



September 2019

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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RUX congratulates Network Rail (NR) for delivering [£98million of vital improvements](#) over the late August Bank Holiday weekend. Blessed with fine albeit very hot weather, a 10,500 strong team worked round the clock to finish 448 projects on time, allowing a normal service to resume on the Tuesday. Some projects such as track renewal and the transfer of signalling control will have an immediate benefit; some will enable an improved timetable in December, while others have laid the ground for future developments. But all contribute to the Rf aim of a better railway. Well done!

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

FoFNL is still awaiting news of any improvements, which seems to extend back at least a couple of years. They congratulate both the Levenmouth and StARLink campaigns for their recent successes, and hope soon to have an announcement too. What is most needed is the 'Lentran passing loop' at the southern end the line, between Clachnaharry and Clunes. This would alleviate the effects of any out of course running, which currently can affect services all day on the FNL and Kyle line. However, the line also needs new trains that are more reliable and better-suited to a four-hours-plus journey; more than just the one new passing loop; a chord and a station at Halkirk, near Georgemas Junction, to allow trains to travel directly to Thurso without reversal. And then there is the prospect of the trial of a shuttle service between Thurso and Wick, using a Vivarail battery train, and the idea of an overnight service from Caithness to the Central Belt, which would be very beneficial to Orkney travellers. ^[L]_[SEP] The problem is the difficulty of persuading the Scottish Government that it needs to spend much more on rail and much less on massive road projects.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

Whilst celebrating the announcement that, after almost 50 years, the Leven line will reopen within the next five, LMRC envisages a continuing role as a voice of the community, and an informed interest/pressure group seeking to broaden the impact of the decision through the Levenmouth Blueprint. Rail related issues include the process involved and its speed, stations, access, timetabling, and freight. However, improved travel and bus links, maximising tourism and other local business development, inward investment, and skills/education links also need to be pursued. LMRC will actively participate, and keep the community informed about progress and challenges en route, as well as seeking their input.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland

NR and Transport Scotland are progressing the design of East Linton and Reston Stations, while the East Coast Event Steering Group (ECESG) works up an acceptable timetable for potential passengers, taking account of potential service conflicts, franchise commitments and operator aspirations. Construction of a second platform at Dunbar started in May, and will be operational from December. Having a separate platform for Northbound stopping trains will enable more East Coast Main Line (ECML) services.

Campaign for Borders Rail

CBR wants the Borders Railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank extended. To support its "Onward to Carlisle Fund", visit www.JustGiving.com and search "Campaign for Borders Rail". Journey times would be about 1hr 50 from Edinburgh, 48mins from Hawick, 25mins from Newcastleton and 13mins from Longtown. Meanwhile, the Holyrood and Westminster governments have pledged to fund a cross-border feasibility study as part of the Borderlands Growth Deal. Electrification of the line has also been mooted, but a real increase in capacity would require the additional infrastructure set out in the July RUX.

CKP Railways

The South Lakes (around Windermere) has a wide choice of public transport - train, long distance coach, and bus - whereas more than 90% of visitors to Keswick and the North Lakes arrive by car, as there is no mass public transport option. Carlisle Lake District Airport could add even more pressure to the area. Transport for the North (TfN) says that a Keswick to Penrith railway would fit its broad strategy, but would need to be privately funded. To succeed, new projects (other than national strategic ones) must come via Local Authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Permission to build railways is granted at national level. Potential Private Sector funders have come forward over the years, but progress beyond the design stage depends on Cumbria County Council support. When it is ready to demonstrate its full support, CKP has a professionally produced design package and lots of related information available.

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Direct Harrogate-London services should start on 16 December, with six trains each way, seven days/week. Compiled by Brian Dunsby from the Real Time Trains web site, and subject to final confirmation, Monday-Friday timings are 0734 to 1736 from Harrogate, and 0733 and 1733 from Kings Cross; very similar on Saturdays. Sunday timings are 0915 to 1802 ex Harrogate, and 0903 to 1803 ex Kings Cross.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

Blackburn-Todmorden-Manchester-Southport is the only Sunday service booked to call at Smithy Bridge, Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston, but is invariably cancelled due to staff shortages. A bus is put on between Blackburn and Todmorden, and Manchester-Southport trains continue to run, but the four Greater Manchester stations have neither a rail service nor a replacement bus service. Leeds-Manchester Calder Valley trains do call occasionally under a special stop order, but it never lasts. Northern has confirmed that it is urgently seeking a long-term solution.

STORM Chairman Richard Greenwood would remove the calls of the Manchester trains at the smaller West Yorkshire stations, which are also served by Blackpool North trains, to give Smithy Bridge, Castleton and Mills Hill an hourly service instead of none at all. Neither the overall journey time nor punctuality would be affected. And as hardly a single weekday goes by without the cancellation of one or more peak services at the four Manchester stations, little wonder that their passenger numbers are falling dramatically.

To cut journey times and boost capacity between York, Leeds and Manchester, NR has announced a £2.9bn upgrade of the TransPennine route. It includes electrification and four-tracking between Huddersfield and Westtown, near Dewsbury, grade separation at Ravensthorpe, and revamping Huddersfield, Deighton, Mirfield and Ravensthorpe stations (see Consultations). NR hopes to submit an application for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) in autumn 2020, so that work can start in 2022. However, passengers are likely to face major disruption.

Regarding its 'new' Ticket Vending Machines, Northern responded as follows: "We are aware there is some customer feedback about...the additional steps now needed and the extra time taken to buy a ticket... We have added significantly more functionality to the TVM's; they are now able to provide a more comprehensive range of tickets to customers and have, in effect, become mini-ticket offices.

“It is understandable that customers faced with the new menu system, and other customers queuing behind them, may feel under pressure when navigating the screens for the first time, but these will take longer to implement...In regard to purchasing a ticket on board, if you can find the option of Promise to Pay and print this off to give to the conductor, this is another way of purchasing a ticket.”

Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users Association

Under the engaging headline “Here Today and...Here Tomorrow”, HPSRUA reports that, due to delays in the delivery of its new trains, Northern will need to retain some Class 144 Pacers in service, possibly until Summer 2020. So what could replace them? HPSRUA suggests the splendid Class 185 trains, which operate transPennine routes from Manchester to Leeds and to Sheffield, and are covering Northern’s local services from Huddersfield to Leeds and Manchester. They have recently undergone a complete refresh with new seats, wifi and customer information screens. Fitted with three engines, one of which can be switched off when not required, they are eminently suited to cross-Pennine routes. The ruling gradient on the Penistone Line is 1 in 70, so there would be plenty of power to improve on the current timetable by a few minutes.

Built as they are on a freight van chassis with two fixed axles per coach, Pacers have poor ride comfort, and the lack of steering can damage both track and wheels. An alternative FORESEE design being developed by the Huddersfield University Institute of Railway Research (IRR) solves these problems with a novel system of active suspension and steering. Replacing the bogies fitted to conventional vehicles with axles offers a major saving in weight, and the potential to increase space and comfort for passengers. Hence the name FORESEE, as the project addresses the “four Cs” of carbon, customer, cost and capacity.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the creation of the Northern Powerhouse, but not a lot has happened on the ground, although some local schemes have emerged in both West and South Yorkshire. New stations are planned at Elland, between Huddersfield and Bradford, White Rose near Leeds on the Huddersfield line, Leeds Bradford Airport on the Harrogate line, and Thorpe Park on the York line.

Friends of the Barton Line

The Abellio East Midlands Railway franchise started on 18 August. Changes will be slow, and the takeover a bit staggered, but there should be some improvements. From 1 January 2020, trains must be accessible to persons with reduced mobility. New features will include the passenger information screens FBL requested. It hopes that the Class 156 units will be more reliable than the Class 153s they replace. The start date of a year-round Sunday service is expected to be December 2021. This timetable will also introduce an hourly Grimsby Town-Leicester service via Lincoln and Nottingham.

FBL understands that, thanks to its efforts and those of Rf and TPE, from December all TPE trains will call at Habrough, except the 0653 and 1753 from Manchester.

Fen Line Users Association

DfT has approved approximately £27m of funding to extend the platforms at Waterbeach and Littleport stations. Eight car services can then be introduced at peak times, probably from December 2020, to reduce overcrowding and provide a better experience for passengers.

The Williams Review failed to include the Fen Line as a strategic part of the network. Together with similar representations from our local MPs and other key stakeholders, FLUA and the King’s Lynn Borough Council respond as follows: “King’s Lynn line is of great strategic value to the economy of...West Norfolk and its principal town. NR has calculated that every minute saved on the route adds £2.8m to the economic potential of this one town, and whilst that is smaller than locations such as Cambridge, the implication of the line not being considered strategic is considerable for future inward investment to the area”.

Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users

Passenger numbers using Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations have risen 8-fold and almost 12-fold respectively since counting started in 1996. In May 2019, both achieved their highest-ever daily count: 2,959 at Cambridge Heath, and 3,429 at London Fields. CHLFRUG believes that the ORR 2017-2018 annual estimates of 774,528 and 1,324,774 are significantly below the true figures, which weakens the case for improving stations and services.

Plumstead and Woolwich Rail Users' Group

RUX welcomes the new RUG that covers Plumstead and both Woolwich stations. Its inaugural meeting on 2 September concentrated on GTR's Passenger Benefit Fund.

Cotswold Line Promotion Group

CLPG celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2018. Service levels have substantially improved over the years at almost every Cotswold Line station, particularly Pershore, Honeybourne and Hanborough. However, that at the halts – Ascott, Finstock and Combe - is actually worse than in 1969. The imperative to cut journey times to the capital would seem to preclude any mid-morning shopping service to Oxford, with an early afternoon return, at least in the short term. However, a Saturday service could be justified given the very different nature of the travel market on that day.

Unfortunately, the welcome improvements to weekend and evening services in the West Midlands Trains timetable have been marred by a lack of rolling stock and its unsuitability. It would seem that CLPG services are suffering to add capacity elsewhere in the WMT network. A Rf survey on the Hereford-Great Malvern-Birmingham New Street service in the Spring and Autumn 2016 identified several services that were so full that passengers could not board or alight at Droitwich and University stations. But in May, the three-car 1550 service from New Street was reduced to just two cars.

Sufficient funding has been secured to launch a Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership (CRP) from Hagley in the north to Bewdley (on the heritage line) and Great Malvern in the west, and Redditch and Honeybourne in the east. A part-time Community Rail Officer will be based at the new Community Rail Hub within the offices of the West Midlands Rail Executive in Birmingham.

The [Cotswolds Discoverer](#) One Day Pass is the perfect way to travel around and explore some of the most scenic parts of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Costing just £10.50, or just £6.90 with a Railcard, it is available for travel on many rail and bus services in the area (see the link).

South Hampshire Rail Users' Group

Of the ten most populous areas in the UK, South Hampshire is alone in not having a significant local rail network, light railway, underground railway or trams. Gosport is the largest town in the UK with no railway station. Southampton–Portsmouth has just one semi-fast and one stopping train hourly. There is no Monday-Friday service from Southampton Central to Eastleigh between 0738 and 0835, and a 40-minute gap in the daytime service every hour, whereas Brighton-Worthing has six trains in the same period. At Totton, the fourth largest intermediate town between Southampton and Weymouth, footfall grew by 71.7% from 2001-02 to 2006-07 after service frequency increased to two trains/hour, but growth fell to just 0.9% between 2006-07 and 2017-18 after the service returned to an hourly stopping service.

First/MTR is committed to an additional hourly service between Southampton and Portsmouth, and running Waterloo-Weymouth semi-fast trains as 10-coach services, splitting at Southampton into fast Weymouth and semi-fast Poole services. But NR says that the power supply can't sustain a better service off peak. If this cannot be rectified quickly, could the SWR franchise agreement be amended to include hire of some second-hand diesel units to run an hourly service between Portsmouth and Poole? An additional hourly service between Southampton and Eastleigh is also needed. See below for SWR changes in May. Denis Fryer believes that there is scope for more radical changes that would both accelerate services and even out the intervals between them.

Avocet Line Rail Users Group

The arrival of 4-car HSTs on southwest main lines has released more Class 150s for Devon Metro services. On the Avocet Line, services are mostly either 2, 3 or 4-car Class 150s, or 2 or 4-car Class 143 Pacers, which are due to leave at the end of the year. Occasionally a Class 158 makes an appearance, and while these are vastly superior to the other stock on the line, they suffer from having only end doors, which delays boarding and alighting at busy times.

Unfortunately, the line from Exeter to Exmouth has seen several fatalities recently; ALRUG sympathises with everyone involved, including the poor driver. Railway staff and the emergency services have to deal with the aftermath.

There were around 300 suicides or suspected suicides on the railways in 2017-18. The Samaritans have partnered with the rail industry in the Suicide Prevention Programme, which has seen a 12% fall since it started. Railway staff have been trained to recognise and help a vulnerable person. The Samaritans '[Small Talk Saves Lives](#)' campaign gives passengers information on the warning signs, and explains how to ask simple questions to start a conversation, or things to do which could relax the situation. You may be concerned you'll make things worse, but there's no evidence that will happen.

RAILFUTURE

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

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.

The £25 cost includes 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](#).

However, Rf Branches and Groups Day 2019 will go ahead in Birmingham on 26 October (see Events). The theme will be engaging with its audiences (stakeholders and the wider public), and in particular some of the key techniques that it uses. As well as the presentations, there will be two Workshop Sessions: “Construct the Message” and “Social Media”. All active members are urged to attend.

PASSENGER GROUP

Regarding light rail versus heavy rail, any such proposal should be considered on a case-by-case basis: conversion to light rail did not necessarily preclude the continued operation of heavy rail. Thus if freight needed to be accommodated, a separate single track might be provided along the route for this purpose; or it might operate at night once light rail services had ended. There were also compatibility issues: in Sheffield, the wheel profile and wheel flanges needed for operation on NR tracks prevented unrestricted operation of tram-trains on street tracks. The Group agreed to ask the EPG about any lessons that might be learned from similar schemes in mainland Europe, such as Karlsruhe. Other issues included the lack of printed timetables; infrastructure constraints preventing the operation of additional services and longer trains, eg at Leeds City; and the continuing poor performance on the ECML.

YORKSHIRE BRANCH

In June, Branch Chair Nina Smith, addressed the third West Yorkshire Development Conference, hosted by “Built Environment Networking Limited”. Rail is vital for sustainable development: Inter-city and commuter lines must be electrified, as electric trains emit less carbon, are quieter, accelerate faster, have fewer breakdowns, and attract more passengers. However, the long-winded “GRIP” process must be replaced.

An upgraded TransPennine line would speed up journeys between Leeds, Huddersfield and Manchester, and facilitate frequent and reliable commuter services from the towns in-between. A new transPennine freight route that took W12 size containers would help achieve a modal shift of trunked freight from road to rail. Bradford needs a joined-up rail network, with direct connectivity between Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Airedale, Wharfedale and Calder Valley lines.

We must also invest in train services. Why are there only 2 trains a day on the direct Sheffield-Pontefract-York route, and one a day between Goole and Leeds? Why has the Colne to Skipton line not been reopened to enable east Lancashire people to access jobs in Bradford and Leeds? Why are there no rails to Wetherby or Ripon? Why has the direct route from Hull and Beverley to York not been reopened? Trains cut congestion and help regeneration. It’s time for a railway renaissance in the north of England!

A new Integrated Rail Plan would enhance services within the Sheffield City Region (SCR), and improve connectivity, notably with Manchester and Leeds. Schemes under way or committed that will benefit the region within the next five years include speed and signalling improvements on the ECML, the Hope Valley Capacity Improvement Scheme, and electrification of the Midland Main Line to Market Harborough. Quicker wins include a permanent Parkgate tram-train service, and remodelling the track north of Sheffield station. In the longer term, SCR will prepare a series of business cases over the next five years to support specific improvement projects, with a view to their introduction by the late 2020s. These include:

- New stations at Barnsley Dearne Valley on the Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) route between Sheffield and Leeds; on the main line at Rotherham, and at Waverley on the Sheffield-Lincoln line
- Four NPR trains per hour on the Hope Valley route between Sheffield and Manchester
- Extension of Midland Main Line services to Barnsley.

Also, in the next five years, SCR will investigate the potential for further enhancements, including:

- A new line between SCR and Greater Manchester, should the NPR preferred option fail to deliver acceptable journey time reductions
- A new station at Askern, with a new service between Doncaster and Pontefract
- New services on the Sheffield Victoria–Penistone–Huddersfield and Sheffield Victoria–Waverley–Barrow Hill–Chesterfield corridors
- A new service between Barnsley and Wakefield via Royston
- Capacity improvements through grade separation at Wincobank Junction, immediately south of Meadowhall station
- Faster regional services between Sheffield and Leeds and extension of through services to Bradford

- Provision of services on Boxing Day.

A surprising element of the Plan is the proposal for a southern link from Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) station, creating a loop to allow ECML expresses to serve the airport directly with little time penalty. As the former RAF Finningley air base, DSA can accommodate the largest aircraft, and topped a Which? survey for the third year in a row, with a customer satisfaction score of 86%. The Plan estimates it could handle 25 million passengers per annum, over 20 times the number passing through in 2018.

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

The public meeting in Shrewsbury on 12 October is provisionally entitled "Shropshire – The Forgotten County?" (See Events). The principal guests will be Daniel Kawczynski, MP for Shrewsbury; Peter Sargant, Director of Planning, West Midlands Rail Exec; Lee Robinson, Development Director (North), Transport for Wales; John Allcock, Chair of Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users' Assn, representing all the RUGs in the northern Marches, and a NR manager. After their presentations, they will form a panel to take questions from the audience. Further details from Steve Boulding, steve.boulding@phonecoop.coop, telephone 07986 457523.

THAMES VALLEY BRANCH

Much to the dismay of Rf, West Oxfordshire District Council defeated a motion to support the reopening of the Witney Branch. The Branch responded with letters in the local Press, and will be seeking to engage with councillors who support the principle of a proper link to Witney and Carterton. The population of the catchment area is now heading to 60,000 making it one of the largest rail deserts in the UK.

Anneliese Dodds, MP for Oxford East, is fully committed to reopening the Cowley Branch. Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Oxford City Council's Board Member for Planning & Transport said the challenge is at Oxford station, and the widening of the Botley Road Bridge for two extra tracks (one for Cowley). However, the City Council is officially opposed to the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway; it doesn't see how a road can be a sensible investment, given CO2 reductions, and as it would undermine investment in East West Rail.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

The TF "Make Delay Pay" campaign revealed a gap in Delay Repay regimes: the compensation does not apply to season ticket holders who heed the advice not to travel, as they have not actually been delayed, whereas those who disregard the advice are entitled to compensation when they are delayed. This creates a situation that is neither sensible, nor fair, and is counter-productive. TF wants every train operating company to amend its Passenger Charter to address the issue as soon as possible, and is also seeking a change to the National Conditions of Travel, which would apply to all train companies.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

On 7 August, a sunny Morecambe welcomed a party of seventeen from Dementia Friendly Skipton. Organised by the Leeds-Morecambe CRP, the trip was kindly supported by Northern. The gate line staff at Skipton station and train crew all helped to make the trip pleasant and enjoyable. Gerald Townson, Chairman of the Bentham Line said: "the quality of the experience is valued by each individual. It brings back memories of seaside trips, complete with fish and chips on the sea front."

Friends of Wool station in Dorset have formally adopted it. Formed in May 2010, the group has worked hard to help improve the station's environment by planting and maintaining platform flowers and greenery, and facilitating school artwork. SWR helped the group become registered members of ACoRP.

1 September saw the launch of the Darent Valley Line CRP from Swanley to Sevenoaks on the Southeastern network. The project developed from a recommendation in the Visitor Economy Study (2017) and follows on from the refurbishment of Bat & Ball Station, undertaken by its Friends and Sevenoaks Town Council.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

Most rail ticket prices will rise by 2.8% next January, based on the discredited Retail Price Index for July. CBT says the more commonly used Consumer Price Index should be used instead. This is typically lower than RPI; last month it was 2%. Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "It's tempting to suggest fares should never rise. However, the truth is that if we stop investing in our railway then we will never see it improved."

Like CBT, though, Rf wants comprehensive reform of the fare regime, and the Rail Delivery Group [agrees](#). Its 'Easier fares for all' proposal calls for a base one-way price for each leg of a journey, which can be discounted algorithmically for travel at different times, booking in advance, or for certain types of traveller. The fare for the whole journey is then the sum of the prices for each leg, so could be different for outward and return journeys. But for a passenger to trust the system, it must guarantee the best value fare for their journey, as there is no indication of whether or how they could check the calculation.

A DfT announcement on 29 August confirmed that this arrangement will be the basis for a trial starting in January. A Super Off-Peak Single ticket between London and Edinburgh will cost £73.70, half the cost of a Super Off-Peak Return, rather than the current £146.40. Also, as part of its smart ticketing rollout, 'Contactless' Pay As You Go (PAYG) journeys are being introduced for journeys at Potters Bar, Radlett and Brookmans Park. However, Groupsave, 'kids for £2' deals and, super off-peak paper tickets at weekends, where available, will still be cheaper than the PAYG fare.

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

Meanwhile, the English Regional Transport Association (ERTA) offers yet another angle on the fares debate. It believes that the annual increase is used to control demand, by pricing people off the railways. Roads then take the brunt of the extra traffic volume, and exhaust fumes take their toll by polluting the air. So getting the railways right is important for 'the nation's health', and thus the NHS. The government should reduce overcrowding, not by increasing fares, but by increasing capacity ASAP. Local Councils and other agencies should have access to capital funds to work up rail-based schemes that would attract a modal shift of passengers and freight.

Train operating companies have overcharged many fare-dodgers by basing penalty fares on the peak rate rather than the off-peak rate, when this applied; Rail Delivery Group guidance did not set out the rules correctly. Anyone who thinks they are owed money should contact the TOC concerned.

"Coincidentally", on the same day that the rail fare increase was confirmed, DfT made two other announcements. Firstly, the new 16-17 Saver would launch the following week, guaranteeing half-price travel for young people on most services in England and Wales. Then, together with Italian firm Trenitalia, FirstGroup would run the Inter-city West Coast services from December.

The contract is in two phases, with the joint venture operating WCML services until March 2026, before a second phase to March 2031, where First Trenitalia will operate HS2 services alongside recast conventional WCML services. During the first phase, West Coast Rail will act as shadow operator for HS2, providing a range of design, development and mobilisation services. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the bid was part of a shift to a new model for rail: the partnership was supported by Keith Williams, who is examining changes to the rail franchising system, and has indicated that government involvement should be limited to overall policy and budget decisions.

After the franchise was let, however, the government launched a review of HS2, with a "go/amend/no-go" decision by the end of the year, and in that regard, a "[Stocktake](#)" from HS2 Chairman, Alan Cook, makes for uncomfortable reading. The cost of Phase 1 from London to Birmingham is likely to rise from £27bn to a range of £36-38bn; and the target delivery date of December 2026 should become a more realistic, manageable and cost effective staged opening between 2028 and 2031. Phase 2a, from Birmingham to Crewe should be completed and amalgamated with Phase 1, and delivered to the same timescale. Its cost is likely to rise from £3.5bn to between £3.6-4.0bn.

Given the early stage of Phase 2b from Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to Leeds, and its essential role in delivering NPR, TfN and Midlands Connect, there is an opportunity to deliver the plans for each region in smaller, more manageable sections as part of a rolling programme of investment. The cost of Phase 2b is likely to rise from £28.6bn to a range of £32-36bn, with target delivery slipping from 2033 to between 2035 and 2040.

Following problems with two power generators on 9 August, there were delays to getting some trains running again which led to significant impacts on passengers. Along with the rail industry, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has been working with the energy regulator, Ofgem, on its investigation to understand the role that the railway system and infrastructure may have played. It wants to identify any lessons learned, and minimise the occurrence and severity of any similar incident in the future.

In August, heavy rain and flooding led to a series of landslips in the north of England and in Scotland, causing disruption to rail services. Fortunately, awareness of these events was high enough to avert any accidents. Ensuring that trains run safely is a key issue for ORR; of particular concern are those earthworks and drainage assets where there would be a higher likelihood of a catastrophic incident if a landslip occurred. It is vital that NR manages these assets effectively.

On 22 August, a train on the Liverpool Street to Southend line travelled for 16 miles at up to 80mph with an open door. A passenger reported it to the driver at Hockley station, in Essex. The RAIB has conducted an investigation, and will release a "safety digest" in due course.

Ten months into its franchise, Transport for Wales (TfW) passengers are still facing cancellations, delays and reduced capacity on some routes. It inherited a stock shortage, as the previous franchise had been let on the premise of zero growth. Taking trains out of service for adaptation to meet accessibility requirements, preparing them for the autumn, and other scheduled and unscheduled maintenance is exacerbating the problem. However, TfW is "confident" things will eventually improve: by 2023, 95% of its journeys will be on new trains.

There is better news from SWR. Following the full opening of the former Waterloo International Terminal, and the return of refurbished Class 442 trains, its May timetable saw a number of improvements:

- A new half-hourly service between Farnham and Guildford (Monday to Saturday)
- Extra later evening services from Waterloo to Salisbury, and Waterloo to Portsmouth
- A new Sunday service: Salisbury-Basingstoke-Reading
- Extra services from Yeovil to Waterloo calling at Castle Cary, Bruton and Frome
- All fast Portsmouth/Waterloo services calling at Godalming (doubling the number of services)
- 15 additional peak-time services.

[So shame about the ongoing industrial action! – Ed.]

According to BBC Transport Correspondent Paul Clifton, SWR's newly-refurbished Class 442 Wessex Electric trains have again been withdrawn from service over fears they wrongly turn signals yellow or red as they pass through Earlsfield in London. As a result, a morning service from Southampton Airport Parkway to Waterloo and an afternoon service from Waterloo to Poole have been cancelled, and shorter trains will run on five services between London and Farnham, Guildford, Haslemere and Woking.

14 of the 21 new Class 717 train trains required to operate the current Great Northern Metro timetable from Moorgate to Welwyn Garden City and to Stevenage via Hertford North are now in service. Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has procured 25 units to provide spares, and to increase peak services once NR has upgraded the track between Moorgate and Finsbury Park to digital signalling. Financed by Rock Rail Moorgate, the fleet is the first in the UK to use a new model for financing rolling stock, with direct long-term investment from pension and insurance companies. Meanwhile, GN is planning a farewell event to mark the retirement of the Class 313, with a special train service planned for 23 October. Tickets are available from [UK Rail Tours](#) with proceeds donated to GTR's charity partners.

The Aberdeen Press and Journal reports that, as part of his "mission" for better public transport, Alex Hynes, MD of ScotRail and Network Rail Scotland, has said that the old Buchan and Formartine line linking Peterhead to Aberdeen should be re-opened. It has been estimated that re-opening it as far as Ellon would cost £380 million. A Transport Scotland spokesman said that its second Strategic Transport Projects Review would inform the funding of transport infrastructure.

In total, there were 68,313 crimes committed on Britain's rails in 2018-19. British Transport Police (BTP) have revealed a 53% rise in drugs offences, a one-third increase in the number of robberies, a rise of 14% in violent crime and 8% in the number of sexual offences.

The [BBC reports](#) that heat from a disused Northern Line station on the London Underground will support a heat network supplying up to 1,000 homes and businesses in Islington by the end of the year. A heat pump will capture "waste heat" from a ventilation shaft on City Road, which currently pumps out air at 18C - 28C. The scheme is a joint project between Islington Council, TfL and engineering firm Ramboll.

The Daily Telegraph reports a threat to heritage lines as steam train drivers retire: over the next five years, Swanage Railway will need another 40. Training from scratch can take four years, as candidates progress from cleaner to fireman to driver, who must then learn the route. Meanwhile, Michael Gough, the MD of Great Central Railway, is equally concerned by the growing shortage of trained guards.

...and finally

The Independent reports that Mark Smith, “The Man in Seat 61”, fancied a cup of tea in Victoria – British Columbia. So with his family, he took the train to Southampton, Queen Mary 2 to New York, and the *Maple Leaf* Amtrak train up to Toronto, before the 3000-mile trip across Canada on *The Canadian*. “Tea at the Fairmont Empress is rather like tea at the Ritz, only Canadian style,” he said.

Ian Stewart of HPSRUA reflects on Pacers not going by the end of the year. Was the decision inevitable, as Pacer is RECAP backwards? In the same vein, is a new TPE train to Leeds a NOVA calling at Platform 8, and that to Manchester “AVON calling” at platform 1? Stretching a point, is an AZUMA an AMUZA? Huddersfield will not be amused to see its first electric trains before it has overhead wires!

CONSULTATIONS

- DfT: [Huddersfield to Westtown \(Dewsbury\)](#), closes 25 October.
- 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 \(Raifuture\)](#), 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, that is a problem if the details change from month to month, so 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.

September

- Saturday 14. Rf London & South East, Herts and Beds Division, St Paul’s Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1100.
- Saturday 14. Rf North West branch meeting, Patten Arms Hotel, Parker Street, **Warrington** WA1 1LS. 13.00.
- Monday 16. Halifax & District Rail Action Group Committee (all welcome), Carlton United Reform Ch, Harrison Road, Carlton Terrace, **Halifax**, HX1 2AD, 1900.
- 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).
- Wednesday 18. Rail Action Group East of Scotland AGM, Village Hall, **Reston**, 1930
- 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
- Tuesday 24. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth Academy Community Use, Methilhaven Rd, Buckhaven, **Leven** KY8 1EA, 1830.
- Saturday 28. Rf Yorkshire, The Quaker Meeting House, 10 St. James’ Street, **Sheffield**, S1 2EW, 1300.
- Saturday 28. Rf East Anglia, Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Street, **Norwich**, NR2 1EW, 1400.

October

- Thursday 3. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway Division, **Goring** URC, Barrington Rd, (by Durrington-on-Sea station), BN12 4EA, 1800.
- Thursday 3. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2019, The International Centre, **Telford**, Shropshire.
- Saturday 5. East Suffolk Travellers Association, Parcels Office, **Lowestoft** Station, 1400.
- Saturday 5. English Regional Transport Association, The Rodboro 1-10 Bridge Street, **Guildford**, GU1 4RY, 1500.
- Saturday 5. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers’ Association AGM, White Lion, **Machynlleth**, 1415. (also 12 November, 7 December - various locations and times).
- Tuesday 8. Campaign for Borders Rail AGM, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, **Edinburgh** EH1 2JL, 1100.
- Saturday 12. Rf West Midlands branch, The Gateway Arts Centre, Chester Street, **Shrewsbury**, SY1 1NB, 1330.

- Monday 14. Bexhill Rail Action Group, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, **Bexhill-on-Sea**, East Sussex, TN39 3LW, 1900.
- Tuesday 15. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, **Felixstowe**, 1430.
- Thursday 17. Magor & Undy Walkway Station, The Golden Lion, 23A The Square, **Magor**, Caldicot, Monmouthshire, NP26 3HY. 1930.
- Saturday 19. English Regional Transport Association, The Ivy Wall, 18–19 New Road, **Spalding**, Lincolnshire, PE11 1DQ, 1500.
- Monday 21 Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Globe Hotel, **Topsham**, 1930.
- Saturday 26. Rf Branches and Groups Day, John Dickens Room, Birmingham and Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, **Birmingham**, B3 3BS, 1030.
- Saturday 26. English Regional Transport Association, Northampton Quaker Meeting House, Wellington Street, **Northampton**, NN1 3AS, 1300.

Further Ahead

- November 5. Railfuture Thames Valley joint event with Chipping Norton Railway Club, Town Hall, Market Place, **Chipping Norton**, OX7 5NA, 19.30.
- Wednesday 6. ACoRP AGM, West Midlands Rail Executive, 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD, 1430.
- November 13. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London**, E15 1NG, 1830 (and every second Wednesday of alternate months.)
- November 16. Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield RUA, The Village Hall, **Stocks Moor**, 1100.
- November 16. Fen Line Users Association AGM, Heritage Centre, Priory Road, **Downham Market**, 1400.

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

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

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