

**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, see website [here](#) (from the "Membership Type" menu, select "RUG").*

*We start with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK, starting in Scotland and working southwards. Let me be absolutely clear: this does not imply that I have entered into a coalition with any Scottish group.*

*As always, I'm very grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.*

**LevenMouth Rail Campaign – help and advice from SESTrans and RAGES**

At a meeting on 11 March, members of LMRC received invaluable help and advice on railway development and sources of funding from a representative of SESTrans – the SE Scotland Transport Partnership. It was said that the reopened Levenmouth link would integrate well with the fast-growing Fife Circle network, and that the scheme has strong similarities with the Alloa line reopening in 2008. The tender for conducting the STAG Appraisal of the Levenmouth line reopening has been issued with completion expected by August 2015.

In April, an Open Meeting of the LMRC was addressed by two representatives of the Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES), who shared their experiences of campaigning and running a successful group. One opinion expressed was that privatisation of the railways had been a good thing: "You can go to the private company and enthuse them - British Rail were more dismissive". Lessons from the talk include: engage with key politicians; establish cross-party support; engage with local and business communities; promote all the benefits. It should also be remembered that politicians react to well-researched statistics.

LMRC's committee has been meeting and corresponding with business leaders in the area to drum up support. The group thinks there is "very significant potential" for freight trains on the reopened line, which would take goods lorries off the inadequate roads serving Levenmouth. In fact 1 mile of the line, from Thornton to Earlseat, has already been reopened (in 2012, for coal transport).

**Rail Action Group East of Scotland – meetings with new train operators**

RAGES met with the Business Development Director of Abellio to discuss the new ScotRail franchise which began in April. Much discussion centred on the delay in the start of the new local service to Berwick until December 2018, which is the latest date for the Company to exercise their priced option for the service. Abellio confirmed that, if Transport Scotland was minded to finance the option earlier, the Company would respond favourably (RAGES has since lobbied Transport Scotland on the matter). Abellio will be providing 1000 extra car parking spaces but none of them in South East Scotland – this prompted RAGES to point out that station car parks in their area were full early in the day. Overcrowding of certain trains was also highlighted by the group.

Representatives from RAGES have also met with East Coast Trains to discuss a number of issues. The group argued for more trains to call at Dunbar and Berwick and for more parking spaces at the two stations. They also want the ticket office hours at Berwick to be restored to those previously enjoyed. Earlier, RAGES member Alison Cosgrove, in her capacity of Chair of Railfuture Scotland, had sent a letter to Rail Minister, Claire Perry, seeking assurance that East Coast mainline services to Dunbar would not be reduced as a result of the new franchise – the Minister replied with an assurance that "Dunbar will not be left out in receiving the benefits that the new franchise will bring".

RAGES is supporting the new East Lothian Community Rail Partnership, and members of the CRP are pictured in RAGES' newsletter carrying out a station audit at Dunbar station. They had been visiting all stations along the route, looking at station facilities and signage.

*If you want to carry out an audit of your local station, you can download a Station Survey Checklist from Railfuture's website [here](#).*

### **Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association (SAYLSA) – now officially recognised as a CRP**

SAYLSA is now officially *the Community Rail Partnership for Carrick & Wigtownshire*. A Medium Term Business Plan for the Partnership will be published shortly - this will help shape the future direction of the line and Partnership activities. To date SAYLSA has been instrumental in seeing the line deliver some of the best growth figures of all Scotland's scenic routes. However, they see a need for the Partnership to diversify into new markets in order to self-fund a greater proportion of its income.

In their Spring "newsbrief", SAYLSA expresses thanks to all the staff at First, the outgoing franchisee for ScotRail, saying: "...the culture of the company was clearly 'can do, get on with it' and this was a great incentive for us in the early years of community rail. Abellio have a tough act to follow." They are grateful that many of the staff will be transferring over.

Commenting on the new timetable for Dec 2015, SAYLSA regrets the loss of direct links to Glasgow via Paisley despite a hard-fought campaign – however, they have secured a useful concession: some services will continue on to Glasgow from Kilmarnock so that those with mobility impairment will still have a through service, albeit via a longer route. For others, the group thinks that Troon would make a better interchange than Ayr between the Stranraer line diesel services and the Ayrshire electrics, as it avoids the need to traverse the footbridge at Ayr.

*This brings to mind an amusing story: Many years ago, the County Surveyor at Hampshire County Council was the guest speaker at a meeting. He learned afterwards that a lady in the audience misheard the announcements and was expecting a talk by the "Countess of Ayr" – Ed.*

### **Campaign for Borders Rail – moving onwards to Carlisle**

The CBR's "Onwards towards Hawick and Carlisle" campaign has borne fruit. Not only has their evidence been adopted by the UK Parliamentary Select Committee's *Borderlands Inquiry*, but the Committee has recommended a feasibility study be carried out in support of reinstatement between Carlisle and Tweedbank.

Members will be out and about in the summer months, handing out leaflets at events and helping to spread the word about CBR plans for reopening to Carlisle. An immediate priority for the group is to continue safeguarding the trackbed. They've received strong backing for their campaign from the MP for Penrith and The Border, in whose constituency most of the English portion of the former route lies, and from the Leader of Carlisle City Council.

The group is currently involved with helping to plan the opening celebrations for the Edinburgh-Tweedbank section in September, with the emphasis on community involvement. However, there's concern that Abellio ScotRail are walking into a rolling stock shortage which may create problems for the line reopening.

Membership of the group is now over 350. Individuals can join for just £5/year, and receive regular newsletters by email, or by post at £2 extra/year to cover postage.

### **Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group – successful ministerial visit**

Transport Secretary Claire Perry MP visited Gilsland in February in support of the Campaign to Open Gilsland Station. She had been invited by Hexham MP, Guy Opperman, when he led an adjournment debate on transport last September. Claire took the time to not only look at the station site but to walk the short distance on Hadrian's Wall trail to the Poltross Burn Milecastle which is one of the best preserved structures along the Wall. The Minister was thrilled by the location of the station and its potential, and had obviously made herself familiar with the problems people in the village are having due to the poor provision of public transport. Everyone then moved to the Samson Inn for refreshments and further discussions.

Those in attendance included representatives of Network Rail, Northern Rail and Northumberland County Council, together with members of the Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group, the Community Rail Partnership and the Campaign to Open Gilsland Station (COGS). Having all these influential people in a room talking together was really productive and everyone left feeling very positive about the future of the station. Campaigners are hopeful that the £30,000 for the GRIP 3 study will be forthcoming soon; meanwhile COGS members are following many ideas to develop the economic and tourism case for the area.

The Invitation to Tender for the Northern franchise was issued on 27 Feb. The surprise for TVRUG was the intention to extend services terminating at and starting from Hexham to Carlisle, giving 2 trains/hour between Newcastle and Carlisle. One of these could be a regional express service calling at Metrocentre, Prudhoe, Hexham (TVRUG suggests adding Haltwhistle to the list). The second train per hour should call at all stations - this would enhance provision at Blaydon and stations west of Hexham. The group has provided evidence that, where the number of calls at Tyne Valley stations has increased, patronage has improved significantly. They welcome two other features of the ITT: the replacement of pacers by the end of 2019 and the requirement for a North East business unit.

TVRUG has refined its aspirations in the light of the ITT and the group is now arranging a second round of meetings with the shortlisted bidders to discuss these. Support for community rail is written in to the ITT, and the Community Rail Partnership is discussing with bidders how they might support individual projects in its action plan.

### **Keswick to Penrith Railway Reopening (CKP Railways) – engaging with potential train operators**

CKP Railways plc has sent information about the Keswick to Penrith Re-opening Project to all the shortlisted bidders for the Northern and TransPennine franchises, and some have already shown interest. CKP Railways are also buoyed by recent statements of support for their rail project from Penrith Chamber of Trade, the Northern Regional Council of the Trades Union Congress, and the Conservative candidate standing for Allerdale Borough Council.

CKP is finding that developing a project such as theirs is becoming ever more bureaucratic. Bodies such as the new Local Enterprise Partnerships are rather nebulous – the former Regional Development Agencies had a much more identifiable presence, with permanent staff and a sense of continuity. Thus it's good news that local authorities have now come together to form "Rail North" which will co-ordinate policies and negotiate with the rail industry.

CKP is hopeful that calls for better connectivity in the North will give a boost to their aim of rebuilding the line between Penrith and Keswick. There is talk of going even further, reinstating the line all the way to Workington – however, CKP recommends caution as the route beyond Keswick would mostly need to be rebuilt from scratch.

The **Friends of the Settle-Carlisle** Line are working with Railcam.uk to install High Definition sound cameras at four locations along the line. The first is at Ribbleshead. To view, click on this [link](#), enlarge to full screen via the arrows button (bottom right), and turn your sound on loud. Enjoy! ... but be warned: it's a bit of a time waster.

### **Furness Line Action Group – hard work rewarded with boost to local services**

Hundreds of hours of hard work by campaigners, including FLAG, were rewarded in February by the good news (in the Northern franchise ITT announcement) that their convincing business case for the Cumbrian Coast line had earned the promise of substantial increases in service levels from Dec 2017. Promised enhancements include: a return to eight through trains each day between Barrow and Manchester Airport, new Sunday trains between Barrow, Millom, Whitehaven and Carlisle, and additional weekday through trains between Barrow and Carlisle.

The group foresees a risk of inferior rolling stock on the Barrow-Manchester route during the early phase of the new franchise, when the service transfers from TransPennine to Northern; however, by 2020, all Northern's existing fleet should be refurbished to an acceptable level. FLAG is pleased to record that the Dept. for Transport has listened to their concerns in formulating the ITT, but they say they will need to monitor the delivery of these promises over the coming years. They are also meeting with the franchise bidders to put forward their aspirations.

FLAG is disappointed that their line appears in "Tier 3" of the list of candidates for electrification in the report from the North of England Electrification Task Force... "but it's not a *fait accompli* – let's see what effect the Moorside nuclear development brings." As a stop-gap measure, the group suggests hauling electric units to and from the Furness Line using diesel locomotives.

Challenging the accepted wisdom that the subsidy paid to Northern is the highest for any train operator, FLAG's newsletter editor presents statistics to show that Northern is being overcharged by Network Rail for its station leases compared to other areas. Another article in the newsletter highlights the stark differences in cost-per-mile for various rail journeys in the North West - the plethora of widely-variable prices and restrictions on certain journeys are "beyond the wit of man to comprehend." The author of this particular article goes on to recommend split ticketing as a way to save appreciable amounts of money (tables are provided showing what can be achieved). This is followed by a handy round-up of rover and ranger tickets, which are another way to save money.

There has been an unacceptable level of service cancellations in the early weeks of 2015, mainly due to staff shortages – FLAG believes there is too much reliance on overtime working to maintain the service levels.

### **Aire Valley Rail Users' Group – 25 years of progress**

The Aire Valley Rail User Group (AVRUG) was founded in 1990 by Keith Preston of Saltaire who is still on the committee – so the group is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. There were just ten members back then but the membership is 100 plus these days. In 1990, electrification seemed a long way off but a great deal has happened in the last 25 years. A few Pacer units still appear but passengers on the Aire Valley line normally have modern electric trains.

Commenting on the Invitation to Tender document for the new Northern Rail franchise, AVRUG says that delays to electrification schemes across the UK will lead to uncertainties over rolling stock availability and the phased withdrawal of the outdated Pacer units: "It's not clear where additional electric trains might come from to provide the extra capacity which is required on our line... A number of our peak trains already have far higher numbers standing [than the specified maximum]."

The Invitation to Tender calls for drivers to have responsibility for operating train doors. AVRUG sees the benefit in this: "With conductors freed from the requirement to operate doors, they would be able to assist passengers and collect fares. We would like to see this enhanced role for on train staff, rather than one person operation of the trains."

AVRUG finds that the Invitation to Tender is, in the main, a positive document, but says the crunch may come when the bids are received: "Will they be affordable?"

With Virgin/Stagecoach now operating East Coast services, AVRUG queried the focus on extra trains to Bradford rather than Skipton, but they have yet to receive a reply.

### **Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association – *please, no more hand-me-downs!***

Noting that their line is in Tier 2 of the Northern Electrification Taskforce priority listing (ie no hope of electrification before 2024), HPSRUA speculates on the type of rolling stock that could replace the outdated Pacer units in the interim period: refurbished Class 144s? battery-powered multiple units? Vivarail's D-train? The Company behind the D-train project told HPSRUA that they think the units would be a perfect fit for the Huddersfield-Sheffield line. However, the group is resigned to getting someone else's hand-me-downs!

Commenting on the latest proposals for the Northern and TransPennine franchises, HPSRUA is pleased to note that there is a requirement for an hourly Sunday service on the Penistone line from Dec 2017 – something they have long campaigned for. Through their membership of Railfuture, the group was able to meet all three Northern franchise bidders and put forward their aspirations, which include: some double-tracking to facilitate a half-hourly service, station improvements and better rolling stock. The group also met with representatives of the Dept. for Transport and RailNorth.

The North is receiving unprecedented attention from politicians in the run up to the general election. Labour's John Prescott launched the *Northern Way* some years ago, then there was the Lib-Dem's *Northern Futures* and now the Conservative's *Northern Powerhouse* ... but "will any of these three *Northern* packages amount to more than fine words?" HPSRUA calls on its members to engage with candidates and bang the drum for the Penistone line, an asset that has been long neglected despite population growth along the route.

As winners of Railfuture's best newsletter award in 2014, HPSRUA (with their *Track Record* publication) is the clearly one to beat in the 2015 Rail User Group Awards competition! Railfuture President, Christian Wolmar, will be guest speaker at HPSRUA's AGM on 9 May.

### **Friends of the Barton Line – *uncertainties if line becomes part of East Midlands franchise***

Following the publication of the ITT for Northern and TransPennine, FoBL took a critical look at the document and sent a response back to the Dept. for Transport. The proposal to transfer Barton line services to the East Midlands Trains franchise raises uncertainties such as the location of the train depot and whether early morning "stock positioning" services would be retained. It would appear that decisions on the branch were being deferred for a year and FoBL would have to look closely at the ITT for the East Midlands franchise when it's issued.

On 26 March, the Secretary represented FoBL at a TransPennine Express stakeholder business-update meeting in Sheffield. The Secretary had also attended a Network Rail invitation-only update conference on their £85m signalling-upgrade project at their new base at Killingholme on 12 March - eleven signal boxes are to be replaced by two computer screens at the new Rail Operating Centre at York, and half-barrier level crossings will be fitted with full barriers.

*Other news:* Members continue to replenish timetables and replace posters at venues along the Barton line. The 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of New Clee station falls in July, and historic photos of the station are being sought. Embroidered "Barton Line" badges have been procured at under £3 each for members to sew onto pins or directly to their clothing in order to promote the line.

### **Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line (STORM)**

STORM members report incidents recently where Northern Rail's response to service disruptions has been woefully inadequate. Whole-line cancellations occur when it would have been possible to run trains on part of the affected route, and then replacement buses are announced which fail to materialise. The result is that passengers are simply left stranded for hours on end. STORM says that, in some cases, it would be better to direct passenger to the regular bus service.

On Saturdays and Sundays from 17 May, a rail replacement bus service is scheduled between Blackburn and Manchester, but the timetable for the bus shows that it calls at every station except

Entwhistle. STORM is aware that Entwhistle has access problems for buses, but wonders if the lack of a service of any kind represents an illegal “temporary closure”. On previous occasions, there has been a taxi for the station.

There was an outcry when the service at Moston reduced to hourly, followed by an understanding that the half-hourly frequency would be restored in 2016. However, STORM has seen evidence that restoration of a more frequent service may not happen until 2019 – the group is keeping watch on the matter and will be lobbying Transport for Greater Manchester if the need arises.

### **North Cheshire Rail Users’ Group – *an important meeting ... on the way to the dentist!***

Following a phone call from her local MP, 6 Feb turned out to be a hectic day for NCRUG’s Chair, Janet Briggs: – the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, would be paying a brief visit to Frodsham station to discuss restoration of the Halton Curve and her attendance was requested. The meeting duly took place and, after a quick photo call, there was just time for Janet to dash across the road and keep a dental appointment!

An interim business case for the Halton Curve was produced by Merseytravel at the end of February and a full business case is expected by end June. NCRUG has been assured that the studies will be completed in time for work on site to commence when the West Coast Main Line upgrade in the area starts in 2016. NCRUG says that, overall, the news on Halton curve is good, but there are still significant issues to be overcome (eg revenue, paths and rolling stock) which means that campaigners do need to keep up the pressure. Saturday 4 July has been earmarked for NCRUG’s annual summer special over the Halton Curve to Liverpool South Parkway.

Noting that it took an intervention by the Secretary of State to recommend replacement of Pacer trains, a correspondent in NCRUG’s newsletter wonders if the present formula for calculating the benefit:cost ratio of rail schemes is too risk averse, and therefore biased against taking the vital steps that passengers know are needed. “We have only to look at infrastructure projects which have taken place to see that actual usage and passenger satisfaction is way above the BCR assessment.”

Following the award of a grant, station volunteers at Runcorn East worked with local schools to produce signs encouraging passengers to dispose of litter correctly - we’re told that these have had a marked effect on reducing littering. In conjunction with the National Citizen Scheme, a memorial garden has been created at the station and planted up with spring flowers. In January, NCRUG enjoyed a successful evening at the ‘Cheshire Best Kept Stations’ awards ceremony with all three of their stations (Helsby, Frodsham and Runcorn East) receiving awards.

NCRUG reached its 25th anniversary on 15 Mar, and the group says that the last five years have seen considerable progress in many respects.

### **Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers’ Association – *an hourly service? ... well, almost!***

With the increased train service beginning on 18 May, SARPA reflects on how far they have come since the dark days of the 1960s when rail pundits envisaged complete closure of the Cambrian line through mid Wales. However SARPA still has plenty of work to do, monitoring the new service and making sure the rolling stock is adequate for the expected number of passengers. Also the new timetable still has some 2-hour gaps, so it’s not yet the hourly service that campaigners want to see.

SARPA notes that Network Rail’s Route Strategy for Wales recommends creating extra platforms at Shrewsbury by ripping up the freight avoiding lines through the station, but the group says the lesson from history is that the loss of any removed infrastructure will be regretted in years to come.

The end of the abominable Pacer trains reminds SARPA’s newsletter editor that BR brought the prototype Leyland Railbus on a proving trip to the Cambrian in 1981. Local legend has it that staff sabotaged the unit causing it to fail on the bank out of Aberystwyth the next day – and Pacer derivatives were never seen on the Cambrian again!

In his regular column, the Brigadier takes a jaundiced look at the Welsh Government's Big Idea of a not-for-profit franchise for Wales from 2018, the jewel in the crown being electrification of the Valley Lines in South Wales. He foresees that "only the crumbs from the table will be left for the rest of Wales and the Borders."

Elsewhere we read that a local school has teamed up with Arriva Trains Wales to provide floral decoration at Welshpool station. Arriva have provided two tubs for the project and children from the school planted bulbs in December.

### **Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association – *SW Wales hardly mentioned in National Plan***

The PRTA has been busy on a number of fronts: commenting on the draft timetable for May 2015 and contributing to the review of National Transport Plan for Wales. Worryingly, the latter document lacked any significant investment plans for Pembrokeshire, prompting the PRTA to reiterate the improvements they would like to see. Network Rail's draft Welsh Route Study is also out for consultation and provides members with another opportunity to submit proposals.

Although not normally concerned with railway history, the PRTA is nonetheless disturbed that railway exhibits at the Scolton Manor local heritage museum have been "side-tracked" to make way for a walled-garden restoration project: "the items need treating properly or they will just rot away." The PRTA urges any of its members concerned about the railway exhibits to take a stand and perhaps get involved.

Noting that Arriva Trains Wales holds a list of station adopters (but, rightly, does not make the information public), the group has asked the company to pass on their newsletter to everyone on the list, inviting them to join the PRTA. The group notes that the flower troughs at Saundersfoot and Kilgetty are looking neglected and says these stations could well benefit from adoption.

PRTA's newsletter recommends a number of websites and special offers to members, including "Recent Train Times" (to find out the punctuality of your train service) and "Tesco Boost Railcards" (discounts using Tesco vouchers). The newsletter editor discovered by chance that a proper car park had been developed at Narberth station, and he wondered why the County Council appears not to have "blown their trumpet" about this improvement.

### **Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group – *end of the line for Liverpool-Norwich service***

Under the heading "The Wrong Decision", PENRUG expresses dismay that the Rail Executive has confirmed its wish to withdraw the hourly express trains from Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield to Peterborough and Norwich. Rail North and the Rail Executive appear to want a single operator for all express trains between Manchester and Sheffield, perhaps because Rail North does not see anywhere east of Nottingham as part of its "region". There is the added risk that the Rail Executive will then withdraw the hourly service between Nottingham and Norwich, leaving Norfolk with no direct trains to any major centre of population except London. PENRUG suggests packaging the routes from Liverpool to Norwich and from Manchester Airport to Cleethorpes as a "bundle" then inviting bids from Cross Country, East Midlands Trains, Northern and TransPennine Express.

PENRUG is preparing its response to Network Rail's draft East Midlands Route Study, and of course the group welcomes the study's recognition of the importance to passengers and the economy of inter-regional express passenger trains. They support the idea of an eventual hourly train between Birmingham and Norwich, commenting that the service could also link Norwich into the proposed Leicester Interchange. They add that there is also a demand for trains between Birmingham and Stansted Airport over a longer day.

PENRUG reports that the Friends of March Railway Station have produced more floral displays and are moving towards charity status, making it easier to obtain a proper lease on their community rooms. They have ambitious plans for a "disabled" toilet on Platform 2 and some parking spaces for people hiring their rooms.

### **East Suffolk Travellers' Association – response to consultation based on comments and surveys**

ESTA's committee devoted a large part of its first two committee meetings this year to drawing up a response to the East Anglia Rail Franchise document from the Dept. for Transport. The response took into account recent comments from members on their experiences, and also the replies to the group's August 2014 travel survey - it calls for service improvements, better connections, improvements to waiting facilities and robust plans to deal with disruption. The response also makes the point that, with just 26 diesel multiple units for the 9 rural services in East Anglia, there is an urgent need for extra rolling stock.

One of the three speakers at the group's meeting in February was a local councillor who gave an update on the project to refurbish the disused station building at Beccles to provide a café, toilet and waiting area, plus a cycle hire outlet, two meeting rooms, a studio and four offices to rent: "Beccles station will again be a hive of activity for the community."

ESTA's appeal for donations towards station seats, in memory of two members who had recently passed away, has so far reached £265 – the committee plans to have small unveiling ceremonies later in the year. Members' outings planned for the summer months include a boat trip on the River Alde and a visit to the Mid Suffolk Light Railway at Brockford & Wetheringsett. ESTA's stall and gazebo will be deployed at the Woodbridge Regatta on 21st June: "this always provides an excellent occasion to promote public transport and talk to people about what we do."

The group's 50th anniversary falls in November, and a working party is busy preparing special events and a commemorative booklet with the working title: *ESTA – The First 50 Years*. "We must certainly send the message that we shall not cease work after 50 years, and the book will conclude with a summary of what we want to see future public transport operators doing in eastern Suffolk."

### **Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users' Association – has the time come for a whole-line user group?**

It's 35 years since the BBRUA began promoting and helping to secure services on the often-threatened Marston Vale line. However, Marston Vale services are soon to form part of a wider network with connections to Oxford, Aylesbury, Milton Keynes and eventually Cambridge. The committee thinks that the time has come to consider the possibility of a larger rail users' group covering the whole of the East-West Rail Line, and is therefore consulting its members, neighbouring groups and Railfuture on the idea.

Following a successful trial over the February half-term, the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership organised another "Meet the MK Dons Football Club Player" at Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre over the Easter period – a member of the team was on hand for autographs and photos, and to answer those burning questions. The heritage centre was "highly commended" in the 2014 National Railway Heritage awards, and BBRUA members will once again be helping to man the shop and tea rooms for the 2015 season. Elsewhere it's reported that a local resident is thinking of setting up a station adoption group for Kempston Hardwick and is looking for other volunteers to help out with practical work at the station.

After many years of pressure, most Marston Vale trains are now using platform 5 at Bletchley instead of No 6 so that passengers can make use of the lifts and better waiting facilities. Concerns of late include erroneous information on passenger screens at some stations, a lack of information at times of disruption, and the poor standard of cleaning on MVL trains.

A members' *Great Value Day Out by Train* to Chichester and Hayling Island is being planned for mid June. That great railway traveller, Michael Portillo, was seen in August 2014 filming on the Marston Vale line but there was disappointment when his Great Railway Journey was finally shown in January, as all viewers saw were quick shots of him boarding a train and some aerial views – nothing about the line's history.



Chiltern Railways has revealed the opening of Bicester Village Station is to take place on October 26. The newly revamped station, previously known as Bicester Town, forms part of a new £130 million line running from Oxford Parkway in the north of Oxford to London Marylebone. It will have level access, two new platforms, a rebuilt car park, cycle parking and bus stops. - [buckinghamtoday.co.uk](http://buckinghamtoday.co.uk)

### **Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group – level crossing solution kicked into long grass**

The group is dismayed that Network Rail is pulling the Foxton Level Crossing Closure feasibility study work from its current funding cycle, setting the project back 5-10 years: “congestion and conflict around the crossing will not become easier with increases in train frequency and population. An all-or-nothing funding approach is not helpful.”

The station car park at Meldreth is now very full, and local members of the group will be carrying out a two-week survey to ascertain figures. A cycle restriction has been brought back into force on one of the morning trains to Cambridge, but rail users are reminded that folding bikes are not affected by this ruling. Station gardening days are planned for Shepreth on 10 May, Meldreth on 12 May and Foxton on 10 June – volunteers and donations of plants are invited.

### **Cotswold Line Promotion Group – better service, but it's still a “patchwork quilt” of departure times**

The new flyover in the Reading area is already bringing noticeable improvements in punctuality for Cotswold line users (“...it is quite exhilarating to rise above the rest of the railway”), and CLPG’s Chairman anticipates further benefits when the final stage of the new layout is completed.

The Cotswold line itself now enjoys an almost hourly service, but while some of the timings have been speeded up, this has been at the expense of certain station calls with the result that some stations such as Pershore have fewer trains than before. Furthermore, the London service is becoming a patchwork quilt of confusing and differing off-peak departure times. The CLPG has put forward carefully-considered timetable proposals which would see clockface departures from Worcester with the majority of trains passing on the newly-redoubled sections of the Cotswold line: “an hourly service which benefits all existing calling points can be achieved on weekdays and with relatively little timetable upheaval and modest cost.”

There’s a further boost to weekend services in the May 2015 timetable. After many years of campaigning, London Midland has been persuaded to introduce two hourly morning trains between Hereford, Worcester and Birmingham via Bromsgrove with additional late afternoon journeys – the best level of service on the route for over 40 years! The CLPG’s newsletter lists many other improvements to services at weekends, and sees this as a recognition of the growing demand for off-peak leisure travel by rail.

The CLPG committee is agonising over a new Constitution to replace the current, much-amended version that dates back to 1978. Two issues have divided opinion: (i) should the Secretary and Treasurer be elected by the committee or by members at the AGM? (ii) should the group introduce postal and/or proxy voting which would enfranchise those who do not attend the AGM but would mean much extra work. *[If any other group can offer advice, I’ll pass it on to the CLPG – Ed].*

Once again, First Great Western will be providing an HST (one that still has adequate first class accommodation) for the CLPG’s annual outing, and members will be off to Tenby in September.

### **Abbey Flyer Users’ Group (ABFLY) – lobbying for real improvements, not just a bit of repainting**

31st March saw ABFLY host an invitation-only Briefing Evening for local Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) plus a scattering of local and county councillors. The evening was a great success and the group’s presentation was lauded as clear, to the point and inspiring. The event provided a rare opportunity of having the unbridled attention of politicians to ‘educate’ them on the

forthcoming opportunities for the Abbey Line, in particular the re-letting of the London Midland franchise. This is due for renewal in 2017 and comes up for consultation later this year.

ABFLY tells us: “We have already made it abundantly clear to the DfT that we expect to see real service improvements, not just another 7-10 years of the ‘status quo’ and a bit of repainting here and there. We are calling for them to sort out some of the long running bugbears, e.g. the lack of late night trains, the huge volumes of income lost through inadequate revenue collection (which in turn suppresses the case for investment), and the parlous state of the rolling stock. We also want them to ‘think big’ – such as trying out through-trains at peak hours and making it a mandatory requirement that the bidders should come up with ‘solutions’ to provide a higher frequency – a train every 30mins or even 20mins in each direction. Just think what an attraction such a ‘turn up and go’ service would become.”

At the same time ABFLY is lobbying Network Rail to include the building of a passing loop in their next 5-year plan, which starts in 2019 but goes out for consultation next year.

In other news – London Midland have confirmed that the line’s tatty and grubby Class 321s will be leaving the line in September and Class 319s from the Thameslink route will take their place. Promisingly, LM are ‘working through the detail’ of a potential interior refresh, which could mean at long last passengers get some trains which look and feel rather more loved than those they replace. Also being discussed is the possibility of modifying the trains, such that the guard can open the doors at every door position. This would enable the guard to operate the doors and collect fares without having to return to the back cab. ABFLY has suggested commissioning the long-defunct ‘Driver Only Operation’ equipment at each of the stations (the big mirrors) such that the driver can deal with all the door opening and closing while the second member of staff can focus solely on customer service: “This may be a little way off yet!”

### **Transition Marlborough Transport Group – council support is the key to success**

Over the past few months, transport campaigners from Transition Marlborough have been working hard trying to convince Wiltshire councillors to back their Marlborough Rail Link line-reopening project. The transport group met with the Director of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, who told them their request for £15,000 to fund a feasibility study would not succeed unless the scheme had the support of the Council. However, the group did manage to persuade the developers of a new housing estate to leave space for an access road to the proposed station site.

### **East Surrey Transport Committee – challenging fares dictated by the Mayor of London**

ESTC has been battling with the Mayor of London over his 2015 fares review, which increased the Off-peak Travelcard by 34% from £8.90 to £12.00 and the Off-peak Oyster cap by 38% from £8.50 to £11.70. The Committee has pointed out how unfair this is and they’ve lobbied all the parties in the Greater London Assembly on the issue. Taking advantage of family and group fare deals outside London (eg Travelcard for 2 adults and 2 children) it is now cheaper to travel to town from just outside London than it is from within the London zones!

In their submission, the Committee says: “We accept that the sales of one day Travelcards on the Underground network have been falling since the introduction of Oystercard. However, in Outer London and on National Rail they are still a substantial and essential part of travel to London, especially in areas like ours which have a mixture of Transport for London and National Rail within the zones and other services outside the zones along with a mixture of services that cross the boundary ... a lot of families in the outer boroughs do not have Oystercards.” In evidence they present a number of tables showing fare comparisons, and they even provide examples of fares in other European cities.

Although the Mayor to date has been unwilling to reverse the increases, he has made two important concessions to the ESTC:

- The first is that, if any person travels off-peak more than twice in a week or 8 times in a month, he will reduce the off-peak cap to £8.70 and credit the Oystercard with difference at the end of each month, provided the Oystercard is registered. This will also apply to registered contactless cards.
- The second is that, for people living in the outer Zones who do not have an Oystercard, he will offer them a free Oystercard (details of this deal from [vernoneveritt@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:vernoneveritt@tfl.gov.uk)).

In his letter of reply, the Mayor acknowledged that visitors who do not opt for Oyster Pay-As-You-Go for off-peak travel will pay more, but this has enabled Transport for London to reduce fares for those who work part time, often on low wages.

### **South Hampshire Rail Users' Group – crumb of hope for service improvement**

New Forest East MP Julian Lewis had written to Rail Minister Claire Perry MP about the poor level of train service at Totton, quoting data supplied by SHRUG. In her reply, the Minister said her Department was considering if they can achieve timetable and service improvements as part of the forthcoming Direct Award of the South West franchise, adding that “there is probably nowhere on the SWT network where changes should be easier to achieve than between Southampton and Weymouth.”

SHRUG sent in a detailed response to the consultation on Network Rail’s draft Wessex Route Study. The group was doubtful whether some of the proposed infrastructure improvements were sufficient to sustain the suggested level of traffic increases, particularly around Southampton and Portsmouth, and between Basingstoke and Reading. They say the Southampton area could benefit from a local 'metro' service of the kind being developed for Bristol. Southampton is the second largest container port in Britain with problems of pollution and road congestion, so the group argues that movement of containers by rail should be maximised. They also say that Southampton Central station needs additional platforms and is in a poor state with inadequate facilities relative to its importance.

*...news from Railfuture follows...*

### **RAILFUTURE CONFERENCES IN 2015**

**The AGM in Blackpool is nearly upon us and this is followed a few weeks later by the Summer Conference in Newark. Our Autumn Conference will be held in Bristol. Further details below...**

- 16 May 2015 RDS Ltd AGM at the Savoy Hotel, Queens Promenade, **Blackpool** FY2 9SJ from 10:45 to 17:00. Complimentary refreshments; lunch, if required, must be purchased in advance (£9.50). The main speaker will be Stephen McFarlane, Head of Community and Stakeholder Engagement for the HS2 project.
- 20 June 2015 Railfuture summer conference at **Newark** Town Hall NG24 1DU, from 10:45 to 17:00. Theme: *Enhancing capacity in the East Midlands*. The fee of only £30 includes refreshments and buffet lunch. There’s an impressive line-up of speakers from the rail industry and local authorities, as well as reports from rail campaigners. *Still open for bookings!*
- 7 Nov 2015 Railfuture autumn conference and RUG awards ceremony at Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel, Redcliff Hill, **Bristol** BS1 6SQ, from 10:45 to 17:00. Theme: *Rail Resurgence in the West of England*. The conference fee is £30, but there’s an early bird discount for members booking before 31 Aug 2015.

For further information and full list of speakers, see: [www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences)

## RAILFUTURE RAIL USER GROUP AWARDS – *entries now invited*

The 2015 User Group Awards competition is now open to receive your entries. The categories this year are:

- ✓ Best Newsletter – *not available to last year's winners*
- ✓ Best Website – *not available to last year's winners*
- ✓ Best Campaign
- ✓ Best New Group
- ✓ Best Campaigner – *Railfuture members only*
- ✓ Best Social Media Promotion – *a new category for 2015*
- ✓ Judges' Special Award

The closing date for entries is Tuesday 1 September 2015, a little earlier than last year to give our panel of judges time to visit participants on their travels. Awards will be presented at Railfuture's Autumn Conference in Bristol on Saturday 7 November 2015. Winners will receive a framed certificate and their next-year's subscription to Railfuture free.

Guidance notes on how to enter will be published on Railfuture's website shortly. In the meantime, take a look at the guidance for the 2014 competition [here](#) to get an idea of how simple it is to enter!

## RAILFUTURE SHOPPING

As well as books on the subject of rail development, there are several other items for sale via Railfuture's on-line shop. For example: there's a stylish ballpoint pen bearing the Railfuture name for only £2, with a special discount price if you buy more than one.

Available at £1 each are copies of recent Conference Reports – well worth reading! Take a look at what's on offer at [www.railfuture.org.uk/shop](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/shop)

## RAIL'S FORGOTTEN REGION – *a report from Nigel Bray, Secretary of Railfuture Severnside Branch*

In the next few months a new railway station is due to open at Newcourt on the outskirts of Exeter, the first station to open in the whole South West Region, excluding those on heritage railways, for nearly 18 years. In the meantime, many stations in other UK Regions have reopened, so it begs the question of why there has been so little progress to date in the West.

There has been progress in recent years with projects to increase track capacity. Redoubling between Kemble and Swindon was completed in August 2014, removing a bottleneck on Gloucestershire's main line to London. Work is imminent to restore four tracks on Filton Bank, a very congested rail artery through North Bristol. Quadrupling will allow segregation of faster and slower trains, essential for the expansion of Bristol's rail network under the Metro West scheme. Work to electrify the Great Western main lines from London to Bristol and Swansea is in progress, with the wires due to reach Bristol Parkway in 2016 and Temple Meads in 2017.

This process of catching up with other Regions in terms of rail capacity is a belated reaction by Central and local Government to the dramatic growth in usage of the West's rail network over the past 15-20 years. Figures from the Office of Rail Regulation show that recorded passenger journeys, based on ticket sales, for the 12 stations in Bristol grew from 4.1 million journeys in 1997/98 to 11 million in 2013/14. The four stations in Bath & North East Somerset registered an increase from 2.9 to 6.6 million over the same period. Annual journeys from stations in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire more than doubled in that timescale. One result of this growth has been overcrowding, particularly at peak times on Bristol suburban routes and on the Cardiff - Portsmouth service.

A route which sorely needs longer and more frequent trains is Cardiff - Portsmouth. It links seven cities including Bristol, Bath and Salisbury as well as major interchanges such as Westbury. Three-car trains were reinstated on the hourly service in 2008 but crowding still occurs. As well as longer trains for commuters, there is a need for some faster trains with First Class accommodation to attract business travellers.

One consequence of the national shortage of rolling stock has been the deployment of unsuitable trains on long regional routes. Bristol - Weymouth needs better and more frequent trains to meet needs such as commuting into Yeovil. Two-car trains have often been hopelessly inadequate for the number of people wanting to travel to Weymouth on a fine day. The good news is that on summer Saturdays First Great Western has provided an eight-coach High Speed Train between Bristol and Weymouth.

The causes of overcrowding can be traced to failure of Government bodies to recognise travel trends, the loss of train building capacity in Britain, the rolling stock leasing system, the scrapping of perfectly good locomotive hauled stock because train operators preferred multiple units and of course, growing road congestion. Let us hope that MPs of all parties, business and Council leaders across the South West will speak with one voice to ensure we do not remain the forgotten Region in terms of rail transport.

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

*There are no Government announcements in the run up to the General Election, but there are still a few items to fill the void...*

### **RUBBER SAFETY DEVICE COULD FILL VOID AT RAILWAY STATIONS**

The famous gap that rail passengers have been told to mind for decades could be in jeopardy after successful trials of a safety device to fill the gaps on London platforms. The rubber devices, appropriately known as gap-fillers, are fixed to the sides of platforms near the doors and have apparently eradicated accidents during a year-long trial.

Heathrow Express, which runs trains between the west London airport and Paddington station, said the rubber strips that had been tested in Terminal 5 would be installed across its network at a cost of £58,000, and could be rolled out nationwide on other lines. Accidents from passengers slipping between the train and the platform accounted for almost half of the fatality risk on modern trains, the firm said, while less serious incidents caused delays while passengers were being cut free or treated. There have been 65 such incidents on Heathrow Express in the past three years, but none in the past year when the bespoke gap-fillers were installed. Heathrow Express said it was working with the Rail Safety and Standards Board and other train operating companies in developing a national platform gap-filler strategy.

However, London Underground's dimensions could prove a challenge. "Mind the gap" announcements have long been a feature of the capital's travel network since the first Tannoy warnings in 1969, but the curved shape of many tube station platforms, as well as the variety of trains in operation, means similar devices might not necessarily work, leaving the Underground's gap unfilled. – *from a story in The Guardian*

## STEALTH FARE RISES

Train companies are said to be planning a string of “stealth” fare hikes of up to 87% just ten days after the general election. In response, David Cameron asked First Great Western (FGW) to “urgently review” its decision to almost double some fares on the route between London and the Cotswolds, which passes through his Witney constituency.

Other sharp ticket-price increases to be introduced on May 17 include an anytime return between Stafford and Liverpool, travelling on Virgin Trains, jumping from £26.50 to £33 (up 24.5%), and an anytime first-class day return on Virgin from Manchester to Stoke rising from £29 to £35.30 (up 22%). The cost of an off-peak first-class single from Crewe to Northampton on London Midland will leap from £30 to £37 (a 23% increase), according to an online calculator devised by [trainsplit.com](http://trainsplit.com), a website that provides passengers with cheaper ticket options.

Cameron has pledged to freeze rail fares in real terms for the whole of the next parliament, while Labour has also pledged to introduce a “cap” on fare rises. The pledges only relate to so-called regulated fares, however, such as season and commuter tickets for major cities.

Train firms have three opportunities a year — in January, May and September — to increase “unregulated” fares, which provide about half of rail fare revenue. “Passengers might very well be surprised at these fare increases when both the main parties have talked about price freezes,” said Mike Richardson, of [trainsplit.com](http://trainsplit.com). — *from an item in The Sunday Times spotted by Andy Long*

## COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS IN SCOTLAND

ACoRP’s two Development Officers have helped to create seven Scottish community rail partnerships in the short time they’ve had - no mean feat, bearing in mind they had started from absolutely nothing in 2013! Their hard work means that Abellio inherit some ready-made CRPs that they can now help develop and flourish, including:

- SAYLSA: *Ayr – Stranraer.*
- Borders Railway Community Partnership: *Edinburgh – Galashiels.*
- East Lothian CRP: *Edinburgh-Dunbar-North Berwick.*
- Glasgow to Anniesland (via Maryhill).
- Glasgow to Barrhead. May be expanded to include all the stations in the south of Glasgow (south of the Clyde) and into East Renfrewshire (e.g. Barrhead and Neilston).
- Highland Main Line CRP: *Dunkeld & Birnam to Carrbridge.*
- West Highland CRP: *Crianlarich to Mallaig.*

Work on establishing other CRPs also continued until the last minute:

- Far North Line CRP: *Inverness to Thurso*
- Kyle Line CRP: *Kyle of Lochalsh to Strathcarron*
- Lorn - Lomond CRP: *Helensburgh Upper to Oban*
- Strathallan CRP: *Gleneagles to Bridge of Allan*

Proposals for further CRPs were also investigated but the two officers unfortunately ran out of time!

- *From ACoRP’s Train on Line bulletin*

## **TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST CONFERENCE IN BLACKBURN**

The next conference of TravelWatch NorthWest will be held on Thursday 4th June 2015 in the Hornby Lecture Theatre, Blackburn Central Library, Town Hall Street, Blackburn BB2 1AG starting at 10.30 hrs (refreshments from 10.00 hrs). Blackburn Central Library is about 10-15 minutes' walk from Blackburn rail station.

The conference will begin with a keynote presentation by James Syson, Transport Strategy Team Leader, Blackburn with Darwen Council on BwD CONNECT. The conference will also be addressed by Beverley Bell, Senior Traffic Commissioner, and Pete Brunskill, Principal Rail Development Officer, Transport for Warrington who will give a presentation on the North of England Electrification Task Force. After lunch, there's a chance to tour the new bus station.

For conference details and registration form, please email [admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](mailto:admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk) – you need to register by 26 May.

## **TRANSPORT FOCUS CONFERENCE AND PUBLIC MEETING IN WALES**

A Transport Focus conference entitled “Putting passengers first: How will the Welsh National Transport Plan deliver?” will be held at Cardiff City Hall, between 2 and 5pm on Wednesday 13 May. Following this there will be a networking reception, between 5 and 6.30pm, where Superintendent Andy Morgan of the British Transport Police will talk about increasing public confidence in travelling.

Then on the morning of Thursday 14 May, TF's Board will be meeting in public at the Thistle Parc Hotel. Guests including First Great Western will be speaking about cross-border services between Wales and England. This is an opportunity to meet Board members and senior staff, and to learn more about the work of TF.

If you would like to attend either event or if you want to receive further details, please email: [michelle.calvert@transportfocus.org.uk](mailto:michelle.calvert@transportfocus.org.uk).

The consultation on Network Rail's draft Welsh Route Study closes on 9 June 2015.
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## **ABERYSTWYTH-CARMARTHEN LINE REOPENING GAINS MOMENTUM**

Ceredigion MP, Mark Williams, met recently with the Secretary of State for Wales, Stephen Crabb, and representatives of Traws Link Cymru to discuss their campaign to reopen the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen line. Mr Williams said that there is now a huge amount of interest and growing momentum for the campaign, so that it was very important to promote a dialogue with the UK Government. The representatives put a strong case to the Secretary, who seemed genuinely interested in the issue. – *from SARPA's newsletter*

## **EBBW VALE DUAL TRACK PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY**

Network Rail says it has begun working on the project to enable a more frequent service train on the Ebbw Vale line. The line reopened in February 2008 after being closed for more than 40 years. Since then passenger numbers have exceeded forecasts and now the Ebbw Vale frequency enhancement scheme will provide second platforms at Llanhilleth and Newbridge stations and double the track between Crosskeys Junction and Aberbeeg Junction.

Work to lay the extra track is expected to be finished this winter. Following this the new platforms at Llanhilleth and Newbridge will be built. The line will then be resignalled to allow for a more frequent service at an unspecified future date.

The Ebbw Vale frequency enhancement scheme is a £40m project, funded by the Welsh Government. In a separate scheme, also funded by Welsh Government, Network Rail is extending the existing track into Ebbw Vale and building a new station in the centre of an urban regeneration zone in the town. – *Transport Briefing*

## PORTISHEAD LINE CLEARED FOR METRO-WEST SURVEYS

A project to clear foliage from the Bristol-Portishead line, due to open as part of the Metro-West scheme, has been completed. Horticulture specialist Glendale says it has cleared 3.3 miles of the route - a commission worth £120,000 and involving 12 staff members working for five weeks. The clearance was necessary for a full topographical survey of the line to be carried out, enabling the next stage of engineering and design work to take place ahead of the line's scheduled reopening in 2019. An earlier phase of clearance work took place and allowed engineers to access structures for surveying. A third clearance phase is planned which will focus on some parts of the freight line in Pill. The Portishead to Bristol line has been closed to the public since 1964 but was used for private freight to the docks at Avonmouth until 1981. – *Transport Briefing*

## HAMPSHIRE NEWS

The East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership officer, Mark Miller, got in touch to say the CRP has now published its 2015 Line Guide covering **Liphook, Liss, Petersfield and Rowlands Castle**, which is packed full of useful information. Mark says he will be taking copies up to ACoRP's Community Rail in the City event at Waterloo on 20th May.

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May sees the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of a new station on the Eastleigh-Fareham line at **Hedge End**. There will be free tea and coffee for rail travellers between 09:30 and 11:30, and a commemorative plaque will be unveiled at 10:30.

## FREEDOM OF RAIL INFORMATION

Network Rail has recently become subject to the Freedom of Information Act due to its new status as an arms-length body of the Dept. for Transport. Anyone can now legally ask the firm for information related to its public services and should receive a reply within 20 working days.

– *from ACoRP's Train on Line bulletin*

## END IN SIGHT FOR BRIGHTON STATION'S 'DELI COUNTER' QUEUE SYSTEM

RAIL commuters are celebrating the end of having to “play bingo” to speak to rail ticketing staff after an unpopular queuing system was shelved. Passengers using Brighton Station are waving goodbye to a “deli counter” system which required them to get a ticket before entering the station's ticket office – for the time being at least. Commuters said they had to wait up to 55 minutes under the system before speaking with ticket office staff, missing their intended trains in the process.

Southern has said the system has been “temporarily suspended” while a review into its operation is carried out. – *from a story in the Brighton & Hove Argus*

## THE RETURN OF THE HUMAN FACE

Morrisons is set to install 1,000 manned checkouts after thousands of customers complained about self-service machines ... 96% of customers prefer staffed checkouts ... “we're listening hard to our customers.” – *from a story in The Independent*

***Hello train operators ... are you listening??!?***



## EVENTS

Events for 2015, lifted from newsletters and emails received in recent weeks, are listed below.  
Further events for the year are shown in the [Events listing on Railfuture's website](#)

Coloured blobs differentiate between types of events...

- National & regional rail events.
  - Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are welcome to attend).
  - Local Rail User Group events.
- 
- 5 May 2015. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at The Sportsman, Severn Street, **Newtown** from 18:45. <http://sarpa.info>
  - 7 May 2015. Thursday. **UK General and local elections.**
  - 7 May 2015. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/>
  - 9 May 2015. Saturday. AGM of the Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group in **Thetford** from 10:30. [www.penrug.org.uk](http://www.penrug.org.uk)
  - 9 May 2015. Saturday. Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association AGM at Stocksmoor Village Hall from 14:00. Guest speaker: Christian Wolmar. [hpsrua@btinternet.com](mailto:hpsrua@btinternet.com)
  - 9 May 2015. Saturday. Celebrations at Hedge End station to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the station between Eastleigh and Botley, 09:30 to 11:30. Enquiries to [alison.hull@hants.gov.uk](mailto:alison.hull@hants.gov.uk)
  - 11 May 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, **Bexhill** from 19:00. [www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk](http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk)
  - 11 May 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe** from 19:30. [www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk](http://www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk)
  - 12 May 2015. Tuesday. STORM's 28th AGM in The Newhey Lodge, Huddersfield Road, Newhey (opposite Newhey Metrolink stop) from 19:30. Speakers from Northern and Transport for Greater Manchester. <http://www.stormrail.info/>
  - 12 May 2015. Tuesday. Stourbridge Line Users' Group AGM at the SVR Station, **Kidderminster**, commencing at 19:30. <http://www.stourbridgelineusergroup.info/>
  - 13 May 2015. Wednesday. London and South East regional branch, Eastern division. **Stratford**. 18.30. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/>
  - 13 May 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, **Methil Docks** from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
  - 13 May 2015. Wednesday. Transport Focus conference entitled "Putting passengers first: How will the Welsh National Transport Plan deliver?" will be held at Cardiff City Hall, from 14:00, followed by a networking reception from 17:00 with BTP speaker. Details: [michelle.calvert@transportfocus.org.uk](mailto:michelle.calvert@transportfocus.org.uk).
  - 14 May 2015. Thursday. Transport Focus public meeting at the Thistle Parc Hotel, Cardiff, with guest speaker from First Great Western. Opportunity to meet the Board of TF. Details: [michelle.calvert@transportfocus.org.uk](mailto:michelle.calvert@transportfocus.org.uk)
  - 16 May 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of the Railway Development Society Ltd (Railfuture) in **Blackpool**. Details [here](#).
  - 16 May 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group at the WI Hall in **Moreton-in-Marsh** from 10:30. [www.clpg.org.uk](http://www.clpg.org.uk)
  - 16 May 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association in St Mary's Church Hall, **Woodbridge** from 14:00. Speaker from Abellio Greater Anglia. [www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk](http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk)
  - 16 May 2015. Saturday. Friends of the West Highland Lines AGM at the Regent Hotel, **Oban**, beginning at 12 noon. Speakers from Abellio and Serco. <http://www.westhighlandline.org.uk/>
  - 17 May 2015. Sunday. **National rail timetable change.**
  - 17 May 2015: Sunday. Friends of the Barton Line lunch at Wetherspoon's in the old theatre at Cleethorpes from 12:15. No need to book, just turn up. [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk)

- 19 May 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at **Chesham** Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
  - 20 May 2015. Wednesday. ACoRP's Community Rail in the City event with CRP representatives manning stalls at major city stations such as London Waterloo and Liverpool Lime Street. Details from [hazel@acorp.uk.com](mailto:hazel@acorp.uk.com)
  - 20 May 2015. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line meet at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes from 19:00. [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk)
  - 21 May 2015. Thursday. Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Assn. open AGM at the WI Hall, **Edenbridge**, 1900 for 1930.
  - 23 May 2015. Saturday. London & South East regional branch, Kent Division meeting in **Faversham**. 14.00. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/>
  - 26 May 2015. Tuesday. Felixstowe Travel Watch public meeting at the Salvation Army church, Cobbold Road, Felixstowe from 19:30 with guest speaker. An opportunity to pick up public transport timetables and leaflets.
  - 1 June 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe**, 19:30. [www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk](http://www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk)
  - 2 June 2015. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at the Railway Station, **Shrewsbury** from 17:45. <http://sarpa.info>
  - 2 June 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Station Adoption Seminar in **Manchester**. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
  - 4 June 2015. Thursday. TravelWatch NorthWest conference in the Hornby Lecture Theatre, Blackburn Central Library, Town Hall Street, Blackburn BB2 1AG from 10.30. Includes a presentation on the North of England Electrification Task Force. Refreshments from 10.00; buffet lunch provided; after lunch, there will be a tour round the emerging new bus station. Book by 26 May via [admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](mailto:admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk).
  - 4 June 2015. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+and+Coastway>
  - 4 June 2015. Thursday. Don Valley Railway drop-in meeting at the Harlequin Pub, **Sheffield** from 19:00. <http://donvalleyrailway.org/>
  - 8 June 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, **Bexhill** from 19:00. [www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk](http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk)
  - 10 June 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, **Methil Docks** from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
  - 19 June 2015. Friday. Closing date for entries in ACoRP's Community Rail Awards competition. Details from [hazel@acorp.uk.com](mailto:hazel@acorp.uk.com)
  - 19 June 2015. Friday. Friends of the Far North Line AGM in **Inverness** from 11:00 with guest speaker from Abellio. <http://www.fofnl.org.uk/>
- 20 June 2015. Saturday. Railfuture's Summer Conference in the Town Hall, **Newark**, from 10:45 with speakers representing train operators and local authorities in the area. Details [here](#).
- 23 June 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at **Chesham** Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
  - 27 June 2015. Saturday. Railfuture East Anglia Branch Meeting at St Mary at Stoke Church Hall, Stoke Street, **Ipswich** IP2 8BX from 14.00.
  - 6 July 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe**, 19:30. [www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk](http://www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk)
  - 8 July 2015. Wednesday. London and South East regional branch, Eastern division meeting. 18.30. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Eastern>
  - 11 July 2015. Saturday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at Wharf Station, **Tywyn**, Talyllyn Railway from 11:45. <http://sarpa.info>
  - 11 July 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of Bus Users UK Ltd will take place in **Cardiff** at the Pierhead Building. <http://bususers.org/>
  - 13 July 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, **Bexhill** from 19:00. [www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk](http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk)
  - 15 July 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, **Methil Docks** from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>

- 15 July 2015. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line AGM at the Sloop Inn, Barton-on-Humber from 20:00 (food and ale from 18:00). [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk)
  - 16 July 2015. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+and+Coastway>
  - 20 July 2015. Monday. Harrow Public Transport Users Association rail meeting at Harrow Baptist Church Hall, College Road, Harrow from 19:30.
  - 25 July 2015. Saturday. London and South East regional branch, Herts & Beds division meeting. 10.45. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Herts+and+Beds>
  - 3 August 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe** from 19:30. [www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk](http://www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk)
  - 4 August 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at **Chesham** Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
  - 4 August 2015. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at The White Lion, **Machynlleth** from 18:55. <http://sarpa.info>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1 September 2015. Tuesday. Closing date for Railfuture's Rail User Group Awards competition.</li> </ul> |
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- 1 September 2015. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at The Royal Oak, **Welshpool** from 19:20. <http://sarpa.info>
  - 16 September 2015. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line meet at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes from 19:00. [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk)
  - 1 October 2015. Thursday. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2015 competition gala dinner and awards ceremony at the Riviera International Centre, **Torquay**. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
  - 10 October 2015. Saturday. East Suffolk Travellers' Association autumn meeting, in the parish church hall, **Aldeburgh** from 14:00. [www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk](http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk)
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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 7 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture's Rail User Conference at The Mercure Hotel, <b>Bristol</b>, just a short walk from Temple Mills station. Details <a href="#">here</a>.</li> </ul> |
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- 10 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar North in **Manchester**. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
  - 17 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar South at the Dept. for Transport offices, Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, **London** SW1P 4DR. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
  - 13 January 2016. Wednesday. Harrow Public Transport Users Association rail meeting at Harrow Baptist Church Hall, College Road, Harrow from 14:00

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...*

Tony Smale, Railfuture Rail User Group Liaison Officer  
 e-mail: [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk) phone: 01929 462116

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