

Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

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.

For details about group affiliation to Railfuture, please contact the [Membership Secretary](#)

LIST OF RAIL USER GROUPS

I have now updated the [Regional](#) List of Rail User Groups on Railfuture's website. The regional list shows the same groups that appear alphabetically in the National list, but they're sorted into geographical areas. Please take a look [here](#) and let me have any comments/omissions.

**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 Far North Line – how can rail compete with road?

Back in 2008, First Minister Alex Salmond said, on a visit to Inverness, "Railways must at least compete with roads" and went on to promise improvements to the Highland Main Line. FoFNL are now asking "what improvements to the Far North Line can be expected to compete with roads?" given the vast amounts of money apparently available for the A9 and A96 trunk roads, adding "we have yet to see any plans for improvements to the Perth-to-Inverness line." Dualling the A9 has a breath-taking price tag of £3bn but proposed rail enhancements to the Highland Main Line remain uncertain, with the maximum investment capped at just £600,000.

On the Letters page, one correspondent sets out the rail improvements he wants to see for Scotland, concluding: "I only wish the Scottish Government would go for full electrification by, say, 2025 ... If the Scandinavians can run electric trains from Kiruna to Narvik, and have done so for nearly 100 years, then we can do so on the Highland Main Line and north of Inverness."

Looking ahead to the renewal of the East Coast Main Line franchise, FoFNL are continuing to lobby for the reinstatement of restaurant cars on the Highland Chieftain between Edinburgh and Inverness. The group is pleased that Passenger Focus is recommending that key business trains and other long-distance services have the facilities to offer hot meals.

In the group's September newsletter, there's a report from the Helmsdale Station Community Interest Company, set up in 2009 to restore the listed station building and secure its long-term future. After community consultation, it was decided to convert the main part of the building into holiday accommodation, fit out the waiting room as an information point, and include a store and mess room for station volunteers. Building work is now in progress, and the Company is appealing for volunteers to help with finishing-off tasks; the accommodation should be available for letting from Spring 2014. Full details and a gallery of photos are available on a temporary website [here](#).

CKP Railways (Keswick-Penrith Reinstatement) – some support from the National Park Authority

Cedric Martindale reports that the Lake District National Park Authority has shown some practical support for re-instating the railway by refusing planning application for a scheme that involved filling in a bridge and thereby obstructing the trackbed. The Authority has also been persuaded to modify its own plans for expanding its maintenance depot at Threlkeld station site so that railway earthworks are not destroyed.

Lack of car parking at Keswick is a perennial issue, and Cedric argues that the bus service is unattractive for business trips or for visitors arriving from far afield, adding that “anywhere without a railway station is not considered to be a serious place to do business.” CKP Railways applied for cash from the Regional Growth Fund this summer; although their project was said to be “worthwhile”, they sadly did not win enough support from the judging panel. In the meantime, the project continues to be funded via the sale of Investment Bonds and merchandise – find out more from their [website](#).

Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group - reopened station now considered viable

TVRUG commissioned JMP Consultants to assess the potential for reopening Gilsland Station, the study costs being met from various sources. Previous studies in 2001 and 2005 concluded there was insufficient potential local traffic to warrant reopening, but the growth of visitors to Hadrian's Wall and increasing local demand prompted a further review.

JMP's analysis indicates the station would generate around 26,000 trips annually and the likely reinstatement cost would be no more than £2.5m. The Consultant concluded that the project is economically viable and represents reasonable value for money. Northumberland and Cumbria County Councils have displayed marked interest (the planned station site sits on the boundary between the two authorities) and both Network Rail and the train operator support the project in principle.

Public meetings are planned shortly to feed back the study findings, discussions are in hand about funding for the next study phase and a working group is being formed to support project development. A realistic five year lead time to reopening is envisaged subject to the case being made in the next stages of appraisal.

Ribble Valley Rail – members offer a warm welcome on the new Ribble Valley Rambler

September 15th saw the start of a new winter Sunday [Ribble Valley Rambler](#) service from Blackpool to Hellifield calling at all Ribble Valley stations, and members of RVR will be travelling on the trains giving out information packs on places to visit in the area. Special events such as tours, guided walks and food markets will take place on most Sundays.

RVR's committee has been looking at realistic campaign priorities for the development of services and station facilities over the next two years. Among their shortlisted aims are: an extra late-evening train from Manchester to Clitheroe, extending services north of Clitheroe, improved rolling stock (3-car units needed) and better waiting facilities.

It's reported that Hellifield station is being repainted by two different teams, one from West Coast Railways and one from Network Rail: “...it's to be hoped that the colours match!” A new shop has opened on the station (complimenting the excellent refreshment rooms) selling model trains and railway books; we're told it's well worth a visit.

Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group – committee meets Patrick McLoughlin

In August, LASRUG's committee met up with the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, who was visiting the area to look at transport in rural communities. Committee members took the opportunity to press the case for timetable improvements that would allow commuting to Lancaster and Leeds from towns and villages along their line - they afterwards commented that it was a useful meeting, especially in the light of forthcoming franchise renewals. Currently, LASRUG is concerned that the 2-year delay in the franchise-renewal process probably means that any planned service improvements are now on hold.

In an article looking at the new “Rail North” organisation, which brings together five metropolitan areas, the hope is expressed that the new body would seek to improve regional and rural services like Leeds to Morecambe. Over the summer months, LASRUG members have attended presentations from the British Transport Police, ACoRP conferences in Birmingham and York, and a stakeholder meeting held by Northern Rail at which the draft May 2014 timetable was presented.

One way in which LASRUG engages with its members is via coffee mornings held on a Saturday.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line (STORM) – 2014 timetable still has drawbacks

After the publication of draft timetables for May 2014, STORM submitted a raft of comments and asked its members to help with counts of waiting passengers at their local stations – this information will help substantiate claims that the service is not being tailored to the numbers wishing to board trains.

Amended timetable proposals, published more recently, have gone a long way to meeting STORM’s original criticism, but the group feels that there are still some serious drawbacks, for example: Littleborough will have only two trains per hour whereas a lesser used station gets three. STORM comments that the West Yorkshire transport authority seems to be exercising more influence on the cross-Pennine service proposals than Transport for Greater Manchester.

Minsters Rail Campaign (Beverley-York reopening) – stepping back from the brink!

In the May edition of Rail User Express, it was reported that the Campaign was in danger of being wound up because East Riding Council announced it was no longer committed to protecting the route from development.

In June the Campaign’s Chairman, George McManus, had constructive discussions with Planning and Transport officers from the Council. He reports that they accept they should revisit the land allocations in the Local Development Framework and that their wording regarding the Minsters Line is not as supportive as it should be. The immediate task will be to raise the issue of rail reinstatement higher up the agenda and to continue promoting the case for reopening. The group is looking at the success of the East-West Rail Link scheme to see what parallels can be drawn.

– from Railfuture Yorkshire Branch newsletter

Selby & District Rail User Group – group reverses draconian station car park policy

SADRUG mounted a vigorous campaign against Northern Rail during the spring following a decision to impose a £50 fine for any car parked outside marked bays at all stations. Without consultation, notices were put up simultaneously with parking tickets being put on vehicles. A massive media campaign was launched and for some time the Company were adamant that there would be no change. SADRUG continued to provide adverse publicity for Northern, meetings were held and eventually wiser counsel prevailed. In the end, Northern sent the group a written apology, withdrew the prohibition from all rural stations, returned all parking fines, and promised to be more customer friendly in the future! Afterwards, the local Parish Council decided to make a grant of £300 to the group for their efforts.

An immediate problem for SADRUG is the decision of the District Council to change the procedure for renewal of discounted Senior and Disabled rail tickets without consulting either rail users or the train operator. The group is also pressing for lifts at Selby Station so that the disabled are not disadvantaged.

– from Railfuture Yorkshire Branch newsletter

Friends of the Barton Line – a third of services being cancelled

In his AGM notes, the secretary writes that the Friends have had a successful year, mentioning in particular: various social outings, the manning of a stall at special events and the continued development of the group's archive (a book about the Barton Line is soon to be published). The secretary welcomes the completion of track renewals and further work on upgrading the signalling, but reports that there have been rather too many cancellations of late leaving passengers stranded for up to two hours – recurring causes are unit failures and staff shortages. One member had contributed to an article in a local paper with the headline: *Rail misery as a third of trains are cancelled.*

The number of eating places in Barton listed on [FoBL's website](#) has now reached a total of 50. The website also has a "Merchandise" page showing memorabilia and publications that can be ordered from the group by post.

Stourbridge Line User Group – Facebook page helps to spread the word

SLUG's Chairman Ron Hebron reports that SLUG's new Facebook Group is proving a popular forum tool and has earned some public interest. Another development has been the setting up of a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/stourbridgelineusergroup>. This provides a more professional front end to the viewer and enables visitors to "Like" the content, thereby spreading the word amongst their online friends.

When the fares increase for 2014 was announced, Ron provided quotes for the local press, making a number of points including: "...Where is the justification for any rise when revenue must be at record levels due to passenger growth? ... Yes, there are bargain fares available but they are aimed at using spare capacity outside peak hours - the fact is that peak time travellers are a captive market and the fare hike will not even guarantee them a seat!" The Stourbridge Line User Group urges passengers to contact their local MP and express their opposition to this "indecent" fare rise.

SLUG is campaigning for the line from Stourbridge Junction through Brierley Hill, Dudley and Wednesbury to Walsall to be re-opened. A feature article in the group's latest newsletter reveals the latest plans drawn up by the transport authority, Centro. The proposal includes a link from the old South Staffordshire Railway to Wednesbury Parkway for interchange with Metro Line 1, and just under 1km of street running in Dudley. Refurbished trams will run initially, but when freight starts to share the route, new tram-trains will be needed.

In July, two students from Aberystwyth University sought assistance with their course work and subsequently met up with members of SLUG, who were happy to explain the concept and functions of a rail user group. After the meeting, one member commented: "if [these students] are typical of their generation, I am confident that the world of railways will be a better place."

East Norfolk Transport Users' Association – East Anglia rail schemes move up the agenda

At ENTUA's Open Meeting in August, members heard the very welcome news that Great Yarmouth station was to receive a major overhaul, something for which the group had been campaigning. The speaker from Greater Anglia had the impression that the Dept. for Transport were looking at rail schemes in the region more favourably, and thought this was as a result of the various stakeholders (MPs, councils, user groups etc.) meeting together as a forum, coming up with plans and putting pressure on the Department.

Commenting on the announcement about fare increases, ENTUA feels that passengers would not object if they were to see immediate benefits such as additional rolling stock, but services continue to be blighted by cancellations due to stock shortages - the forthcoming franchise consultation will present an opportunity to press for more diesel units.

Currently, Network Rail is consulting on a resignalling scheme for the area, and ENTUA is busy formulating its response. The group also wants to see a dedicated bus link between Great Yarmouth station and the town centre, and thinks the refurbishment of a key river bridge near the station will present an opportunity to introduce a new bus service.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group – possibility of ticket office closures heads list of concerns

Concerns for CDTUG in recent weeks include: the threat of ticket office closures across the London Underground network, some overcrowding in the evening peak, and LU trains leaving stations earlier than timetabled. The group identifies a number of operational issues that need addressing, one being the “nonsensical routing” of services when there are engineering works south of Northwood; there’s also an idea for achieving better connections between LU and Chiltern trains at Chalfont & Latimer by swapping train paths.

The group notes that the new S-stock trains are faster than the ones they replaced and wonders if timetables now contain too much slack. Finally (in connection with the Croxley Link project), CDTUG has heard a rumour that the Bakerloo Line could be reinstated between Harrow & Wealdstone and Watford Junction.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group – “don’t suffer in silence!”

A message to members of BTPG says the 0540 from Bedwyn is often cancelled and First Great Western still frequently cancel services running on to Bedwyn to allow them to depart from Newbury on time. Members are encouraged to complain to FGW: “the more people that complain the more likely it is that something will get done.”

Shawford Rail Users' Group (Hampshire) – experimental Sunday service a success

The group welcomed the trial by South West Trains of extra stops at Shawford on Sundays during the summer holiday period, and members have been doing their bit to publicise the service enhancement. They report that the extra trains have been welcomed and were well used by locals. However, due to a short platform, only the front door of the 5-car Class-444 electric units can be opened at the station and this leads to delays, especially at peak times or when there are passengers in wheelchairs.

The group wants to see the increased Sunday service made a permanent feature. They also argue that the time has come to solve the problem of delays to the 444s, either by selective-door opening or by platform lengthening.

...news from Railfuture follows...

SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE – an important request

Railfuture’s Chairman David Berman reminds us of the importance of speaking with one voice, particularly when responding to official consultations. Branches and specialist groups within the Organisation now appreciate that it is essential to nominate a single person who will be tasked with pulling together all the comments and submitting evidence in a timely manner. Of course, individuals are free to send in their own comments but they **MUST NOT** purport to represent Railfuture anywhere in their submissions.

A problem arose in the past when a Rail User Group submitted comments under its own name, but included the subtext “Affiliated to Railfuture” in its title. This resulted in the entry being listed under “Railfuture” in the official record of submissions from stakeholders. **It would be helpful, therefore, if Rail User Groups could avoid using “Railfuture” in their title.** It would be safer not to mention “Railfuture” anywhere in submissions to consultations! *Thank you.*

Channel 4 Dispatches Programme

A few weeks ago, I forwarded a request for assistance from a television producer working on a documentary programme about passengers' experiences of rail travel. Just for the record, I had not sought guidance from the Railfuture Board before forwarding the request and therefore the forwarded message should not be taken to represent any official endorsement from Railfuture. I'm sorry for any confusion or offence this may have caused. - Tony

RAILFUTURE RAIL USER CONFERENCE AND RUG AWARDS CEREMONY – Oxford, 2 Nov

Railfuture's Rail User Conference at the Town Hall, Oxford takes place on Sat 2 Nov 2013; details can be found at oxford2013@railfuture.org.uk. Highlights of the conference are as follows:

- Welcome and opening comments from the Lord Mayor of Oxford
- Lord Richard Faulkner of Worcester: "Saving Britain's railways and the work of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group"
- Stephen Barker, Project Manager: "Evergreen 3, the new rail route from London to Oxford"
- Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Leader, Oxfordshire County Council: "The Rail Revival in Oxfordshire and local best practice by the County Council"
- Lord Tony Berkeley, Railfreight Group: "Rail freight, HS2 and the politics of rail"
- Chris Aldridge, Principal Planner, Network Rail Western Region: "Looking forward 20 years on the Western Region"
- Patrick O'Sullivan of EWRL: "Ongoing developments on East West Rail"

Plus commentary from our Conference Chairman, **Christian Wolmar** and of course the **Rail User Group Awards** ceremony.

Railfuture's second Rail User Group Awards competition remains open for receiving your entries until 30 Sept 2013. The competition aims to recognise and reward the various achievements of rail user groups over the past year. You can download full details about how to enter from the Rail User Group page on Railfuture's website [here](#).

Some RUGs and individuals have been nominated for awards without their prior knowledge – so come prepared for a pleasant surprise! There's also a prize for the conference participant who correctly guesses an award winner.

FERRIES QUESTIONNAIRE

Trevor Garrod writes: "We have received well over 100 replies to the [Railfuture ferries questionnaire](#), concerning journeys made between Great Britain and Ireland or the Continent. Thank you to everyone who has completed it. You can still send us completed questionnaires on journeys made up to September 30th."

RAILFUTURE WALES

The Branch has been working on a revised version of its Development Plan for Wales and hope to have it out by the time Members of the Welsh Assembly return to Cardiff Bay after the summer break. Railfuture Wales member John Rogers will be attending the Senedd on 3 Oct to answer questions in a debate about rail operations in Wales after 2018, when the current franchise expires; he will be supporting the Welsh Government's proposal for a not-for-dividend franchise.

The Branch is dismayed that the Wrexham-Chester line redoubling project has been put on hold in view of the timetable limitations and delays which this stretch imposes: "there's potential for additional services and reopened stations, but it is unlikely that these could be accommodated north of Wrexham unless there is double track.

A major task for the Branch this summer was to send in detailed comments in response to the Arriva Trains Wales Dec 2013 timetable consultations.

RAILFUTURE WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

The Branch has been in correspondence with Cross Country Trains about the Company's Ten Minute Reservation system. Whilst it seems a good idea that passengers can reserve a seat right up to 10 minutes before departure, it means that someone already legitimately occupying that seat will be forced to relocate and maybe stand – this can be very stressful for the elderly or less able. There is evidence that passengers are unhappy with the new arrangements and train managers are constantly having to sort out problems.

Please reply with any experiences you may have had of XC's seat reservation system, and I will pass them on to the person concerned – Ed.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

Transport Minister Patrick McLoughlin made a welcome visit to East Anglia in August, during which he was lobbied for better roads, railways and port facilities. A group of East Anglian MPs had arranged to meet him to present a list of aspirations. Whilst acknowledging some rail projects have already been agreed for the Ely area, much was still to be achieved for the Great Eastern Main Line, particularly in the Chelmsford area where additional tracks are urgently required to enable faster trains from Norfolk and Suffolk to operate without impeding the improvement of services from Essex stations. The case for newer rolling stock was also made. All this quite rightly attracted much media attention and East Anglia Branch member Chris Burton eloquently made a supporting case for the above improvements in a broadcast interview on ITV Anglia News.

The annual announcement of fare rises at the end of August saw the usual reaction from passengers about there being no sign of any improvement to the train service. Just to prove that, in fact, quite a lot of work is going on, an article in the Branch newsletter takes the reader on an imaginary trip from Kings Cross to Peterborough, mentioning the various improvement schemes along the way: Thameslink works, various station enhancements, a new carriage depot, the Hitchin flyover, as well as the major works at the start and finish of the journey. The article concludes: "There is of course plenty more to do, but a vigorous start has been made."

RAILFUTURE PUBLISHES OPTIONS FOR EXTENSION TO CAMBRIDGE

Four options to reopen the railway line from Cambridge to Bedford have been published by Railfuture. The Government has already approved the reopening of the Oxford to Bedford section of the former 'Varsity' line, and council bosses would like to complete the link to Cambridge, but Railfuture has said land must be earmarked now.

In a submission to Cambridgeshire County Council's consultation on its transport strategy, Railfuture said a new two-track electrified line with trains running at 100mph or above could offer a journey time from Cambridge to Bedford of just 35 minutes.

Its preferred option is building a new line diverging from the existing line from Cambridge station south of Hills Road bridge. There could be a station at the Trumpington park and ride site, and the line would then head north-west on a new alignment to Cambourne, before joining the main line at Little Barford and continuing to Bedford using a junction north of Sandy. Railfuture said this option would allow for express trains to travel between Peterborough and Cambridge in 35 to 40 minutes, and for other services to stop at Huntingdon and St Neots, plus new stations at Alconbury and Cambourne - taking pressure off the A14 and the A428.

Another option would follow the same route via Trumpington but then use the existing track bed of the Varsity line, with diversions where this has been built on.

A third suggestion would follow the Kings Cross line as far as a new junction at Shepreth station, before heading north-west to the existing track bed via a short tunnel near Barrington.

The simplest suggestion is to use the existing lines to Hitchin and to Sandy, with a new route being provided from there to Bedford.

Peter Wakefield, chairman of Railfuture's East Anglia branch, said: "If councillors are serious about this, they have to start protecting routes, or else it will be virtually impossible."

– from an article on bedfordshire-news.co.uk

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

INNOVATIONS IN ADVANCE OF FARES AND TICKETING REVIEW - from DfT press releases

The Dept. for Transport has been looking at a range of options to modernise fares as part of its fares and ticketing review, and a report is due to be published shortly. Meanwhile, there has been a drip-feed of announcements about fares and ticketing in recent days:

1 The government is investing £2.85 million into a trial of paperless ticketing as it starts to deliver **smart card technology** to rail passengers across the south east. Train operator c2c, which operates between Fenchurch Street, Shoeburyness and the Essex coast, will upgrade ticketing systems at all of its stations outside London, paving the way for passengers to start using smart cards in the region. This will be rolled out on services outside London from January and those into the capital from April. More details [here](#).

2 The government will invest in a trial of **flexible ticketing** as part of its drive to give commuters a better deal on the railways. Flexible ticketing will give passengers a better deal by reducing the money they spend on fares and will spread demand across the network by encouraging them to take less busy services. Exact details are to be decided, but the scheme could include discounted tickets for those travelling in the slightly quieter periods at either end of the rush hour, and the introduction of flexible season tickets to benefit those who work part-time. More details [here](#).

3 Plans have been announced for a pilot scheme that could see all long-distance rail tickets sold on a single-leg basis and allow passengers to more easily "**mix and match**" each ticket type when planning a return journey. Currently the government regulates the price of off-peak return fares, and this can lead to a situation where the cost of single tickets is similar to that of returns. By regulating off-peak singles instead, passengers would be able to choose the most appropriate ticket for each leg of their journey. It could also help tackle crowding by giving passengers more choice over which service they travel on. More details [here](#).

4 A further [raft of initiatives](#) was announced on 19 September, including:

- a cap on standard single and standard return fares at £250 and £500 respectively.
- the significant expansion of the National Rail Enquiries website to provide a comprehensive oversight on fares and ticket information.
- the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) overseeing the development of a code of practice.
- an ORR study into the sale of tickets that will consider whether current markets are operating efficiently, effectively, and in the best interests of passengers and taxpayers.
- a stronger and more focused approach to customer service as part of the government's new rail franchising schedule.
- the publication of annual surveys on how well ticket office staff, ticket machines and websites perform in regards to selling passengers the best ticket for their journey.

➤ *Chris Fribbins, Head of Railfuture's Passenger Group, comments: "The government's recent announcements go some way to addressing points contained in Railfuture's response to the fares and ticketing review in 2012 (which you can read [here](#)). The Passenger Group is due to meet in September, so will be able to discuss further actions."*

ORR PUBLISHES DATA ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE RAIL INDUSTRY

The Office of Rail Regulation has published statistics highlighting year-on-year levels of government financial support to the rail industry from 1985/6 to 2012/3.

Statistics show that in 2012/3 the rail industry received a £5.1bn government subsidy; this is £524 million greater than the previous year. The subsidy includes just over £1.5bn on major rail projects such as Crossrail. The data also highlights that 2012/3 is the third successive year that the government received money back from train operating companies (£420m) as part of their franchise agreement.

To view these statistics, visit ORR's National Rail Trends (NRT) Portal at: <http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk>.

RAIL 'DINING OUT ON VICTORIAN LEGACY'

Network Rail must catch up on a whole generation of under-spending on the country's rail network, which is why £37 billion is now planned to be spent between 2014 and 2019, according to chief executive David Higgins (speaking at a conference in Birmingham on HS2). "Everything is being done 20 years later. Like the water industry, the railways have been dining out on the legacy of Victorian investment," he said, warning that similar critical issues also face the aviation and power industries. Emphasizing 'a substantial mismatch between supply and demand' he said that while passenger numbers had doubled there had been no new tracks – 'except one to France'. – *Railnews*

RAIL STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

Rail North has published its Long Term Rail Strategy for the North of England. The document sets out how rail can support the growth of the North of England's economy over the next twenty years by improving connectivity for passengers and freight across the North, while at the same time providing a better customer experience and delivering a more efficient railway. You can read the document and send in your views on the strategy by completing the online survey form [here](#). The consultation period runs to Monday 21 October 2013. – *Rail North website*

LANCASHIRE ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES TRANSPORT SCHEMES

Transport for Lancashire, a committee of the local enterprise partnership, has announced a package of road and rail improvements to boost economic growth over the next decade. They've outlined six schemes to be delivered by 2024/25 based on forecast funding allocations from the Dept. for Transport and other bodies. Four are road schemes; the two rail schemes are (i) extending Blackpool's tramway from the Promenade to Blackpool North railway station and (ii) doubling parts of the railway line between Bolton and Blackburn. You can read the full list of proposals and submit your comments [here](#). – *Lancashire LEP website*

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PUBLISHES RAIL STRATEGY

Staffordshire County Council, working with its partners, is currently developing a Rail Strategy that will establish Staffordshire's issues and key priorities in terms of rail investment to set out how Staffordshire sees rail provision in the county progressing and developing in the future. The Council has published a survey [here](#) to gather the views of both Staffordshire residents and people from outside of the county who use Staffordshire's rail network in order to inform the strategy. The closing date for completion of the survey is 4 Nov 2013.

The Council intends to consult on a draft rail strategy in early 2014 and to publish the final working document during spring 2014. – *staffordshire.gov.uk*

BATTERY-POWERED TRAIN UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Network Rail is developing a prototype battery-powered train. Working closely with Derby-based train manufacturer Bombardier and operator Greater Anglia, the project will use one of the operator's Class 379s as a test-bed to determine future battery requirements and what kind of train might be needed. This train will be adapted by Bombardier and fitted with two different forms of batteries which will undergo many lab tests before being fitted to the train.

The modified train will then undergo a variety of tests 'off network'. If these tests prove successful, the train will then run on an electrified branch line on the Anglia route, yet to be chosen, with its pantograph down. This is so that if there is a problem, it can raise its pantograph, and collect power again. This running will be both in and out of passenger service and by the end of 2014, the trial will be complete. More details [here](#).

If it proves practicable to create an energy storage capability for trains, electric traction can be introduced to more parts of the railway without the need to necessarily extend the electrification infrastructure. A battery-powered train could use non-electrified and diesel lines, and recharge their batteries at terminal stations. – *from a Network Rail press release*

EAST WEST RAIL LINK SUFFERS SETBACKS

Andy Long of the Bedford Commuters Association tells us that some recent developments may impact negatively on the progress of the EWRL scheme. Firstly, the Office of Rail Regulation has indicated a reduced level of funding for both the EWRL and the Northern Hub schemes in its Draft Determination of Network Rail's business plan. Secondly, local authorities are holding back some of their promised funding for EWRL, ostensibly setting aside part of the money for a possible "East of Bedford" extension. A third threat comes from the publication of proposals to fund improvements to the parallel A14 trunk road.

Andy fears that the EWRL Consortium will now be seeking cost savings or a stretched delivery period, and thinks it may be time to start lobbying MPs and other decision makers to ensure the scheme stays on course.

WINDERMERE STATION LACKS CAPACITY

Adrian Morgan from the Leeds Northern Rail Reinstatement Group spotted that the electrification scheme for the Windermere branch does not include any plans for an extra platform at Windermere, plus a stabling siding and signalling, to cope with additional trains and charters. He wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport pointing out this oversight but received a reply to the effect that there is no funding for any extra work of this nature.

CAMPAIGN BID TO HELP DISABLED TRAIN TRAVELLERS

Disabled people in Scotland are missing out on a social life because of huge barriers to rail travel, says a new campaign group. Younger members of the charity *Enable Scotland* are asking companies to rethink current policies that demand anyone who uses a wheelchair must book well in advance of travel. They've just launched the HUBS (Help Us Be Spontaneous) campaign at the Scottish Parliament, which is due to debate the Government's new learning disability strategy.

The campaign aims to change the rules requiring disabled people who need assistance to pre-book, in some cases up to 24h in advance of travel, which campaigners say removes the ability for them to be spontaneous, to meet friends on the same day, or travel where they want to, when they want. The campaigners also want to see a change in the attitudes of staff to people who require assistance on board trains and at railway stations, which they say are often poor. – *Scottish Herald*

BROMPTON BIKE DOCKS

An item in *Railfuture East Anglia's* magazine prompted me to look into the spreading phenomenon of "Brompton Docks" at railway stations:

You can now hire one of the iconic folding bicycles from automatic "Brompton Dock" lockers at some 20 stations around Britain. You need to register in advance, either as a frequent member (£20 annually and £2.50/day hire charge) or as a leisure member (£1 annually and £5/day hire charge). Reservations can be made online or by text message.

Once you have your Brompton bike you can take it to work, take it home ... you can even take it on trains and buses. The bikes can be folded under your desk at work, taken into meetings or folded into the boot of your car for longer journeys. Find out more at <http://www.bromptondock.co.uk/>

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!

Fri 27 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards 2013, Llandudno.

Sat 28 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Festival, Llandudno and Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Sat 28 Sep [Railfuture Severnside](#) meet at the GWR Staff Club, Bridgwater from 14:00.

Mon 30 Sep Closing date for [Railfuture's RUG Awards competition](#).

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

Tue 1 Oct [STORM](#) meet at Newhey Lodge, Huddersfield Road, Rochdale

Thu 3 Oct [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting from 18:00.

Sat 5 Oct Railfuture branches and specialist groups meet in Manchester from 10:00. Details [here](#).

Mon 7 Oct [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30

Wed 9 Oct AGM of the [Sevenoaks Rail Travellers' Assn](#) in Christ Church Hall Sevenoaks from 20:00. Guest speaker from Passenger Focus.

Wed 9 Oct EWRL Conference at Aircraft Research Association, Bedford. Fee £10. Book [here](#).

Thu 10 Oct [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) 10th anniversary conference at Merseytravel offices, One Mann Island, Liverpool from 11:00. Speakers from Merseytravel, First TPE & Traffic Commissioner's

Fri 11 Oct AGM of the [Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group](#) at Bentham Town Hall from 19:30.

Sat 12 Oct [ESTA](#) meet at St Marks Church Hall, Oulton Broad South. Guest spkr from County Council.

Sat 12 Oct [Railfuture Severnside](#) visit to Seaton Tramway.

Mon 14 Oct [BRAG](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill (note change of venue) from 19:00.

Sat 19 Oct Trans Wilts Rail Partnership meeting at The Laverton, Westbury.

Mon 21 Oct [ALRUG](#) AGM at Topsham (tbc) from 19:00.

Thu 31 Oct ORR publishes final determination on NR's Strategic Business Plan for Control Period 5.

Sat 2 Nov [Railfuture](#) conference, at the Town Hall, Oxford. Fee only £30.

Mon 4 Nov [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Thu 7 Nov [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting from 18:00.

Sat 9 Nov [HPSRUJ](#) meet at Stocksmoor Village Hall from 10:00. Guest speakers will be the Interim Franchise Director for the new Rail North organisation and a representative from W Yorks Metro.

Sat 9 Nov [Railfuture London & SE](#) ride Bluebell Line to Sheffield Park for a special presentation.

Mon 11 Nov [BRAG](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill from 19:00.

Wed 13 Nov [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.
Wed 13 Nov [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Eastern division) meet at Stratford from 18:30.
Fri 15 Nov University of Huddersfield conference: HS 2 'Is there owt in it for th'North?'
Sat 16 Nov [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Kent division) meeting from 14:00.
Sat 23 Nov [Railfuture North West](#) meeting from 13:00.
Mon 2 Dec [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.
Thu 5 Dec [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Sussex & Coastway) meet at 18:00.
Sat 7 Dec [Barton-Cleethorpes CRP](#) Santa Specials: 2 return trips along the line.
Sun 8 Dec National rail timetable change.
Mon 9 Dec [BRAG](#) meeting with Christmas meal at Conquest House, Bexhill from 19:00.
Mon 16 Dec [ALRUG](#) Christmas Social at The Globe, Lympstone (tbc) from 19:00.

2014

Mon 6 Jan [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.
Sat 18 Jan [Railfuture Yorkshire](#) branch meeting in Doncaster.
Mon 3 Feb [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.
Sat 10 May Railway Development Society (Railfuture) AGM in Sheffield.

More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.

Please say if you no longer want to receive Rail User Express, or if someone else in your organisation wishes to be included on the circulation list.

This bulletin has been sent by

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