



August 2019

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

RUX is published around the middle of each month. It may be forwarded, or items reproduced in another newsletter (quoting sources). Anyone may request RUX as an email attachment, or opt to be notified when it is posted on the [Railfuture \(Rf\) website](#). There is no charge for either service. Following GDPR, [Railfuture Membership](#) now maintains both lists. Please advise if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter or link, or if you know of anyone who would like to be added. For further details of any of the stories mentioned, please consult the relevant website, or ask [the editor](#) for the source material.

On 27 July, Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised a faster rail route between Leeds and Manchester; details will be published in the autumn following the review into HS2. However, it is unclear whether this would be a high-speed line (HS3) or a higher speed line (Northern Crossrail). But rather than embarking on a new project from scratch, he might be better advised to go for quick(er) wins such as full electrification of the existing trans-Pennine routes, Midland Main Line (MML) and Oxenholme to Windermere; reopening the 12mls of line between Skipton and Colne; and upgrading Manchester Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations.

Roger Smith

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

Friends of the Far North Line

At Brodie Engineering's works in Kilmarnock, five Class 153 single-coach units are being stripped out to provide 20 bike spaces as well as a seating area and space for other larger items such as skis. Some very inventive design work ensures that every bike is easily accessible at stations en route, and yet is securely held in place. These carriages will be attached to some existing services to boost cycle-related travel on the West Highland, Kyle and Far North Lines - the FNL "end-to-enders" will be delighted!

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

During his visit to Levenmouth on 8 August, Michael Matheson, the Scottish Transport Secretary, gave the green light for reopening the rail line to Levenmouth to passenger services, at an estimated cost of £75m. Rf [congratulates](#) the LMRC for its dogged but ultimately successful 10-year campaign. The project will now go forward to the detailed design phase with initial estimates of construction and preparation costs of around £70 million. Mr Matheson also committed an additional £5 million to a Levenmouth Blueprint fund, available to partners to maximise the benefits of the Scottish Government investment in the area.

Furness Line Action Group

On 1 July at Barrow station, following speeches by Northern Regional Director Chris Jackson, CRP Chairman Tim Owen and John Woodcock MP, the brand new 3-car diesel unit 195.116, Proud To Be Northern, was waved off. FLAG is proud to be Cumbrian too, and to be first to sample the new trains. Barrow now enjoys 11 through trains a day to/from Manchester Airport, and 7 or 8 trains on Sundays, depending on the date.

FLAG has helped restore a full timetable of through trains from the outset of the campaign. It was the catalyst for Cumbria Better Connected (CBC), flagging impending cuts at a Cumbrian Railways Association meeting in November 2011, and briefing John Woodcock MP. In August 2014, CBC, FLAG and the Copeland RUG, each responded to DfT's franchise consultation document. Their joint effort was rewarded, not only with extra Manchester through services, but also Sunday trains north of Barrow. The Northern franchise from April 2016 committed Arriva to 8 through Manchester trains from December 2017 - now there are 11! Great teamwork from all - including Northern!

Lakes Line Rail User Group

On 8 May, Robert Talbot and Dick Smith, with Tim Farron MP and representatives of the Railway Industry Association (RIA) discussed RIA's Electrification Cost Challenge report and its implications for the Lakes Line. RIA claims that a realistic cost of a basic electrification scheme is £1million per single-track km, so the 16km, 10mile Lakes line could be electrified for £16million - the very sum the government set aside in 2010-15, but which NR subsequently raised to £40+ million, making electrification of the line unaffordable.

The LLRUG, CRP and local businesses objected again to the disruption to Lakes Line and/or West Coast Main Line (WCML) services to Oxenholme over the three bank holidays this year; the LLRUG Chairman asked Northern, Trans Pennine Express, Virgin Trains and NR to make an effort to avoid this. However, from 20 July to 4 August, there was a total blockade of the WCML at Acton Grange, between Crewe and Warrington Bank Quay.

On 1 July at Oxenholme, LLRUG greeted the first Class 195 train onto the Lakes Line. Following a delay at Milnthorpe, it arrived about a minute late, but even that showed one of its advantages: it had made up two minutes between Milnthorpe and Oxenholme, with power in hand. The 205 seats on the three-car Class 195 units will be a great relief after the 150 or so available on a Class 158. First impressions were positive. Even at the end of a coach, the ride was good, and it was very quiet inside. The gangway down the middle seems wider than on the Class 158. Northern doesn't yet pronounce 'Burneside' correctly, but otherwise the announcements were fine, and the info screens even show you which side the platform will be at the next stop. On these first runs nobody seemed to use the luggage space under the seats or the (deeper than usual) overhead racks; passengers were leaving their cases in front of the tip-up seats in the vestibules. Northern tell us the conductor will encourage passengers to use these spaces, so hopefully regular passengers will soon get the message.

Single day Ranger and multi-day Rover tickets offer very good value, but are poorly marketed. The Lakes Day Ranger (standard price £24.50 for an adult) also includes travel on Stagecoach buses in Cumbria, and a single trip on Lake Windermere with Windermere Lake Cruises. But although valid on all operators' trains, they are marketed only by Northern. They are available via its [website](#), but not advertised at stations nor available from a ticket vending machine, so it's little wonder that only knowledgeable travellers use them.

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Harrogate Council's draft Local Plan chose Green Hammerton for major development over Flaxby Park. But although Goldsborough station would reopen as Flaxby Parkway park and ride, the Plan's Sustainability Appraisal took no account of Flaxby's potential for rail services. When independent government inspector Richard Schofield requested more work on this, the Council awarded Flaxby Park the maximum score for rail provision, and NR said that it would work to confirm the deliverability of the new station. The updated Sustainability Appraisal and Local Plan are eagerly awaited.

Northern Weekly Salvo – Paul Salveson

From 7-21 September, the Platform Gallery at Bolton Station will celebrate the artwork of railway men and women. The organisers are calling for railway workers to submit their work for possible inclusion: contact Paul Salveson on 07795 008691 or email paul.salveson@myphone.coop for further information. During the period of the exhibition, the station partnership will be running a series of talks, poetry readings and musical events celebrating railway culture. Paul (former Bolton signaller and railway guard) will give a talk on two talented but neglected railway worker-poets: signaller Walter Sinkinson and guard Joe Smythe.

The branch line from King's Lynn to [Hunstanton](#) closed in 1969, but much of the track bed still exists. The seaside town is increasingly popular throughout the year, but road traffic is becoming worse and worse; the economic, environmental and social benefits of bringing back rail are compelling. Great Eastern built Wolferton station, which served the nearby Sandringham estate, as a grand statement with no expense spared. It isn't huge, but is superbly designed, and visitors are encouraged to wander round.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

At STORM's July meeting, Northern's Regional Director Chris Jackson, supported by acting Community Liaison, Rebecca Styles, explained what a huge undertaking it was, with more staff, more stations, more depots and more trains than any other train operator (*not if you combine the four Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) brands! – Ed*). Northern has 436 trains in a fleet of 14 different types, of which 243 will have been refurbished by January 2020. Seventy per cent of the new fleet will be in operation from December 2019, whilst the first of the Class 142 Pacers is being retired this month.

In the question and answer session, Northern agreed to examine STORM's proposal that, rather than cancel the Rochdale leg of a late running Blackburn service at Manchester Victoria, it should run fast to Rochdale to maintain the return stopping service. Northern is also considering new ducting to improve the air quality at Victoria, and at replacing its three existing lifts.

Friends of Castleton Station suggest forming a Rochdale Canal Line CRP, embracing all stations from Mills Hill to Littleborough, as funding to benefit stations is better for a CRP than for individual Station Friends. A CRP needs local authority support, but all these stations are within Rochdale Borough Council. Once up and running, it could expand to follow the canal at least to Sowerby Bridge.

STORM and Rochdale Councillors want TfGM to acquire the former goods yard at Smithy Bridge for a park and ride facility. Access isn't straightforward but not impossible, and it could be the last chance in the area. Yorkshire PTE has provided large P&R facilities on old goods yard sites at Todmorden, Hebden Bridge and Sowerby Bridge, so it's a shame that the provision in the Manchester area falls so short.

NR's Variable Track Access Charge (VTAC) on train operators varies by type of vehicle and distance run, based on the stress imposed on the infrastructure by the passage of the vehicle. One of the highest charges is the 15.27p per vehicle mile levied on Northern's Class 769 hybrid units (converted from ex-Thameslink Class 319 EMUs). This compares with 5.62p/mile for a Pacer and 5.71p/mile for a Class 150.

Arriva Rail North has advised STORM that its Sunday working bridging agreement that would have aligned terms and conditions and brought Sundays inside the working week, lapsed on 14 July following the result of the New Deal for Drivers (NDFD) referendum. As a result, some Sunday services may be cancelled at relatively short notice. Northern is working through a plan for each week over the summer to understand the impact, and to mitigate any disruption. It will focus on key routes: major cities, the Lake District and coastal holiday resorts.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group

On the Liverpool-Norwich Class 158 express units, the control panel for the information screens of the public address system was fitted where the cab handset and microphone were, so these had to be moved. However, conductors experienced squealing in the earpiece when making announcements, and so turned down the volume - but they were then too quiet for passengers to hear. Replacement components have been ordered and should be fitted soon. There have also been some total failures of the public address system, mainly at Norwich, causing the train to be taken out of service. Most happen when the fuse blows. Replacement takes some time, and has to be done in depot, at least until the warranty period expires. New components to filter the electrical supply are being designed. The system has the potential for automated announcements, which could be activated later.

When Norwich loses its hourly express trains from Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield by December 2021, it will also lose the Class 158 express units. The replacement Matlock to Norwich service could use Class 172 Turbostars from the West Midlands. If so, PENRUG hopes that the toilets are more dependable than when those units were last in its area. Also, a two-car Turbostar has around 30 fewer seats than the present units, and some trains run full throughout the week. Finally, the Stansted Airport to Norwich service to be introduced for 2020 will require passengers to change trains during the business peaks: yet another example of the Franchising Director specifying services that cannot be delivered.

English Regional Transport Association

At its Horsham meeting on 7 September (see Events), ERTA will seek to initiate a Guildford-Horsham-Shoreham Rail Re-opening Group.

Elsewhere, a report for Milton Keynes Council has called for reopening the Leighton Linlade-Dunstable-Luton, Bedford-Olney-Northampton and Wolverton-Newport Pagnell-Olney lines, whilst ERTA would add Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton. Early days yet, and much upheaval and cost would be entailed, but the common strand is that, in response to climate change, calls for re-openings across the country are bubbling up, and projects to address them seem inevitable.

Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group

The introduction of Class 710/2s to the Goblin line drags on. Currently, six are diagrammed for daily service, with the three 4-car Class 378s on stand-by to cover the Barking–Gospel Oak, Euston–Watford Junction and North London Lines; they are not planned to revert to 5-car formations until later in the year. BGORUG wants an urgent meeting with TfL to discuss the ongoing planned service alterations and cancellations, and how the passenger compensation deal it has struck with Bombardier will apply to passengers.

Bedford Commuters Association

Effective 1 July, GTR streamlined its senior management to simplify accountability and push responsibility and accountability as far down the line as possible. Tom Moran, MD of Thameslink (TL) and Great Northern (GN), and Angie Doll, MD, Southern and Gatwick Express, will form a five person executive team with CEO Patrick Verwer, COO Steve White and CFO Ian McLaren.

For up to nine weeks from 21 October, Bedford station will lose up to half the spaces in its main car park, and this number will further reduce to around a fifth for around six weeks. NR needs the area to demolish and rebuild nearby Bromham Road Bridge as part of its programme to electrify and upgrade the MML north of Bedford. Car park season ticket holders will be able to use their permits at any TL North and GN station, and tickets will be valid for travel into London.

In April the DfT announced the 73 stations that would receive funding under its Access for All scheme. Unfortunately, Flitwick was not selected, even though it was the top priority station on TL North. Instead, Cricklewood, Mill Hill Broadway and Biggleswade were successful.

In April, the DfT announced that Abellio had won the new East Midland franchise, and the contract was signed a few weeks later despite Stagecoach and Arriva taking legal action. BCA is seeking a meeting with Abellio to discuss the details of the franchise including the new timetable, electrification, new rolling stock and other issues that will affect Bedford rail users.

Association of Public Transport Users (Thameslink North)

GTR is again consulting on the calling pattern of the fast TL services that were introduced when East Midlands Trains opted to omit Luton and Bedford in the peak: dropping the Harpenden and Flitwick stops speeded up semi-fast Bedford services, and also allowed the fast lines to be used between Harpenden and Bedford. However, these services will cease from December 2020 when the electrified Corby service starts, although the latter is dependent on Greater Anglia being able to introduce its new trains, thus releasing its Class 360s for refurbishment, on which TL drivers will then need to be trained.

GTR plans to rollout Oyster and Contactless Payment options to Radlett “this summer”, and Contactless to St Albans, Harpenden & Luton Airport Parkway “by end of 2019” (it is already available on the Airport bus). The Contactless functionality will come by extending existing TfL services, so the functionality might include weekly capping, but is unlikely to support railcards, carnets or season tickets. For regular travellers, GTR’s Key Smartcard may still prove a better option.

KeyGo (the Pay as You Go Feature) will support Railcards sooner rather than later. New ticket office software will need to be rolled out and staff trained. APTU believes that you will need to present your Key Smartcard and your railcard at a GTR ticket office for staff to update the KeyGo database. The rumour is that Carnets are also coming to Key. It is unclear if this will extend to stations that don’t presently have Carnets, but APTU will lobby for this to happen (and seek official confirmation and timings etc).

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

At its penultimate Spring meeting, Honorary President Professor John Whitelegg said that current transport problems, particularly in Hereford, needed a new and fresh approach based on a very much improved public transport and cycle plan involving an integrated tram, bus and cycleway network. Examples from the continent showed what can be achieved given the political will to act on vehicle emissions, improving air quality, the environment, and the need to reinvigorate our decaying cities.

In the final talk, an enthusiastic Fay Easton, Head of Stakeholder & Community at West Midlands Railway, spoke about the prospects of community engagement with Ledbury and Colwall, and the setting up of a CRP. WMR already sponsors the Ledbury Poetry Festival, and has funded a new eye catching sign at Ledbury Station and a poet's chair. Unfortunately, as our Chairman pointed out in a letter to WMR, its train service does not live up to the same enthusiasm, and is currently suffering a deterioration in rolling stock quality, overcrowding and poor reliability. RBfH hopes that its statement about new trains in 2020 will prove a reality, or its drive to engage with the community will be fruitless.

A key achievement of Transport for Wales in its first year is the launch of its Community Rail Vision. It will expand its current five CRPs to cover the whole Wales and the Borders network, with a view to establishing a Crewe-Hereford CRP by 2020/21. Station adoption is also set for a boost, with an ambitious target of having adopters at 90% of all stations on the Wales and Borders network. To celebrate the fantastic work of its volunteers, Tfw will appoint Community Rail Ambassadors to help grow the scheme and make stations the best they can possibly be. It is set to spend almost £200 million on its 247 stations across Wales and England, improving all aspects of customer experience from passenger information to waiting rooms and, where possible, the creation of dedicated community spaces.

Cotswold Line Promotion Group

CLPG and GWR have opened a new waiting room at Moreton-in-Marsh station in honour of Oliver Lovell and John Stanley, two CLPG founder members. CLPG President Lord Faulkner said: "In the late 1970s plans were drawn up to close the line between Moreton and Evesham. It was to fight that and save the line that the CLPG came into being, and John and Oliver were at the heart of that campaign."

Dartmoor Line Supporters Association

The summer Sunday Exeter-Okehampton service is loading well; judging by the amount of luggage, many are long distance travellers. GWR aims to reinstate the regular daily service withdrawn in 1972 'as soon as practicable'. Okehampton would then serve as a railhead for the 'Railway Desert' of West Devon and North Cornwall, with a potential catchment greater than that of the hugely successful Borders Railway in Scotland, and halving the distance to Bude's current railhead at Exeter. And Cross Country's Community Fund has reinstated Plymouth Citybus 279 between Gunnislake and Okehampton stations via Tavistock and Lydford, offering several options for day trips, including a circular tour around the edge of Dartmoor by train and bus.

Okehampton station, owned by Devon County Council, is arguably a 'Gem' of a former Southern main line station - the largest west of Exeter. It is almost entirely maintained by a dedicated and hard working group of volunteers, members of the Dartmoor Line Supporters Association, which also owns and maintains the two coaches and brake van currently in use on the lightly used 'Heritage' shuttle weekend trains between Okehampton and Meldon Viaduct Stn.

Rf welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Rf and its Campaigns by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture consultation responses](#).

ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE: "EVERY PASSENGER MATTERS"

Inclusion and Accessibility for passengers using the rail network

SATURDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 2019

Registration from 9.30am, Starts 10.00am to 4.30pm

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH CENTRE, STOKE GIFFORD, BRISTOL BS34 8PD

The venue is kindly sponsored by CrossCountry Trains

Railfuture is excited that its inaugural Annual National Conference will concentrate on inclusion and accessibility for passengers using the rail network. This is at a time when the Guardian Newspaper reported on 9 July that the DfT has published research on the experience of disabled rail passengers that found they still encounter barriers to using trains.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS

Matthew Golton, Deputy Managing Director, Great Western Railway

Richard Gibson, Head of Communications, CrossCountry Trains

Lorna Brown-Owens, Access and Inclusion Manager, Network Rail

Jon Harris, Integrated Transport and Accessibility Manager, West Midlands Trains

A representative from the British Transport Police

Guest Chair - Stephen Brookes MBE, BA (Hons), Rail Sector Champion for the Minister for Disabled People

There will also be an optional interactive afternoon workshop session for delegates on the theme of inclusion and accessibility. We want to hear what barriers you experience in using the rail network, and what improvements you would like to see to ensure that every passenger really does matter.

Cost is only £25 including a buffet lunch and refreshments throughout the day.

To book visit Railfuture's website www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/railusers

For special dietary requirements or enquiries please email annualconference2019@railfuture.org.uk



What! No RUG Awards this year?? Correct. Rf's review of its programme of national events included the Awards timetable. Unfortunately it was not possible to incorporate them this year, but in 2020, they may be presented at the AGM. Look out for updates in [Railwatch](#) and [Rail User Express](#).

The [National and Regional lists of RUGs](#) have recently been updated, together with the list of Reopening Campaign Groups on the same page. Please take a moment to check the details of any campaigning organisations that you know about, and report any errors to tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk. Thanks!

PASSENGER GROUP

Work behind scenes by the Passenger Group has paid off. Following strong reaction to news of the UK decision to leave the Interrail/Eurail scheme that allow people to travel around Europe on a single train ticket, the Rail Delivery Group, which represents UK train operators, has backed down.

Chiltern Railways was pressed on the subject of increasing its fleet size to cater for increased numbers, particularly on London services to Oxford and the West Midlands. CR said that its bid for Class 170s coming off lease elsewhere had been unsuccessful, as other TOCs were able to commit to longer leasing periods, so it was working with DfT to try and obtain additional rolling stock. Its current 20-year franchise finishes at the end of 2021 (with the option of a 5-year extension), but no discussions on renewing or extending it were underway pending publication of the 'Williams Report' in the autumn.

In May, CR reinstated direct services to Stratford on Avon throughout the day by extending every other Banbury service, giving a two-hourly frequency from London Marylebone. Although it takes a little longer, it avoids the need to change trains (using footbridges/lifts) at Leamington or Dorridge.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

Make Delay Pay is TF's campaign to encourage passengers to claim the compensation they are entitled to, and which provides an incentive to train operators to improve reliability. TF is discussing good practice with every train company, and reviewing their websites and claim forms: it challenges them to simplify the claiming process.

South Western Railway (SWR) passengers have suffered sub-standard performance for two years or more. Between Spring 2018 and Spring 2019, the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) showed a 2% decline in overall passenger satisfaction although the figures for punctuality and reliability increased 4% in the same period. Accordingly, NR and SWR have adopted a more collaborative working relationship, with a Joint Performance Improvement Centre at Waterloo station, where senior operational managers from each organisation meet every week to scrutinise performance. Initiatives have included:

- Improving the reliability of the infrastructure (including track and signalling) by deploying more staff to conduct inspections for defects
- Introducing paramedic teams at Clapham Junction and Wimbledon stations
- Recruiting additional British Transport Police to address trespass and fatalities
- Introducing locally based staff to manage train crew during disruption, and a simplified train dispatch plan to reduce the wider impact of unplanned disruption across the network.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

CRPs are now 'accredited' rather than community rail lines being 'designated'. Rf London & SE branch has two of the first five such CRPs in the country, and DfT uses some interesting phrases in its letter of approval that could equally apply to Rf. "Accreditation should provide assurance to others, including potential funders and partners, that the CRP:

- Operates to high standards of governance and financial propriety
- Adopts a collaborative approach
- Is worthy of trust by others
- Is a good representative of the local community".

There are also phrases about "objectives are supported by Government" and "a suitable entity for receiving public funds". Could these too be lessons for Rf? Occasionally it's useful to refresh cardinal principles, especially when they can be played back in terms that others know and understand.

After more than ten years of campaigning, the Cooksbridge Area Rail Action Group is delighted to report that Southern is significantly increasing the number of its stopping trains. From next December, there will be an hourly Monday to Saturday service in each direction, with a greater frequency at peak times. At present there is a long service interval in the middle of the day, and no trains at weekends. There will still be no Sunday service, but the Action Group is working with GTR towards introducing one next year, although this is still subject to confirmation.

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

Boris Johnson has appointed the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP as Secretary of State for Transport, and Chris Heaton-Harris MP as the rail minister. Paul Maynard MP has specific responsibility for Northern Powerhouse Rail, HS2, Crossrail, East West Rail, and the TransPennine route upgrade.

The £14.8bn allocated to London's Crossrail project in 2010 has swollen to £17.6bn, but the Public Accounts Committee reports that it may go even further over budget: it is "sceptical" of DfT's ability to oversee major rail projects. Services should have started running throughout the line last December, but may not now begin until March 2021. In response, the DfT claimed it had acted "swiftly and effectively" when problems at Crossrail became clear.

According to the Financial Times and the BBC, HS2 Chairman Allan Cook too has advised the DfT that HS2 cannot be delivered within its £56bn budget. The DfT responded: "The Chairman of HS2 Ltd is conducting detailed work into of the costs and schedule of the project to ensure it delivers benefits to passengers... and represents value for money for the taxpayer. We expect Allan Cook to provide his final assessment in due course."

At its annual conference on 16 July, England's Economic Heartland (EEH), Sub-national Transport Body designate for the Oxford to Cambridge arc, launched a wide-ranging debate on the future of transport in the area as it unveiled its [Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement](#) (See Consultations). EEH supports the East West Rail Consortium, which provides leadership on behalf of the local partners in respect of the project. Its meeting on 11 June identified two issues of concern:

- HS2 is scheduled to deliver the 'Calvert Box'. Any delay in its delivery could delay that of the 'Aylesbury spur', an integral component of the Western Section.
- Capacity of the bay platforms at Oxford Station seems to be an issue in developing the timetable for the Western Section. The line between Oxford and Didcot Parkway is heavily utilised, so the Consortium suggests that EWR take the paths on this section currently assigned to local services.

The DfT has cancelled the competition to operate rail services between London, Kent and parts of East Sussex; Southeastern has been granted a five-month extension to April 2020. A spokesman said: "This follows significant concerns that continuing the process would lead to additional costs incurred to the taxpayer, with no certainty that this would deliver envisaged benefits for passengers in a timely fashion." It will also ensure that the recommendations of the Williams review can be taken into account.

In a set of [proposals](#) to the Williams Review, ORR urges radical reform of accessibility and compensation. Train operators should cut the notice required for booking assistance from the current maximum of 24 hrs to 10pm the day before travel by April 2020, and just two hours prior to travel by April 2022. They must also improve the reliability of the assistance passengers receive, whether or not they book in advance.

Compensation reform could require train operators to: inform passengers of their rights both while they are on a delayed train, and when they alight; process claims within 20 working days, and publish data on how well they are meeting these standards, and accept claims from Intermediaries who meet a new code of conduct. Operators should automate their claims process as much as possible, and harmonise their respective delay repay schemes.

ORR notes that the worst performing train operators in 2018-19 all used infrastructure on the East Coast Main Line. Its analysis indicates that no single party caused the large rise in delay: most was due to delays that train operators caused to each other, rather than those caused by NR. ORR wants to better understand the interface with train operators, and where NR is reliant on them to deliver. To support its approach to holding NR to account in CP6, it has appointed senior regulation managers aligned with NR's new devolved structure.

The ORR has fined GTR £1m after a man died leaning out of a Class 442 train window on a Gatwick Express service in August 2016. GTR admitted a health and safety breach because a warning sign not to lean out was not displayed clearly enough. The Class 442 trains were withdrawn from service in 2017, but are now back in service following refurbishment. However, ORR said that some trains with droplight windows were still running on the network, and it has instructed operators to take immediate action to prevent a similar tragedy happening again.

Tim Weller, a candidate for W Midlands Metro Mayor 2020, is lobbying to protect the Black Country line that could form a part of new route between Worcester and Derby. It is threatened by a proposal to use just 4mils of it for a tramline costing £449m, when 35mils of heavy rail could be reinstated for under £200m. DfT passed his email to NR, who said that this section of railway was of “national strategic significance”: “Investment in the corridor would allow for continued freight growth, given that the other SW-NE route via Bromsgrove is already at full daytime capacity. The Round Oak-Bescot route...is the only corridor that could take freight traffic displaced by further passenger flows into central Birmingham”.

But see also the Rf article [Rails back to Brierley Hill](#). Section 7 of the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) Rail Investment Strategy Integrated Freight Strategy has the Stourbridge-Wednesbury-Walsall corridor carrying both freight and passengers. A Modern Railways article on the tram-train trials between Sheffield and Rotherham showed that heavy rail, tram-train and light rail can co-exist, providing the infrastructure is compatible. The RF West Midlands branch believes that the tram extension, including the rebuild of Dudley Port station, would provide in a more timely way the clean urban public transport connections throughout the Black Country that it presently lacks. Better connections would also become available to and from Birmingham and Wolverhampton (and hence beyond). It understands from WMRE that the existing heavy rail formation is to be retained for heavy rail trains, principally freight, although this may necessitate some sections of single track working by both tram-trains and heavy trains.

The Warrington Guardian reports that the cost of Warrington West park and ride station in Chapelford, between Warrington Central and Sankey, has increased by £1.5 million to £20.5 million. Its construction is nearly complete, but then a series of safety inspections and tests – the ‘entry into service’ process – has to be undertaken. The station was due to open this summer, but NR now aims to open it when timetables change in December, subject to discussion with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the train operating companies Arriva Northern and East Midlands Trains.

Bristol and Swansea are each about 45 miles from Cardiff, so the BBC wonders why it costs £3,156/year to travel east, but only £1,796 to go west. Even a first class ticket to Swansea (£2,692) is cheaper than a standard to Bristol! Stuart Cole CBE, Emeritus Professor of Transport at the University of South Wales, said devolution of rail travel allowed the Welsh Government to influence fares by having both TfW and GWR run services between Swansea and Cardiff, whereas the UK government had turned down requests for TfW to run services to Bristol. However, [Grand Union Trains](#) will become a second operator on the London-Bristol Parkway-Cardiff line from 2021.

The Conwy Valley Line between Llandudno Junction and Blaenau Ffestiniog, which closed on 16 March due to significant flooding, reopened for passengers ahead of the National Eisteddfod in Llanrwst from 3-10 August. However, Dolgarrog station remains closed while the platform is replaced. NR has also increased the line speed through Maenan, between Dolgarrog and Llanrwst North, from 30mph to 45mph.

Students attending the University of Worcester’s open day in September can register for a voucher offering a free ticket for use on West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services. The offer echoes a similar scheme providing free travel for those going to job interviews, or to training courses for job seekers.

The 44th edition of Barry Doe’s [Rail Franchise Map](#) shows changes to East Midlands Railway routes, and identifies Seamer and Bletchley as junctions, rather than Scarborough and Milton Keynes. Some routes are amended – no West Midlands Trains from Worcester to Gloucester, nor Northern from Scunthorpe to Barnetby – whilst Chippenham, Craven Arms, Kilmarnock, Lewes and Whitland, where routes divide, have been added for clarity.

...and finally

A commuter received £27,602 from NR after "possibly slipping" on pigeon poo at Paddington station! Data obtained by the [BBC](#) has revealed NR has paid out nearly £1m in five years for slips, trips and falls at its stations across the UK. Over half of the payouts were made following accidents at Euston, Paddington, Victoria and Liverpool Street stations.

Azuma services from London to York, Newcastle and Edinburgh finally began on 1 August. To launch the new service, on 30 July LNER arranged photo shoots for Azuma with Mallard at York, and with Flying Scotsman at Darlington.

CONSULTATIONS

- England's Economic Heartland: [Outline Transport Strategy](#), closes 31 October.

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

EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains a [List of Events](#) and a [List of Key Dates](#) for consultations, franchise changes, CP6 planning, service alterations for major rail projects etc. As a Calendar of Events embedded in a document may be discarded, and that is a problem if the venue changes from month to month, a stand-alone copy in Word format would be very helpful.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

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

August

- Saturday 17. English Regional Transport Association, Prince Regent, 91 Regent Street, **Cambridge**, CB2 1AW, 1400.
- Tuesday 27. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth Academy Community Use, Methilhaven Rd, Buckhaven, **Leven** KY8 1EA, 1830. **NB. Change of day and venue.**

September

- Thursday 5. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway Division, **Brighton**, (also 3 October).
- Saturday 7. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association, Railway Hotel, **Borth**, 1215. (also 5 October, 12 November, 7 December - various locations and times).
- Saturday 7. English Regional Transport Association, Unitarian Church, Worthing Road, **Horsham**, RH12 1SL, 1400.
- Monday 9. Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, Crown Hotel, Albert Road, **Colne**, 1900.
- Wednesday 11. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London**, E15 1NG, 1830 (and every second Wednesday of alternate months.)
- Saturday 14. Rf London & South East, Herts and Beds Division, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1100.
- Tuesday 17. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (Also 22 October, 10 December).
- Wednesday 18. Friends of the Barton Line, No 1, Cleethorpes station, 1900 (Also 20 November in Barton).
- Friday 20. Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group, Town Hall, **Bentham**, 1900.
- Saturday 21. Rf Annual National Conference, St. Michael's Church Centre, The Green, **Stoke Gifford**, (by Bristol Parkway station), BS34 8PD, 1000.
- Saturday 21. English Regional Transport Association, The Bell, 40 Market Square, **Aylesbury**, HP20 1TX, 1400
- Saturday 28. Rf East Anglia open meeting, **Norwich**, 1400 (Also 7 December in Cambridge).

Further Ahead

- 5 October. East Suffolk Travellers Association, Parcels Office, **Lowestoft** Station, 1400.
- 5 October. English Regional Transport Association, The Rodboro, 1-10 Bridge Street, **Guildford**, GU1 4RY, 1400.
- 15 October. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, **Felixstowe**, 1430.
- 21 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Globe Hotel. **Topsham**, 1930.

Disclaimer: unless otherwise indicated, views expressed in Rail User Express are those of the contributing organization, and not necessarily shared by Railfuture.

Contact Roger Smith by e-mail: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk, or phone: 01462 815992.

<https://twitter.com/Railfuture> <https://www.facebook.com/Railfuture/>
<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/railfuture-in-great-britain/30/22a/b59>

Railfuture Ltd is a (not for profit) Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 05011634.

Registered Office: Edinburgh House, 1-5 Bellevue Road, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 7NP

(for legal correspondence only)

All other correspondence to: 24 Chedworth Place, Tatingstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND