

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.

The websites of rail user groups mentioned below are listed [here](#).

Please support Britain's number one advocate for the railways and rail users!

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

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH**Magor Action Group on Rail (MAGOR) – campaigning for a “Walkway” station in S. Wales**

The MAGOR station-reopening campaign was launched in June 2012 to a packed meeting in the village hall, supported by the local MP, council officials and rail industry managers. The chairman of the campaign group, Laurence Hando, says “the population of Magor and Undy live with the railway and would like access to it without driving long distances. Our unique selling point is that the whole population of 9,000 can walk to the village centre in 15 minutes (where there is space to build a station). This is why we are campaigning for a “Walkway” Community Station... there’s no need for car parking.”

The original station at Magor was opened in 1850. Passengers on the Great Western main line between Newport and the Severn Tunnel will be familiar with the distinctive features of the parish church sitting on an embankment above the site of Magor Station. According to Laurence, a significant number of the commuters using Severn Tunnel Junction station originate from Magor and Undy, with the majority travelling to Bristol; they would have to go back on themselves if they were travelling to Newport and Cardiff, so most go by car adding to the congestion on local roads.

“For the first time since the closures of Magor and Undy halts in 1964, we now have a serious case put forward to justify a railway station. We are aiming for a date of March 2018 to open a new station. If we don’t get our station in before the new electric overhead cables, then we may never achieve our aims.”

Please email me at ruglink@railfuture.org.uk if you would like the 4-page illustrated document setting out the case for a new station at Magor.

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 – confusion over how many tracks run to the Far North!

The big news from the Far North is the reopening of Conan Bridge Station on a reasonably bright day in February, and the welcoming of the first train to stop there in nearly 53 years. By midday, well over a hundred people had gathered on the single-car platform to hear the official speeches. It’s reported that 3700 passengers used the station in the first 8 weeks, although road works on the A9 may have contributed to rail patronage.

Although an hourly service between Inverness and Tain remains the goal for FoFNL, the group has proposed some additional, peak-hour services using existing train and crew resources. An analysis of traffic along the line shows that the southern 25% of the route is used by 74% of its passengers. The detailed proposal was submitted to the HTRANS transport authority, who saw merit in the idea but pointed out the need to allow for allocated freight paths, whether used or not. The group will need to rework and resubmit their proposal.

There seems much confusion lately about how many tracks really do run to the Far North. A Beeching-anniversary article in the North of Scotland's *Press and Journal* bizarrely included the line to Wick in the list of lines which were closed by the axe-wielding doctor! On another occasion, an announcement from First ScotRail about the suspension of service owing to an overturned lorry clearly stated that "all lines are blocked" (the route is single track).

[I was about to summarise an interesting article from FoFNL's magazine about the reopening of the line from Dingwall to Cromarty, until I read that Royal Assent for empowering the construction of the line, complete with overhead electrification, was granted on Easter Monday ... which my diary tells me was April the First! - Ed.]

Dornoch Rail Link Action Group – is a hybrid diesel-electric unit the answer?

DORLAG looks to new technology to supply the answer to rolling stock replacement on the Far North Line. By 2020, the current Class 158s will be nearly 30 years old and need replacing, but "new legislation makes it more difficult and expensive to design a fully emissions-compliant engine for a modern diesel multiple unit." Loco-hauled trains, fuel-cell vehicles or even line electrification need to be considered ... but perhaps the most practical way forward for remote rural lines would be a lightweight, hybrid diesel-electric multiple unit.

Journey times to and from Caithness are of primary concern for DORLAG supporters, and the group was keen to get an assurance from First ScotRail that the new station at Conon Bridge would not affect overall timings. They've discovered that funding could be available for small-scale improvements outside the normal rail-industry study and assessment process; an example is the ongoing installation of barriers on open level crossings which will help to improve safety and reduce delays. An announcement is expected later this year about the freight terminal at Georgemas and other developments along the line.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES) – reopening plans edge forwards

Following the 2011 study into the case for rail developments in the region, including new stations at East Linton and Reston, the SEStran transport authority put together a 7-point brief for additional work needed to supplement the original study findings. RAGES has been privy to a draft copy of the supplementary report and says that there is an extensive chapter on the socio-economic improvements that a rail service would bring to a county which has no rail stations. The consultants paid tribute to the public meetings at East Linton and Reston organised by RAGES in Sept 2012.

The group's campaign to reopen the Haddington rail branch received a boost when it featured on the front page of the East Lothian News recently. The News had seen a copy of the RAGES newsletter saying that there was a need to gauge the residents' interest in a reopened station before undertaking a feasibility study. An online poll on the newspaper's website asked people: "Are you in favour of the reinstatement of a rail link to Haddington?" and 87% said "Yes". RAGES is now working with Haddington Community Development Trust on a questionnaire about the rail link which will be circulated around the town.

Although Scotland has an active network of station adoption groups, there are as yet no Community Rail Partnerships, and the Scottish Government is considering whether to introduce them. RAGES thinks it would be possible to create a CRP for the North Berwick or Dunbar lines, subject to the initiative getting the support of local communities.

In his recent "Salvo", Paul Salveson reminds us that it's 20 years since Community Rail was born in England with the formation of the Penistone Line Partnership in 1993.

This next item about GLAM Trac is also from "Salvo"...

Golcar, Longwood and Milnsbridge Transport Campaign - GLAM Trac

The new GLAM Trac group had a stall at a local event in May, promoting public transport and in particular its campaign for a station to serve Golcar and Milnsbridge. Over 350 people signed the petition addressed to Metro and Kirklees Council with lots of interest from people wanting to get involved. A public meeting is planned for Friday May 31st (see Events listing) and the group is hoping to get speakers from other re-opening campaigns, especially ones that have achieved their aim.

Harrogate Line Supporters' Group – backing for a new station at Flaxby Moor

The Supporters' Group was invited to give an update on the preparation of the draft "Business Case for the Harrogate Line" to a meeting arranged by the Knaresborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce earlier in May. The main purpose of the meeting was to explain development plans for a business park at Flaxby Moor adjoining junction 47 on the A1(M) motorway. The south west corner of the site lies adjacent to the Harrogate line.

The outcome was that the meeting gave unanimous support for the proposed Flaxby Green Business Park and the related Flaxby Moor Parkway Station. It was felt that a station at Flaxby Moor would serve the local residents and many growing businesses far better than the small station currently proposed by the local council at Manse Farm.

Meanwhile the Supporter's Group is assisting with a study by WSP Consultancy into the merits of electrification of the Harrogate line, possibly as an add-on scheme to TransPennine electrification.

Leeds Northern Rail Reinstatement Group – local plan supports line reopening

Following the publication of the Harrogate District Local Plan, the chairman of LNRRG, Dr Adrian Morgan, has searched the document looking for anything that may affect the reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway. He notes that the document "supports in principal rail re-openings including the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton route." There are statements about the need to protect the route for future reinstatement and the long-term protection of the Bilton Triangle. However, the proposed development of the Goods Yard site at Hutton Bank is not mentioned; Adrian intends to write for clarification about this point.

Minsters' Rail Campaign – dismay as Council decides to remove route protection

Campaigners working to reopen the Beverley to York railway have said (in a press release) that they're devastated by a policy change at East Riding Council. News that the proposed route will no longer be protected from development may have sounded the death knell for a campaign which was set up 10 years ago to reopen the line. Securing route protection from development pressure was the reason for setting up the campaign. Reopening the line could have given Hull and Bridlington direct connections to the East Coast main line. The group is trying to arrange a meeting with the Council to see if they can get this decision reversed. Should they fail it is unlikely the Campaign will continue.

George McManus, Chairman of the Minsters' Rail Campaign, said: "This decision illustrates a lack of vision at the heart of East Riding Council which is stuck in the past and motivated by short term gains rather than long term benefits. Unless this decision is reversed, this line will never re-open and East Yorkshire will slip further into congested, polluted decline".

The press release achieved some coverage in the local papers and on BBC Radio Humberside. The York Press and the Hull Daily Mail both carried a response a Council spokesman, who confirmed the route is no longer safeguarded in the area's blueprint for future development. He said: "It would be difficult, if not impossible, to say the line could be built over the next 15 years; that is effectively why we have taken the route out of the Local Plan."

The Campaign has been supported by all of the region's MPs, two MEPs, a number of local authorities and town/parish councils and organisations such as the Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit the Campaign website www.minstersrail.net/.

Hull & East Riding Rail Users' Association – city joins premier league!

Tony Ross, secretary of Hull & East Riding Rail Users Association, was pleased to see that progress is being made on the rectification of a major landslip on the Goole/Scunthorpe to Doncaster main line. He's also heard that planned maintenance work on the Selby Swing Bridge has been deferred so that the alternative route via Selby will remain available. "With Hull City football club's promotion to the Premier League, it's particularly important that people have confidence in being able to travel by rail."

Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association – new study should identify line improvements

MCRUA's ongoing programme of passenger counts shows that patronage along most of the line continues to grow at 10% a year. However, commuting into Manchester shows zero growth due to a reduction in the peak-time service, so the group is delighted that Transport for Greater Manchester has commissioned a "Study on the Mid Cheshire Line" to look at passenger requirements and any improvements needed for both infrastructure and services.

MCRUA's summer newsletter includes an update from the Middlewich Rail Link Campaign, who are looking to reopen the line between Sandbach and Northwich. Their local MP is working tirelessly on the issue and Cheshire East Council is prepared to take the scheme forwards; the Dept. for Transport is being helpful but Network Rail refuses to play ball, claiming there's "no business case". However, the campaigners are redoubling their efforts to ensure further progress and say they are more confident than ever of eventual success.

Organised in association with Compass Tours, MCRUA's next special train will be on 11 Sept, out via the Settle & Carlisle and back around the Cumbrian Coast – details and booking form [here](#). The next music trains on the Mid Cheshire will be 6 Jun and 26 Jun, with further trains promised through the summer months. The group will be manning a stall at the "Northwich 150" event on 27th & 28th July.

On the subject of Northwich, there's concern that conductors are not announcing that people with mobility difficulties need to be at the front of the train as it approaches the station to take advantage of the new platform hump.

Stourbridge Line Users' Group – now on Facebook

In an update, the group's chairman tells us: "SLUG has embraced the world of social media and now has an account with Facebook. Though we are always seeking fully paid-up members, it has become necessary to engage with the wider world of Stourbridge Line Users in order to increase our following and influence. The link is on the home page of our [website](#). In due course, the website will be redesigned to show the Facebook / Twitter logos."

Felixstowe Travel Watch – "two short extensions = one full franchise!"

FTW has noted how easy it is to hide from the conductor and avoid paying for a short rail trip: "we have to keep reminding Greater Anglia about this." The group has also been lobbying GA about their unfair refund policy for season ticket holders – an FTW member commutes to Ipswich but only receives a miserly £1.50 refund if the train is cancelled.

FTW is dismayed that the refranchising process for Greater Anglia has been deferred for two more years, meaning that much-needed improvements are unlikely to happen in the near future. It's the second such delay in recent times, as the original franchise was due to expire in 2011 (the two short extensions add up to almost the length of a full franchise period!). The group is pleased, however,

that the idea to remove some passenger-train paths to create more capacity for freight seems to have slipped down the agenda.

In a short reflection on the Beeching closures, we read that the East Suffolk Travellers' Association was foremost in opposing closure of the Ipswich-Lowestoft line (now enjoying an improved, hourly service) and: "just a few years later, the Felixstowe branch of that organisation was formed. As they say, the rest is history!"

As in previous years, FTW is making a small contribution towards the operating costs of the summer open-top bus service along the sea front. All good publicity for the group!

Bedford Commuters' Association – order for new trains still not signed off

The BCA has been looking through details of the Thameslink service pattern once the upgrade programme has been completed, and is asking its members to let them know if any of the specific proposals will cause problems. The group is perplexed by further delays in the closing out of finance deals for the new Thameslink rolling stock, blaming the "much-discredited Private Finance Initiative" model for making the process over-complex.

During the morning peak period large queues build up at Bedford Station's ticket windows, especially when monthly and weekly season ticket renewals are due. The BCA has obtained assurance from First Capital Connect about the manning of ticket windows and has been able to give its members detailed guidance about renewing season tickets in advance.

Association of Public Transport Users (Herts) – contract award expected...er...shortly

APTU has also been following the protracted ordering process for new Thameslink rolling stock with interest, and quotes a written answer from Simon Burns MP given in Parliament on 13 May: "The Department intends to award the contract for Thameslink Rolling Stock shortly..." A decision on the proposed Freight Terminal at St Albans is also plagued by delays, and APTU understands that there may be an announcement at the end of June. St Albans station itself now has well over 1,000 cycle parking spaces, possibly more than any other station in the country.

Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group – passengers too numerous to count!

BGORUG notes that the fight for electrification of their line is hotting up: four London Assembly Members along the route have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging him to include the scheme in the next round of infrastructure investment to be announced in June.

The group remains unhappy about attempts to solve overcrowding with additional trains in peak hours (some of which get cancelled at the last minute); one member's attempt to count passengers proved impossible because the train was so packed. They hope to be able to put across their concerns at a forthcoming meeting with Transport for London.

New waiting shelters have been provided at some station on the line, but BGORUG continues to complain about the shelters installed in the 1990s which subsequently had glazed panels replaced by steel sheets to deter vandalism, creating prison-like interiors – now the train operator has relented and will be trialling the reinstatement of glazing. Meanwhile the group is fighting a proposal to reduce booking-office opening hours at Gospel Oak, saying instead that the opening hours at other station should be increased to Gospel Oak standards.

West Sussex Rail Users' Association – too much snow and too much sun!

WSRUA report a terrible start to 2013 with disruption due to snow in January, several suicides, and an inordinate number of infrastructure problems including point and signal failures...plus some train failures that are the fault of the operator. The group has attended several meetings of a Horsham District Council Committee dealing with concerns around disruption to rail services in bad weather.

Other concerns for the group in recent months include: de-staffing of a ticket barrier line at Chichester (could be dangerous), unreadable ticket machines at Pulborough (due to sunshine), and a lack of progress on bus-rail integration.

Once the refranchising process for the combined Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern network gets underway again, WSRUA plans to reopen dialogue with each of the bidders and report back to its members. In the meantime, engineering works planned for the Arun Valley Line are bound to affect services, and WSRUA will be urging Southern and Network Rail to keep closures to a minimum. It's hoped that the operator will be able to speed up services when the work is complete.

WSRUA will have a stall at Arundel Station on 17 Aug for the Arundel 150 event being organised by the Arun Valley Community Rail Partnership. Similar celebrations will be taking place at Littlehampton and Amberley.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group – electrification to Bedwyn ... if funding can be found

A few days ago, BTPG and other interested parties were invited by the Dept for Transport to a presentation of a draft report by consultants ARUP about the possibilities for electrification beyond Newbury. The first option in the report was extending electrification as far as Bedwyn, and this yielded an acceptable benefit-to-cost ratio of 2.58. The other options were: (ii) as far as Westbury (iii) as far as Westbury, plus Mendip Quarries and (iv) as far as Batheaston Junction - the BCR for all these was unacceptably low.

Thus the favoured scenario is that Pewsey and Westbury will continue to have direct diesel services to Reading and Paddington, while Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn will be electrified. However, there is currently no money for this additional electrification, and so the uncertainty remains about how Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn will be served when the wires reach Newbury in 2016.

Friends of Crewkerne Station – “please shop at Waitrose!”

Friends of Crewkerne Station is one of the three local groups being supported by the Waitrose store in Crewkerne during May. The group is on track to receive a share of around £1,000, the monthly amount Waitrose donates to charity via its green disc scheme. The more discs that shoppers drop in the FoCS box, the bigger their share!

...news from Railfuture follows...

GOOD NEWS ON LEWES - UCKFIELD RAIL SCHEME

Secretary of State for Transport Patrick McLoughlin has asked Network Rail to examine if re-opening the Lewes-Uckfield railway line will help meet the demand for the future growth in rail travel. He visited Lewes station on May 9th, where he met local MP and Transport Minister Norman Baker to discuss rail provision in the constituency.

Following this announcement from the Dept. for Transport, Railfuture issued a press release saying: "This is great news, as it's something we've been supporting for some time. We've been working with local stakeholders, including East Sussex County Council, to progress plans for a transport hub at Uckfield and protect the route so it can be reopened. We feel there is a strong long-term case for a second main line to Brighton, but we have to take one step at a time. Our proposals must fit in with Network Rail plans."

Railfuture recently engaged a firm of consultants, JRC, to research travel needs in Sussex. "We've put our money where our mouth is on this one. This work will help form the business case for reopening this stretch of line, as part of a partnership with key players, so that we can move towards a viable, realistic solution. We want not just a better railway for passengers, but to promote growth in the local economy as well." Further information [here](#).

Note: [Wealden Line Campaign](#) 10-mile trackbed walk, Lewes to Uckfield from 10:30 on Sat 6 July.

RAILFUTURE SEVERNSIDE BRANCH – four tracks needed for Bristol bottleneck

Sevenside Branch is calling on the Government to approve four-tracking of the main line over Filton Bank (Dr. Day's Junction - Filton Abbey Wood) in North Bristol. This section of route was reduced to two tracks in the mid 1980s, when retrenchment was still the policy for the railways. Restoring four tracks will allow proper segregation of fast and slow trains through the Greater Bristol rail network.

Nigel Bray, Secretary of the Branch, says reinstatement of the second pair of tracks is essential if Bristol's rail services are to grow. Since the late 1980s, there has been a great expansion of train services using the Filton corridor: Cardiff-Portsmouth and Cardiff-Taunton services are now more frequent, as are Cross Country trains north of Bristol and local services between Bristol and Gloucester. Great Western electrification, scheduled to reach Bristol in 2016, will involve two fast electric services to London each hour via Bristol Parkway in addition to those via Bath. The Greater Bristol Metro project will create half-hourly services between Yate and Weston-super-Mare, and also between Clifton Down and Bath. All these new services would use all or part of the bottleneck through North Bristol. Furthermore, the plan for a deep water container port at Avonmouth would also increase rail freight movements in the Filton area.

RAILFUTURE SUMMER CONFERENCE IN TAUNTON – 22 June

There's still time to book for Railfuture's summer conference on Sat 22 June at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton – just a short walk from the station.

Experts will be talking about community rail schemes and planning for climate/environmental change, and there will be guest speakers from rail campaign groups focussing on their own specific projects: the Portishead Railway Group on line reopening, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways on creating an effective network for the city, the New Somerset and Dorset Railway on their long-term aim to reopen the S&D, and the Tarka Railway Association on recent problems at Cowley Bridge Junction.

The fee for Railfuture's Summer Conference is £30 including lunch and conference. For further details or to reserve your place please email taunton2013@railfuture.org.uk.

RAILFUTURE RAIL USER CONFERENCE IN OXFORD – 2 Nov

Railfuture's Rail User Conference will take place on Sat 2 Nov 2013 at the Town Hall, Oxford.

Christian Wolmar will be presiding over an impressive line-up of speakers including: Stephen Barker of Chiltern Railways talking about the Oxford-Marylebone scheme; Lord Faulkner, co-author of *Holding the Line, How Britain's Railways Were Saved*; Lord Berkeley of Rail Freight Group; Chris Aldridge from Network Rail telling us about future plans for the Western Region; and Ian East MP speaking about the fight to save the Oxford-Bicester service.

The fee for the autumn Rail User conference is £30 including lunch and conference report (£25 for members booking before the end of August). For further details or to reserve your place please email oxford2013@railfuture.org.uk.

RAILFUTURE RUG AWARDS 2013

Railfuture's second Rail User Group Awards competition is now open for receiving your entries. The competition aims to recognise and reward the various achievements of rail user groups over the past year. You can download full details about the competition from the Rail User Group page on Railfuture's website [here](#). Prizes will be presented at Railfuture's Rail User Conference at Oxford Town Hall on 2 Nov 2013 (see above).

WALK THE ROUTE : MAKE THE LINK – Sat 29 June

Join Railfuture, the Campaign for Better Transport and other local transport campaigning groups to make the case for completing the missing rail link between Bedford and Cambridge. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Beeching Report and the year in which the reopening of the line from Oxford to Bedford gets under way. Railfuture wants to see this strategic route opened all the way to Cambridge, and are publicising the campaign via this special “Walk the Route” event.

Participants wishing to lend their support should assemble from 10.30 at the Visitor Centre in Priory Country Park, Bedford. At 10.45, there will be the official rally and photo-opportunity, then at 11.00, the ‘Make the Link’ walk and cycle ride begins, following Sustrans national route 51 for just over 7 miles. The finish is at the Market Square, Sandy.

For more details, see: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam+walk>.

FERRY SURVEY – your help is needed, please

Many of you will have filled in Railfuture’s **Airport Survey** in 2012 – the result can be accessed via the Press Releases section of Railfuture’s website.

A **Ferry Survey** has now been “launched” and you are asked to help by filling in details of any journey made by ferry between 1 Oct 2012 and 30 Sept 2013. The ferries of interest are those to: the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Continent, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight, the Scilly Isles and the Scottish islands. You can access the survey [here](#). Results will be published in a “Ferry Crossings” report towards the end of 2013. *Thanks!*

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

CROSSRAIL 2 CONSULTATION

With London's population set to boom, plans are underway for a vital new rail line, Crossrail 2, in order to support this future growth. Crossrail 2 would create a new high frequency, high capacity rail line between southwest and northeast London. Proposed routes would help relieve congestion and provide a catalyst for new jobs and homes.

On 14 May, the plans moved a step closer with Transport for London and Network Rail launching a public consultation on the proposed routes. The consultation will seek the views of people in London and the southeast of England and will run until 2 August 2013. It aims to establish what level of support there is for the project and where the public and stakeholders would like Crossrail 2 to serve. The public are encouraged to respond and share their views at www.crossrail2.co.uk

LONG TERM PLANNING PROCESS – your comments invited

Network Rail’s new [Long Term Planning Process](#) facilitates the strategic planning of the rail network taking into account the views of the rail industry, funders and customers. The planning documents issued by NR will include: market studies, cross-boundary analysis and route studies.

Market studies and route studies will be published on NR’s website as drafts, followed by a 90 day consultation period. The consultation responses will help to form the final study which will again be published on the website. Subject to any representations being upheld by the Office of Rail Regulation, each study will be established 60 days thereafter.

Four draft Market Studies are currently out for consultation with cut-off dates in June/July: London and South East passenger market study (due date 25 July), Long distance passenger market study (due date 28 June), Regional urban passenger market study (due date 26 July) and Freight market study (due date 26 July).

Railfuture intends to submit comments on all four studies; if there are any specific points you wish to make, email them to me [here](#) and I will make sure they get to the right person.

SO ... WHAT IS A “MANAGEMENT CONTRACT”?

The Thameslink Consortium asked the Department for Transport what a “management contract” actually means and received this reply: “The key differences between what we have termed a ‘management-style’ contract (MC) and what, in railway parlance, is termed a ‘franchise’ are (a) under an MC the Government retains most or all of the revenue risk, and (b) the operator is contracted to undertake specific additional tasks – in this case all the relevant preparations for the introduction of the enhanced Thameslink service in 2018.” – *Item in APTU’s May newsletter*

REMOVING FARE ANOMOLIES – *it can be done!*

ScotRail announced that, from May 19, rail fares for more than a quarter of a million journeys a year are being cut after ScotRail and Transport Scotland worked together to tackle decades-old fare ‘anomalies’. These inconsistencies occur when it is cheaper to buy a ticket from A to B, and then from B to C, rather than from A to C in one go. The changes announced mean it will almost always be cheaper for a customer to buy one end-to-end ticket for their journey rather than purchase separate tickets for two different legs of the same journey.

As a general rule of thumb, ScotRail has ensured that end-to-end fares will be at least 50p less than the cheapest ‘split ticketing’ option. The new price structure will remove more than 1500 of the inconsistencies, making it easier for customers to obtain best value fares for the journey they wish to make. This initiative puts the interests of the customer first, by tackling the fare inconsistencies that are most prevalent in Scotland. – *Item in RAGES’ April newsletter*

NEW STATION OPENS IN WEST MIDLANDS

Trains have started to call at a new station in the West Midlands, which opened yesterday with the launch of the summer timetables. Stratford-upon-Avon Parkway, between Wilmcote and Stratford, has a generally hourly service to Birmingham Snow Hill operated by London Midland.

The new £7 million station has been built as part of Warwickshire County Council's Sustainable Transport Project, and was funded by the Department of Transport. It is intended mainly for commuters, and is close to a park and ride site which will make trains much more accessible to motorists than the existing station in the centre of Stratford. –*railnews.co.uk*

FOUR MORE STATIONS ANNOUNCED

New stations at **Lea Bridge** (North London), **Ilkeston** (Derbyshire), **Newcourt** (Devon) and **Pye Corner** (Newport) were given the green light after successfully applying for funding under the New Station Fund.

Lea Bridge is located on the Lea Valley line between Tottenham Hale and Stratford in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The station, costing in excess of £6.5 million, will consist of two platforms, a new footbridge and lifts, station canopy, ticket vending machines, Oyster readers, waiting shelters, help points and cycle storage.

Ilkeston is on the Erewash Valley line between Nottingham and Langley Mill. The unmanned station costing over £6.5 million will consist of two 6-car platforms and waiting shelters, plus a new 150-space car park, cycle storage, taxi rank and bus stop.

Newcourt is located on the Exmouth Branch between Digby and Sowton and Topsham. The new station costing around £1.5 million will comprise a new platform and shelter, ticket machine, secure cycle parking and CCTV. The station will be served by a half hourly local service on the Exmouth branch.

Pye Corner is on the Ebbw Valley line in South Wales between Rogerstone and Cardiff. The station costing over £3.5 million will consist of a single platform and will be equipped with a help point, ticket machine, CCTV and customer information screens. The station will be served by a car park accommodating 70 spaces. – *from DfT press releases*

LEGAL CHALLENGE TO NEW LONDON-OXFORD LINE FAILS

The new £130m rail link between London and Oxford line will go ahead, after a legal case brought by an Oxford resident failed in the High Court. Construction is due to start this summer and the route to be open by 2016. When complete, it will become the first new rail link between London and a major city in 100 years.

A DfT spokesman said: "The court's judgment shows the department's handling of the case and the way in which we arrived at our decision were correct. It confirms that the department took sufficient steps to assess the impact of the scheme on Oxford Meadows before deciding to make the Transport & Works Act Order."

The project will involve 10 miles of dilapidated track being upgraded, and two new stations will be built – one replacement at Bicester and one in north Oxford at Water Eaton. The route will open up a route to High Wycombe that has been closed since the 1960s. Oxford station would see two new platforms, and Islip station will also be rebuilt. The project will allow trains to run at up to 100mph on double tracks. – *Rail Technology Magazine*

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST CONFERENCE IN PRESTON

The next conference of TravelWatch NorthWest is to be held on Tuesday 11th June at the County Hall, Preston (very close to Preston railway station), starting at 10.30 (refreshments from 10.00). Confirmed speakers are: (i) Chris Anslow, Group Manager, Public Transport Development, Lancashire County Council (on the Pennine Reach and other initiatives), (ii) James Syson, Transport Strategy Team Leader, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Richard Watts, Rail Development Team Manager, Lancs CC (on Community Rail Partnerships), (iii) Alistair Kirkbride and Claire Maclaine from the Lake District National Park on GoLakes Travel and (iv) Alex Warner, Owner, Flash Forward Consulting Ltd. (a transport consultancy). The deadline for confirming your attendance is 31 May.

WELSH ASSEMBLY MEMBERS WANT GREATER SAY OVER TRANSPORT DECISIONS

The devolving of Network Rail's investment spending priorities and a greater say in how train companies operate services is needed if Wales is to achieve an effective integrated public transport system, according to a report published today from a cross-party committee of AMs. In its latest report, the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee describes current transportation integration between bus and rail in Wales as "sadly lacking." Despite improved dialogue between Network Rail and the Welsh Government, decisions on major rail infrastructure spend remains a non-devolved matter.

In its report, *Integrated Public Transport in Wales*, the committee calls for a "statutory relationship" with Network Rail, including devolution of powers to specify high level outputs for Welsh rail infrastructure similar to that for Scottish Government. That would give the Welsh Government – although it would need some financial agreement with the Treasury that provides the required additional funding to its block grant – powers to decide on key rail investments, like electrification of the North Wales line.

The report also recommends that the Welsh Government continues to lobby for an enhanced role in the rail franchising process as it affects Wales. In particular it said the Welsh Government should have powers to shape the next franchise agreement on the Wales and Borders franchise currently operated by Arriva.

Delivery of the 25 recommendations in the report "would greatly assist the development of a fully integrated transport system in Wales." – *walesonline.co.uk*

PUBLICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS DUE...

On 12 June 2013, the Office of Rail Regulation publishes its draft determination, and draft strategic regulatory statement, on [Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan](#) for Control Period 5 (2014-19).

On 19 June 2013, Passenger Focus is due to publish its **National Rail Passenger Survey** for Spring 2013.

On 25 June 2013, the Department for Transport will publish a **Franchise Competition Process Guide**.

On 26 June 2013, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announces his **Comprehensive Spending Review** for public spending in 3-year period from 2015/16.

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 31 May Golcar, Longwood & Milnsbridge Transport Campaign (GLAM Trac) public meeting at Milnsbridge Baptist Church from 19:30.

Sat 1 Jun [Railfuture Wessex Branch](#) AGM from 14:00 at East Cliff United Reformed Church Hall, Holdenhurst Road, Bournemouth (nr station). Guest speaker from rail industry.

Sat 1 Jun [Railfuture Surrey](#) open meeting at Staines Methodist Church Hall, Thames St, Staines from 10:30. Discussions on NR's Market Study, Surrey Rail Strategy, Southern access to Heathrow etc.

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

Mon 3 Jun [Watford Rail Users' Group](#) open meeting at Watford Town Hall from 18:45. Representatives from local train operators in attendance

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

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

Thu 6 Jun [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting in Lewes from 18:00.

Fri 7 Jun [Friends of Dronfield Station](#) AGM at Gosforth Lodge, Dronfield from 19:30.

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

Sat 8 Jun [West Sussex Rail Users](#) AGM at the Capitol Theatre, Horsham from 10:15. Guest speaker from Southern.

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

Mon 10 Jun [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet in the Sackville Hotel, Bexhill seafront from 19:00.

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

Tue 11 Jun [FoWHL](#) AGM with lunch at Commodore Hotel, West Clyde St, Helensburgh from 10:45. Guest speakers: Keith Brown (Transport Minister), John Yellowlees (ScotRail) & Paul Salveson.

Tue 11 Jun [TravelWatch North West](#) conference in County Hall, Preston from 10:30 to 15:00.

14-23 Jun [Green Transport Week](#) - make people stop and think about the way they travel.

Sat 15 Jun [Railfuture Yorkshire Branch](#) meeting at St Giles Church, Pontefract from 14:00.

~~**Thu 20 Jun** [TravelWatch North West](#) conference~~ moved to 11 June (see above)

Fri 21 Jun Closing date for ACoRP Community Rail Awards competition entries.

Sat 22 Jun [Railfuture](#) summer conference on future aspects of railway operation at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton. Fee only £30, includes lunch.

Sun 23 Jun [ALRUG](#) outing to Buckfastleigh with lunch and steam train ride.

Wed 26 Jun [OPSTA](#) AGM at Burscough Wharf from 19:30.

Sat 29 Jun [Make the Link](#) event starting from Priory Country Park, Bedford at 10:30. Walk or cycle the missing link from Bedford to Sandy.

Tue 2 Jul Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Assn AGM at Golden Pheasant, Plumley from 19:30.

Sat 6 Jul [Wealden Line Campaign](#) 10-mile trackbed walk, Lewes to Uckfield from 10:30.

Mon 8 Jul [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet in the Sackville Hotel, Bexhill seafront from 19:00.

Mon 8 Jul [SELRAP](#) open meeting at Herriots Hotel, Broughton Road, Skipton from 19:00.

Wed 10 Jul Railfuture London ([Eastern division](#)) meeting at Stratford from 18:30.

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

Wed 10 Jul [SENRUG](#) AGM at Morpeth Town Hall from 19:30. Guest speaker from Northern Rail

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

Thu 18 Jul [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting in Newhaven from 18:00

Sat 17 Aug [Railfuture Kent](#) meet at 14:00.

Wed 28 Aug [East Norfolk Transport Users Association](#) AGM and public meeting at St Paul's Church Hall, corner of Salisbury Rd/ Caister Road in Great Yarmouth from 19:30.

Thu 5 Sep [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting at Hampden Park from 18:00.

Mon 9 Sep [SELRAP](#) open meeting at St Bartholomew's Church, Colne from 19:00.

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

Wed 11 Sep [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

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

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

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

Mon 30 Sep Closing date for Railfuture's RUG Awards competition.

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

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

Mon 21 Oct [ALRUG](#) AGM at the Manor Hotel, Exmouth (tbc) from 19:00.

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

Sun 8 Dec National rail timetable change

More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.

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 all the way from Dorset by

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