



August 2022

### Welcome to the Rail User Express

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It's always good to see Rf making an impact in the national and local press. A recent example was the coverage in the [Credition Courier](#) of its town council's support for the [ACE Rail campaign](#) to extend the Tarka line from Barnstaple to Bideford. Credition itself has benefitted greatly from reopening the line to Okehampton, so the prospect of an additional semi-fast service to Barnstaple and Bideford would be most welcome.

Roger Smith

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

### Furness Line Action Group

The Furness line will once again see 11 Manchester Airport trains/day from December, but via Bolton rather than Wigan North Western. Some will be doubled from 3-car to 6-car units, so the platforms at Dalton and Kents Bank, and on the Lakes Line at Staveley, will need to be extended. FLAG commends Northern on these positive initiatives.

However, re-routing Airport trains via Bolton reduces journey times by 10mins, so they will reach Preston ahead of the London trains, severing their connection with Barrow and Windermere services. FLAG has suggested holding them for 10mins at Preston. Also, the last train into Barrow is planned to run 40mins earlier, making the 1910 from Euston the last to connect rather than the 2030, and limiting the opportunity for nights out in Manchester. Northern is looking at a potential solution to run a later train.

It is now four years since a regular Sunday service was introduced on the line north from Barrow, but many people still assume there isn't one. Visitor attractions along the route include Ravenglass (for the "Ratty"), Drigg, Millom, St. Bees, Whitehaven and Maryport, so it's time for a post-Covid re-launch!

### Upper Wensleydale Railway Association

Notwithstanding the report last month that the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority had killed off any prospect of reinstating the rail line between Garsdale and Hawes, UWR's understanding was that the development of a bridleway should not irreversibly jeopardise this possibility.

So given the long-term nature of its ambitions, and in anticipation of a time of greater political and popular support for sustainable regional transport schemes such as this, UWR intends to continue to research and promote the case for the line to form part of the national rail network.

### **Northern Weekly Salvo – Paul Salvesson**

How barmy is it for someone to sit in a ‘booking office’ selling only one product (ie rail tickets). Can you imagine a petrol station selling nothing other than petrol? Some years ago, Merseyrail and Merseytravel piloted a scheme called ‘M to Go’ that transformed some ‘booking offices’ into convenience stores, selling not only train tickets, but also a range of other products. It seems a very sensible alternative to closing booking offices, and leaving smaller stations unstaffed.

### **Harrogate Line Supporters Group**

NR has approved Northern Rail’s plans to reinstate the 0607 and 0633 stopping services from Harrogate to Leeds from December 2022 - important for business and leisure travellers to London and other onward destinations. Northern also hopes to reinstate the 0805 Harrogate - Leeds and the 1629 Leeds – Harrogate – York.

### **Friends of Hunmanby Railway Station**

A North Eastern Railway Tile Map at Hunmanby shows the network as it was in 1920, from the Humber to the Irish Sea and up to the Scottish Borders. The Railway Heritage Trust has suggested it would make a worthy entry for its Annual Awards in London on 6 December. Any scheme that has restored, renovated, or enhanced buildings and structures in the railway environment can apply for one of ten Awards; seven of which are sponsored. Trust judges David Wharton-Street and John Ives will visit the station, and produce a detailed report for the Adjudicatory Panel.

At the suggestion of Pete Myers, Stakeholder Manager at Northern Rail, The Friends of Hunmanby have entered the National Community Rail Awards in 5 categories to showcase the huge range of support given by the local community, traders, local councilors, and its MP over the last year. Thanks are due to local author Jane Copsy for collating 3,400 words, photographs and supporting testimonials in answer to the questions.

### **English Regional Transport Association**

The consultation on Transport for the South East’s Strategic Investment Plan closes on 12 September. ERTA is lobbying support for the following projects:

- Guildford – Horsham – Shoreham, with a chord onto the Arun Valley Line.
- Electrify the North Downs Line, to enable a semi-fast service to Guildford and Reading.
- Reinstatement of the Polegate - Stone Cross link. Bypassing Eastbourne would shave 20mins off Ashford - Brighton services, relieve the A27 trunk road, boost London – Eastbourne services via Gatwick, and benefit rail freight.

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

TfL has set out a long-term capital funding deal to support London’s economic recovery. It is considering the very difficult set of choices open to it if the Government proposal does not meet that need.

### **Avocet Line Rail User Group**

The May timetable reinstated the first train of the day and saw half-hourly trains on the Avocet Line up to the 2224 from Exmouth, which improves evening connections at St Davids from all directions - a long-term aspiration of ALRUG. A worrying trend has been the increasing number of incidents due to issues with the diesel units. Greater use of the Turbo Class units has not improved the situation.

A members' meeting in Exmouth on 30 May took the form of a panel presentation followed by audience questions. Passenger numbers are strong in Devon and Cornwall, with Exeter Central traffic well above pre-pandemic levels. However, fewer commuters mean less revenue despite increased leisure traffic. Marsh Barton station will open next winter; Cullompton and Wellington have £5m of development funding, so are likely to proceed, as is Edginswell. A new Okehampton Parkway station continues to be worked up for funding, and in the longer term, re-opening the Tavistock - Plymouth line is also a possibility.

## RAILFUTURE

*Rf welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more weight to its campaigns. Join [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 Rf on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Consultation responses](#).*



In Christian Wolmar's absence through Covid, Rf Governance Director Stewart Palmer presented the [RUG Annual Awards](#) at the AGM on 16 July. Of the 14 Rf branches, all 11 with a nomination within its area had an Award-winner (Gold, Silver or Bronze) or a Commendation, as did 14 of the 15 nominated groups, eight of which were newcomers to the Awards. The top awards were:

### Gold Awards:

- Best Newsletter, the Paul Abell Award: jointly to South East Northumberland RUG and Fen Line Users Association.
- Best New Group, the Oliver Lovell Award: Tarka Rail Association's ACE Rail campaign.
- Best Website: Friends of the West Highland Lines.
- Best Campaign: Cooksbridge Station Partnership.
- Best Campaigner, the Clara Zilahi Award: Nick Farthing, of Three Rivers Rail Partnership.

### Judges' Special Award:

- OkeRail and the Dartmoor Line.

Talking to people about their local campaigns, ranging from restoring services to reopening lines, Rf Honorary Vice-President Roger Ford was impressed by the professionalism local groups develop when it comes to obtaining support from a wider than expected range of 'stakeholders'. This year there was extensive discussion on the use of the various social media.

## NEWS

The [Rf Annual Conference](#) in Leeds on 15 September, Turning Point for the Railways, should interest anyone concerned about their future. As well as updates on the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) and the development of Great British Railways (GBR), the underlying theme is of inclusion and diversity: only by widening the customer base can the railways develop and thrive. Topics will include engaging young people in railways, the future of rail freight, and the role of women in rail. The Campaign for Family Friendly Trains will run a workshop addressing the current difficulties of using the railway when accompanied by babies and small children. Not to be missed!

## RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

13 May saw the formal opening of a transformed March station. A Fenland District Council [video](#) illustrates the scope of the works involved. At Huntingdon station, the extended car park will have five new charging points for electric vehicles. However, APCOA has plans to remove the car park ticket machines, and require users to pay using their phone app. But not everyone has a smartphone, so it must be possible to pay at the station from car park machines, rail ticket machines or, where there is one, at the ticket office.

With fewer Cross Country and London services to the airport, Stansted has the capacity for all Norwich – Cambridge services to be extended there. The numbers using this through service have grown substantially. However, the rather ramshackle station has no ticket barriers, and manual inspection causes long delays in reaching the airline terminals.

Although the Haverhill – Cambridge Restoring Your Railway bid was unsuccessful, Rf continues to promote the scheme, encouraged by the ongoing commitment of MPs Matt Hancock and Anthony Browne. It also has strong local support: a petition drew 5,000 signatures. Meanwhile, restoration of the Wisbech line awaits yet another report from NR. A direct Cambridge service would need the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements completed, due in the late 2020, but a shuttle service to March in the interim would show the faith. However, restoration must be as “heavy rail”, both to enable through running and to offer the prospect of freight operation.

Another station with much greater potential is Kennett, on the Mid-Anglia line, half a mile before Chippenham Junction, where the single track to Newmarket branches off the main line to Ely. Its limited timetable is a major barrier: potential Cambridge commuters have no direct service between 0742 and 1009, whereas every other station between Ipswich and Newmarket has an hourly service. As well as serving several local villages, it is ideally sited to act as a ‘Parkway’ station off the A11/14, but is overlooked by transport planners.

## COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK

Many CRPs and station groups work with creative professionals to deliver projects, such as artwork at stations, promotional films, posters and logos, often with great success. However, issues can arise around copyright and intellectual property rights. This CRN [guidance](#) will help you understand the key considerations and avoid any issues.

Sponsored by the South East Lancashire CRP and operated by Diamond Buses North West, a new weekend bus service runs hourly from Walkden station right to the main entrance of the RHS Bridgewater Gardens - ideal for rail passengers from Manchester, Salford, Wigan and further afield. There is a flat fare of just £1 adult and 50p children, but free with a valid rail ticket. Normal TfGM concessions are valid.

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

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced £9-11.5bn for the Transpennine Route Upgrade, up from £2.9bn. Over the next 10-15 years, electrification, digital signalling and an extra track will cut Manchester - Leeds journey times from up to an hour to just over 30mins. NR has started by electrifying ten track miles from Colton Junction, where York - Leeds trains leave the ECML, towards Church Fenton.

ORR’s annual assessment of NR’s overall performance, launched on 20 July, highlights its delivery of £840m of efficiency improvements for the year, which met its annual target, as did most of its five regions. However, NR’s delivery of renewal work was more varied; it needs to focus on improving its examination of structures such as railway bridges and tunnels.

ORR will also ensure that there is a robust framework within which to hold NR (or GBR) to account in CP7 from April 2024, so it has launched a consultation on how it will regulate to protect the interests of passengers, freight users and taxpayers.

Teams in five regional GBR divisions will together deliver an integrated national rail network, so its HQ will be a lean business unit. Of the 42 local authorities that bid to host it, GBRTT has shortlisted six: Birmingham, Crewe, Derby, Doncaster, Newcastle and York. A [public vote](#) will influence the final decision - but be quick, it closes on 15 August.

A new NR taskforce led by independent experts in four key areas will advise on how the railway can be made more resilient to heatwaves:

- Dame Julia Slingo FRS, former Chief Scientist at the Met Office, will examine the future likelihood of extreme hot weather events in the UK, and how timely forecasting can mitigate their impact.
- Sir Douglas Oakervee will investigate how the railway infrastructure can continue to function safely and reliably.
- Simon Lane, former MD and CEO of railways in Melbourne and New South Wales respectively, will explore operational standards, policies and practices.
- Anthony Smith, CE of Transport Focus, will examine how NR communicates with passengers in the run-up to and during periods of extreme weather.

The Government has approved a new nuclear power station at Sizewell C in Suffolk. This ought to result in significant enhancement of rail in the area, but is very much a long-term project.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA), which sits within the Cabinet Office, has given stages two and three of East-West Rail one of the 27 red ratings issued across 235 major Government projects. Procurement of a delivery partner to oversee the line's extension from Bletchley to Bedford and on to Cambridge is due to start later this year, but the IPA does not believe the scheme can meet its objectives on time and within budget.

*„,and finally*

The Royal Astronomical Society [reports](#) that even a moderate solar storm can turn railway signals red when there is no train in the section. A University of Lancaster research team has modelled the impact on a South-North line from Preston to Lancaster, and a West-East line from Glasgow to Edinburgh. Cameron Patterson, a PhD student, says: “We are now looking at how strong a storm needs to be to turn a red signal green - a far more hazardous scenario!”

A bridge at King's Dike to carry the A605 to Whittlesey over the Peterborough - Ely line was first mooted in the 1970s. 50 years later, after spiralling costs led to a change of contractor, it has finally opened to traffic. When the level crossing was active, its gates were closing some 200 times a day, leaving motorists with a wait of up to 23mins.

And two more naming ceremonies: 66786 is now Cambridge University Railway Club, while 73212 has been named Stephen Eaves to mark his retirement after 50 years as a line controller.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

- GBRTT: [Location of GBR HQ](#), closes **15 August**.
- NR: [Waterside Line Reopening](#), closes 9 September.
- Transport for the South East: [Strategic Investment Plan](#), closes 12 September.
- GBRTT: [Rail Freight Growth Target Call for Evidence](#), closes 27 September.
- ORR: [Holding NR/GBR to account in CP7](#), closes 30 September.

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

## EVENTS

Please keep your events coming, and update websites with any changes as soon as they are made. Stand-alone lists are helpful, as newsletters may be discarded. Also copy [Roger Blake](#), who maintains lists of [Events](#) and [Key Dates](#) on the Rf website.

Blob colour indicates the type of event:

- Rf events (RUGs are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

### August

- Saturday 13. English Regional Transport Association, **London Forum**, Online, 1400.
- Tuesday 16. Rf East Midlands, Victoria Hotel, 85 Dovecote Lane, **Beeston**, NG9 1JG. 1200.
- Saturday 20. Rf London South East, Kent Division, 1400 (Also 19 Nov).
- Tuesday 30. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, **Online**, 1830 (Also the last Tuesday of every month).

### September

- Thursday 8. Rf London South East, Sussex and Coastway Division, **Brighton?**, 1800. (Also 6 Oct, 3 Nov).
- Saturday 10. Rf London South East, Herts & Beds Division, **Kings Cross**, 1100.
- Saturday 10. English Regional Transport Association, The Swan Pub, 1 Dunstable Road, **Flitwick**, Bedfordshire, MK45 1HP, 1400.
- Tuesday 13. STORM, Blue Pits Inn, 842 Manchester Road, **Castleton**, OL11 2SP, 1400 (Also the second Tuesday of each month).
- Wednesday 14. Rf London South East, Eastern Division, **Online**, 1900 (Also 9 Nov).
- Wednesday 14. Rf West Midlands.
- Thursday 15. Rf Annual Conference, St Georges Centre, 60 Great George Street, **Leeds**, LS1 3DL.
- Thursday 15. Friends of the Barton Line, No 1 Inn, **Cleethorpes**, (Also 16 Nov, White Swan Barton.)
- Thursday 15. Meldreth Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, venue TBN, 1930.
- Tuesday 20. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, HP5 1EP, 1930 (Also 25 Oct, 6 Dec.)
- Saturday 24. Rf East Anglia, Friends' Meeting House, 5 Upper Goat Lane, **Norwich**, NR2 1EW, 1400 (Also 3 Dec, Cambridge).

### Further Ahead

- 5 October. Community Rail Awards, Manchester Central Convention Centre.
- 15 October. East Suffolk Transport Association, Market Hall, High Street, **Saxmundham**, 1400.
- 15 October. English Regional Transport Association AGM, St Peters Court House, Church Lane, **Berkhamsted**, Hertfordshire, HP4 2AX, 1400.
- 21 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Manor Hotel, **Exmouth**, 1900.

Disclaimer: unless otherwise stated, views expressed are those of the contributor, and not necessarily shared by Rf.

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