



January 2020

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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Janus like, Rf looks both forward and back. In 2019, it issued a 10-point challenge to the rail industry and government to rebuild public trust in service delivery. See the Rf Board's [end of year report](#) on how well they rose to it. Operation and resilience were satisfactory, but cancellations and industrial relations were an abject failure, while restructuring the industry is still work in progress. Then, hopefully with 20/20 vision, it sets out its [2030 manifesto](#) based on the views of 20,000 members, affiliates and supporters.

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.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

LMRC has worked for some time with CLEAR, the Community-Led Environmental Action for Regeneration, especially in the run-up to Walk-the-Line and other Campaign events. They have on several occasions cleared the trackbed of trees and other plantation on the Leven side of the A915 road bridge close to what was – and will be again - Cameron Bridge Station, aka Windygates.

However, Station Road that once linked Windygates with Cameron Hospital was severed for a bypass that is crossed by a footbridge with stepped ramps, and so is inaccessible to most if not all wheelchair users. It would have to be completely rebuilt to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland

Platform 2 at Dunbar became operational on 15 December, and was officially opened on the 17th. The £13 million investment has delivered a new 271m platform with a 30m span footbridge and lift access. The new northbound platform will increase capacity and improve operational flexibility for local and cross border services on the East Coast Main Line. It is an enabler of one of RAGES strategic aims of an improved rail service between Edinburgh and Dunbar, with services eventually extended to Berwick Upon Tweed.

Lakes Line Rail User Group

Once it has recovered from the all-too-frequent bouts of train cancellations, the Lakes Line (LL) can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging a shift from car use to public transport. But it needs investment to allow a half hourly service, doubling its capacity and making connections at Oxenholme more convenient. Work is also required at stations, as well as co-ordination between rail and bus operations to make onward travel into the National Park as easy as possible.

LLRUG has been in contact with Avanti, the new WCML operator, and looks forward to working with them on matters such as Oxenholme services, and improving its passenger facilities by extending the waiting facilities and installing toilets on Platform 2/3, and on Platform 1 extending the awning northwards and making the toilets more reliable.

Northern has bid for Staveley station to be part of DfT's Mid Tier 'Access for All' programme to make the station fully accessible. The May 2020 timetable will exploit the performance of the new trains, allowing for additional Lancaster, Burneside and Staveley calls. Northern's Control sections in Manchester and York have been reminded that a LL train can be held at Oxenholme for a late running WCML train, provided it can return to Oxenholme in time to make an outbound connection.

Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group

After 30 years, LASRUG believes that it has achieved many of its original aims in terms of improvements to the Leeds to Lancaster and Morecambe rail service. The line now has all the extra trains provided for under Northern's franchise, although it hopes that the bid for a path into Lancaster before 0900 for the first train from Leeds on Monday to Saturday will be successful. The return working of this train from Lancaster at 0941 is particularly welcome as it fills a 4-hour gap in the eastbound service.

Travellers are using the augmented service in ways not previously possible. The number of passengers changing at Carnforth between the Bentham and Furness lines has grown noticeably because of the improved connections, but there is scope to raise awareness of this link and grow the traffic still further.

Bolton Station Community Development Partnership

Visitors to Bolton Station's first-ever Christmas Market included a group of itinerant railway elves, who arrived by train from Manchester. They entertained passengers with elf-like activities, and gave out toffees to fascinated children. A Christmas-themed layout created especially by Bolton Model Railway Club delighted both adults and children. Northern, Diamond Buses, TfGM and NR supported the event.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

Three STORM members met NR and Northern in December to discuss the frequent flooding at Walsden, causing cancellations of trains beyond Rochdale. The moorland area above Rochdale, Bacup, Todmorden and Hebden Bridge seems to be suffering from heavy rainfall more often, and this is causing severe flooding at several places along the Calder Valley. Downstream from where Walsden Water crosses under the railway, just south of Winterbutlee tunnel and close to the Rochdale Road overbridge, is a culvert with a restricted capacity, which backs up causing the flooding. Responsibility for it lies with the Environment Agency (EA) and Calderdale Council; NR alone cannot alleviate the problem.

In weighing the costs of flood prevention against the damage caused, it appears that the EA counts only the actual physical damage to those immediately affected. The disruption to rail services, and problems for passengers seem not to be taken into account. However, from a railway point of view, doing nothing is not an option, so NR intends to engage with the EA and Calderdale Council as a matter of urgency.

No more Bolton services are possible without considerable investment in additional infrastructure, so once Northern has enough vehicles, it plans to run 6-car trains on the Preston and Blackpool services by connecting two 3-car units in multiple. The 4-car Class 319s are not divisible, so Northern plans to replace them with more modern and more powerful Class 323s that are coming off lease in the West Midlands.

As well as the Ordsall Chord, the 'Northern Hub' plan in 2014 included upgrades to Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road stations. At Piccadilly, two extra Platforms 15 and 16 were planned, while at Oxford Road remodelled platforms would have allowed for longer trains. But although all the legal processes for the upgrades were completed in 2015, the DfT has sat on the decision ever since. According to a report for TfN, "some train services contracted in the current franchises are not able to operate; and services that do run have far lower reliability than is required." HMG now has only three choices: afford the infrastructure, cut train services, or accept the current, very poor reliability. The report urges northern leaders to call on the DfT to sign off on the platform expansions as originally proposed, at a cost of £700-800m.

Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association

Performance on the Mid Cheshire Line has been badly affected by cancellations due to driver shortages, mainly as a result of the driver training programme for new trains. This continues until May, albeit with a reducing intensity from March onwards. Performance on the Crewe-Liverpool line was also poor, although timetable changes from December should have made it more reliable.

The Chairman wrote to Northern regarding, inter alia, its ticket vending machines, in particular how tortuous it was to get a Promise to Pay, and problems with Greater Manchester Wayfarer and Metrolink tickets. Northern responded that in the last year it had rolled out a major software update on all of its TVMs, but that the current functionality was only the first stage in improving the TVM experience.

Friends of the Barton Line

The non-collection of fares between Cleethorpes and Grimsby Town is an ongoing issue on both the Barton and Manchester services. FBL is concerned that it could impact on the passenger figures reported to the ORR, weakening the case for investment. Ticket machines on station platforms could mitigate this.

The Chairman and Secretary have expressed their concern to both the Grimsby and Cleethorpes MPs over the possible loss of promised improvements to the Barton line service following the deferral in transferring its franchise from Northern to East Midlands Railway.

Campaigning organisation Greengauge21 has resurrected the idea of a Humber rail crossing west of Barton to link Hull with Nottingham, Sheffield and London - an aspiration since 1849. They also suggest creating a Lincolnshire coastal railway by reinstating the Spalding - Boston line and Firsby - Grimsby via Louth.

East Suffolk Travel Association

The East Suffolk Line now has an hourly Sunday service, easing overcrowding and making the service more attractive. The hourly summer Sundays service that Norwich - Lowestoft has enjoyed for the last three years now also runs in the winter. Most Norwich – Cambridge trains are extended to Stansted Airport, so Lowestoft is now only one change of train away from the airport.

In October, the Northern Area Planning Committee of East Suffolk Council unanimously approved Greater Anglia's plans to rebuild Saxmundham station and reconfigure the car park. ESTA's Chairman had submitted a letter of support, and was allowed to speak for three minutes. The first floor of the building, destroyed by fire in February 2018, is to be rebuilt as a bungalow-style house with a pitched roof; the canopy will be retained and the house will incorporate a waiting room and a storeroom. The work will be done in stages during 2020. Work is also due to be carried out on the other platform.

English Regional Transport Association

ERTA wants the Government to commit to a rolling programme of rail rebuilds and re-openings across the English Regions. So much has been poured into HS2 and HS3 when so much elsewhere cries out for funding to cover the cost of working up, start up and delivery. It needs a level playing field for expenditure both within rail and between rail and road, and easier access to capital funding.

Freight for Southampton is often held waiting for a path south of Reading, so Rex Hora has mooted rebuilding part of the old Didcot-Newbury-Southampton line as far as Whitchurch, before joining the line to Salisbury and then to Southampton. Alternatively, a further extension to join the Basingstoke-Southampton line north of Winchester would be more direct. A new alignment would be required in any case [*Much of the old trackbed is now the A34 – Ed.*], but a Park and Ride for Newbury alongside the bypass could offer new travel opportunities. Route protection and further studies are called for.

Bedford Commuters Association

A major change to the East Midlands Railway timetable in December 2020 will see six trains per hour to/from St Pancras: two fast to Sheffield, two fast to Nottingham and two stopping trains to Corby. BCA is unhappy that only the Corby service will serve Bedford; travellers for the north will need to change at both Kettering and Leicester. It is also concerned with the quality of the Class 360 EMUs on the Corby service, compared with the existing Intercity trains. A consultation on the draft timetable runs until 14 February.

The old Bromham Road Bridge was demolished over the weekend of 2-3 November, and its replacement installed. The remaining work on the new bridge is on schedule for completion in April. Both Bedford and Flitwick were allocated £80,000 from the Passenger Benefit Fund to compensate for the May 2018 chaos. Subject to DfT confirmation, the toilets at Bedford will be refurbished, and BCA hopes that this work will commence shortly.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

There were many reports of northbound Chesham trains being diverted to Amersham at short notice. Also, some such services were starting from Wembley Park without appropriate announcements being made at Baker Street. This was an ongoing complaint that TfL had failed to address.

Regarding step-free access at Amersham, there are hoardings both at street level and on the platforms, and some work appeared to be taking place overnight, although no major construction work is evident. Chiltern drivers complained that the platform hoardings stopped them seeing the signals clearly, so its northbound services are now using Platform 2 rather than Platform 1.

Windsor Lines Passengers Association

Because of the RMT strike, the SWR timetable did not change until the New Year. There are some extra Waterloo-Reading services either side of the evening peak, and an extra Windsor via Hounslow service in the evening peak. Services on both London Overground branches from Richmond and Clapham Junction to Stratford have increased from four to five trains per hour (tph), providing ten tph between Willesden Junction and Stratford, and a more even service on both branches throughout the day.

The DfT has rejected the privately financed Southern Rail Link to Heathrow project in its current form. Instead, it has renamed the scheme Southern Access to Heathrow to reflect a mode agnostic approach rather than just heavy rail. While it anticipates that heavy rail will be a vital component of this project, interventions such as light rail, guided busways and emerging technologies such as maglev and autonomous pods could be blended with heavy rail to realise wider opportunities and benefits.

Between May 2020 and May 2021, Class 701s will replace all of the Class 455s, 456s, 458s and 707s. There will be sixty fixed 10-car units numbered 701 001-060, and thirty 5-car units numbered 701 501-530. Thus 750 new carriages will replace the current 742 carriages.

Andy Mellors (currently MD SWR) moved to MD, Non-Franchised Businesses within First Group's Rail Division on 6 January, whilst Mark Hopwood is the new Interim MD at SWR. As MD of GWR, Mark successfully steered Thames Valley services through a decade of massive upheaval - and did a deal with the RMT. Most of its new trains now run without a guard, with no fuss. Could he do the same for SWR?

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

West Midlands Railway has been scouring the country for trains to bolster up its overcrowded and unreliable train service. What have they come up with? Some good old faithful ex-BR Class 153 Sprinter units. These started life as two coach Class 155 trains for BR's Regional Railways sector, built in 1987/88 to replace diesel mechanical multiple units dating from the 1950s. Converting the 155s to single unit 153s provided an economic unit for use on local and branch line services. As such the 153s were to be seen throughout the regional network on short branches such as those in Cornwall, longer secondary lines such as the Heart of Wales and Scottish Highland lines, and on secondary services in the Midlands and the North.

In a speech at a Northern Powerhouse Partnership event in Bradford, former British Airways chief executive Keith Williams said the Government "will have to step back from the railway". He called for a new relationship between the public and private sectors, to create a more flexible system that lets train operators "get on with running services". The poor punters find it nigh on impossible to find a railway manager or a politician who is prepared to admit responsibility. There is a long way to go yet, so will we get there without a radical shake up - and will the Williams Review provide it?

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](#).



Inaugurated in 2012 but paused for 2019, the annual RUG Awards will return for 2020. The closing date for nominations is 1 March, with the presentations made at the National AGM in Birmingham on 27 June. The categories open for [nominations](#) are:

- 1 – Best website
- 2 – Best social media promotion
- 3 – Best newsletter
- 4 – Best new group - the Oliver Lovell Award
- 5 – Best campaign
- 6 – Best campaigner - the Clara Zilahi Award (for Rf members only).

The Judges' Special Award is made or not at their sole discretion.

THE NORTHERN FRANCHISE

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has stated that he will take action on the Northern franchise and appoint either an Operator of Last Resort or a short-term direct contract. An [article](#) by the Rf Board analyses the root causes of the poor performance, and concludes that the DfT should award a short direct contract to an operator to fight off the alligators, while a separate team drains the swamp by defining an operational solution that will work in the long term.

PASSENGER GROUP

The Group agreed that it should campaign on issue of seat comfort (or lack of it), which had arisen because of DfT specifications for the design of new rolling stock. Making a comfortable seat that complied with all the relevant safety regulations was more expensive, whilst efforts to save weight may also be an issue. The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) had commissioned a research project on seat comfort.

People who are colour blind have difficulty seeing the illuminated toilet engaged signs on trains. However, this would not be covered by accessibility regulations, as colour blindness was not regarded as a disability.

Regarding the new EMR franchise, the Group noted the East Midlands Branch's concern about using pairs of Class 153s coupled to a Class 158 on some Nottingham - Liverpool services; it sees this as a retrograde step in terms of passenger comfort and reliability, the latter because the service can operate at only 75mph west of Nottingham with the 153s attached, as opposed to 90mph at present. EMR concedes that the situation is far from ideal, but says it is the best it can do to maintain capacity with the rolling stock it has been allocated. EMR is due to receive 11 3-car and 22 2-car Class 170s from WMT and GTR in 2021, which will replace all of its Regional fleet currently comprised of Classes 153, 156 and 158.

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

At a Branch meeting, members expressed their disappointment with Cross Country Trains to Stakeholder Liaison Manager Alex Bray. Over the last 12 years, passenger numbers have increased from 32 million to 41 million, but with few additional seats. The overcrowding has been widely reported in the rail press, with many pleading with XC to use HSTs now stabled out of use. But making this old stock legally compliant with the new accessibility regulations would be costly. So where do the extra fares go? Apparently, £1m per week returns to the DfT, whilst some fares are not as low as they might be to avoid further overcrowding.

Another ongoing complaint is the seat reservation system. Some passengers buy a ticket and make a reservation on the train after it has set off. Passengers who have sat in those seats when the screen said “available” are confused when challenged by the new customer, and this can lead to confrontations. This situation is likely to get worse as XC is trialling same day “advance” purchases. In a show of hands, the majority were against seat reservations after departure.

The Branch objected on environmental grounds to a planning application by National Grid for work that would make it more difficult to re-instate and electrify the Woodhead line. However, it supports the proposal by MEMRAP (Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership) to reopen the line from Matlock to Buxton and Peak Forest. It would provide passenger services from Derby to Manchester, a steam service from Matlock to Buxton, and a more direct route for stone trains to the south of England, relieving congestion on the Hope Valley line. It is seen as a credible project that could be achieved quickly: the “only” major works required would be to replace the Monsal Trail cycle route (!) and to build a bridge over the A6 at Rowsley.

Branch Chairman Nina Smith has three challenges to TOCs regarding station signage:

- Name (running) boards adequately illuminated at night
- End of platform boards set at sixty degrees to the track to tell passengers which station they have just passed
- Signs in more than one language, especially for tourists from countries that do not use the Latin script, eg China and Japan. Keighley (for Howarth) is a classic example.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

RFEA devised a survey and assessed almost every station in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, north Essex, north Herts and east Central Beds through the eyes of occasional, infrequent and anxious travellers, as well as season ticket holders and other more confident travellers. If stations work for people with limited mobility, hidden disabilities, young children or heavy luggage, then they will work better for everyone. Its [Easy Stations report](#) sets out findings and recommendations to encourage further investment.

A Cambridge South station on the biomedical campus is needed now. Instead, a [public consultation](#) will run from 20 January to 2 March, with events at various local venues. A second round of consultation on a preferred option is expected later this year, prior to an application to the Transport Secretary for a Transport and Works Act Order in 2021. Subject to gaining the necessary funding and consent, work could start in 2023, with a target to open of 2025.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

East Hampshire CRP, No 55 on the [ACoRP map](#), is expanding to form Hampshire CRP. However, creating a structure to oversee “any line in Hampshire and across its borders” would embrace No 41, Three Rivers CRP from Salisbury to Southampton and Bursledon, and No 28 between Lymington and Brockenhurst.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

The CBT [Future of Rail](#) report examines the current failings of the railways, and what steps the Government needs to take to get them back on track. Drawing upon the evidence submitted to the Williams Rail Review, it makes a number of recommendations for radical improvement. It's now up to the Government to seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity, and produce a White Paper detailing its new rail policy as soon as possible after the Williams Review is published.

Local public transport was a priority for all the main political parties in the election, so there's real hope that the network will have a brighter future. A National Bus Strategy has the potential to protect vital bus routes, reconnect communities and make bus travel greener and cheaper.

More than a year after the previous Transport Secretary said that fare rises would no longer be linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI), regulated fares have been yet again. It's time for a complete overhaul of the system, and a fairer way to calculate future levels. Only total reform will ensure the railways are more affordable and better value for passengers, and so restore passengers' faith in the rail network.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

The best thing the rail industry can do to help save the planet and offer users a decent choice is to run trains on time - better still if they are electric. Only the return of the reliable railway will take some of the sting out of looming fare rises. In the meantime, passengers should Make Delay Pay by claiming compensation – even if you donate it to charity, make your voice heard!

Case Study: Mrs H bought an advance return ticket from Banbury to Southampton Central. The return leg was so crowded that she couldn't get to her reserved seat; claustrophobia forced her to get off at Reading, so she had to buy another ticket to continue her journey. As Mrs H saw this as a health and safety issue, she asked CrossCountry to refund her extra ticket. She was told she would be contacted, but got no response. CrossCountry agreed with TF that Mrs H should have been issued a refund; her case should also have been reopened when she contacted them again, so arrangements were made for a refund to be issued.

The issue of overcrowding is something that extends beyond any one operator or route. TF believes that it is one of the key challenges facing the rail industry in the coming years. Unless there is a concerted effort to address the issue, the network will increasingly fail to deliver a service that meets the needs of passengers.

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

In preparation for CP6, ORR changed its internal processes: focusing on holding NR to account, and prioritising early action more clearly where this would benefit railway users. They also better reflect NR's structure and public sector status by providing for ORR to apply financial penalties to management bonuses (for example at regional level) rather than imposing fines that merely reduce NR's overall funding.

DfT has granted some dispensations around replacement vehicles non-compliant for accessibility. ORR has re-emphasised to all train operating companies their responsibility to advise passengers of any such issues that might affect their journey. It will monitor how they provide that information, including 'mystery shopping' exercises online and in stations.

A 1.2 billion pound [upgrade](#) of the East Coast Main Line will entail a reduced service on every weekend from 11 January to 1 March, with full closure on two weekends. On 25-26 January, there will be no service south of Peterborough other than Hitchin – Kings Lynn. On 29 February and 1 March, there will be no service between London King's Cross/St Pancras & Letchworth Garden City and Biggleswade, although trains will run from these stations to King's Lynn and Peterborough respectively. Services into St Pancras on the Midland Main Line and the Bedford branch of the Thameslink will not be affected.

Scottish Transport Secretary Michael Matheson has confirmed that the Abellio ScotRail franchise will be ended prematurely. Significantly increasing Government subsidy would not deliver commensurate benefits to passengers, communities and the economy, so it will remain at its existing level, and the franchise is expected to end in March 2022. However, rollout of ScotRail's Class 385 trains was completed last month, making a total of 1,016 carriages – a 28% increase since the start of the Abellio franchise. It is also in the process of introducing 26 fully refurbished InterCity HSTs, of which [Rail Magazine](#) fully approves.

Fife Council has granted Scottish Enterprise outline planning permission to redevelop the former Longannet Power Station site. Scottish Enterprise and Transport Scotland recently signed a joint framework agreement with train maker Talgo UK to assign part of the site as its manufacturing base.

Following its Outline Transport Strategy last July, England's Economic Heartland, the putative sub-national transport body for the Oxford-Cambridge arc, is now preparing the full document for consultation in July. Meanwhile, anticipating the benefits that East West Rail will bring as it crosses the West Coast Main Line, Milton Keynes Council has published a [Central Bletchley Prospectus](#).

Hertfordshire County Council's new [Draft Rail Strategy](#), currently out to public consultation until 30 March, envisages Watford Junction as a 'super hub'. Its wish list includes:

- Resurrecting the Croxley Rail Link to provide a direct service to Aylesbury
- Doubling the number of services to Birmingham, with hourly services to Manchester and Liverpool
- Upgrading the Abbey Line to St Albans Abbey to allow a half-hourly service
- Two West London Line services an hour, extended to Gatwick Airport.

The December timetable change also saw the opening of two new stations: at Warrington West between Liverpool and Manchester, and at Robroyston, on the Glasgow Queen Street - Edinburgh line via Falkirk Grahamston. With 263 free parking spaces, and close to M80 J2, Robroyston provides an easy commuting option both for local residents, and for motorists from further afield. Similarly, Garforth station just off the M1 near Leeds now has 83 additional free car parking spaces, bringing the total to 333, together with another 10 blue badge bays, and a new cycle shelter.

Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council is examining with NR the technical feasibility and value for money of relocating Poole railway station to the east of the level crossing, to create a travel interchange with the bus station. NR said it would give "serious consideration" to part-funding any project that enabled the level crossing to be closed.

A West Midlands Rail Executive feasibility study has deemed as viable the project to open a new railway station in Aldridge. It is hoped that two trains an hour could run from Wolverhampton to Aldridge via Birmingham New Street and Walsall, with an estimated 500,000 passengers using the service annually. However, West Midlands Mayor Andy Street would also like trains to serve Aldridge as part of the current Wolverhampton to Walsall line, with new stations at Darlaston and Willenhall.

On 7 January, DB Cargo UK launched a new route for Maritime Intermodal from Felixstowe to its new East Midlands Gateway (EMG) Terminal at Castle Donington. The 17-acre site is capable of handling up to sixteen freight trains daily, and serves Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Kegworth and Castle Donington.

Parliament has a new champion for transport reform in Chris Loder, the newly elected MP for West Dorset. A 20 year railway career saw him progress from station assistant at Salisbury to Head of New Trains at South Western Railway, with spells at c2c, Chiltern Railways and Deutsche Bahn.

Irish Rail, which jointly operates the Belfast to Dublin Enterprise service with NI's Translink, has banned customers from refilling their own reusable cups. The company is trialling its own cup, which is compatible with its on-board catering trolley. A spokeswoman for Irish Rail told [BBC News NI](#) it was a "bespoke cup that is designed to fit under the spout of the trolley, and the lids have been tested for safety purposes".

,,,and finally

The Lymm Hotel (adjacent to the site of Lymm station) was demolished in October. It hosted the Brazil football team (including Pele) during the 1966 World Cup competition, but the team complained that they were kept awake all night by the frequent steam-hauled freight trains. 1966 was the only time ever that Brazil did not progress beyond the group stage of the competition, so the Lymm line helped to pave the way for England's only ever victory!

Thameslink's oldest member of staff has worked on the railways for 57 years, and still plays cricket for England over-70s at the ripe old age of 80! Siggie Cragwell gets up at 4am to do the 6-11am shift as a platform assistant at Elstree & Borehamwood station - and then goes to the gym to keep fit.

On Christmas Eve, NR teamed up with the Sikh charity Midland Langar Seva Society and the Monsoon Venue Group to give 350 homeless and vulnerable people a festive dinner on the concourse of Birmingham New Street station. Carol singers and Santa Claus helped to create a party atmosphere.

CONSULTATIONS

- East Midlands Railway: [Draft December 2020 Timetable](#), closes 14 February
- Office of Rail and Road: [Accessibility of rail replacement services](#), closes 14 February
- Hertfordshire County Council: [Draft Rail Strategy](#), closes 30 March.

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, a stand-alone list 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.

January

- Saturday 25. Rf Yorkshire AGM, St. George's Conference Centre, 60 Great George Street, **Leeds**, LS1 3DL, 1300.
- Tuesday 28. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Ajax Way, Leven KY8 3RS, 1830 (and the last Tuesday of every month) – **NB Reversion to previous venue.**

February

- Saturday 1. St Andrews Rail Link Campaign AGM, Scorecard Bar, Scores Hotel, **St Andrews**, KY16 9BB, 1030.
- Tuesday 4. Ribble Valley Railway Committee Meeting (open to all), New Inn, **Clitheroe**, 1430 (Also 3 March).
- Tuesday 4. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers Association, The Unicorn, **Caersws**, 1845 (Also 3 March, Shrewsbury Station, 1745).
- Thursday 9. Rf London & South East, Sussex and Coastway Division, 1800 (also the first Thursday of each month (except August) at various venues).
- Saturday 8. English Regional Transport Association, The Rupert Brooke, 8-10 Castle Street, **Rugby**, Warwickshire, CV21 2TP, 1500
- Saturday 15. Rf London & South East, Kent Division, venue TBC.
- Saturday 15. East Suffolk Travellers Association, Quay Street Church, **Woodbridge**, 1400
- Tuesday 18. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (and 31 March).
- Saturday 22. English Regional Transport Association, Unitarian Church Hall, Worthing Road, **Horsham**, RH12 1SL, 1400.

Further Ahead

- 4 March. Rf Yorkshire Branch, Yorkshire Childrens' Centre, **Huddersfield**.
- 11 March. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London**, E15 1NG, 1830 (and second Wednesday of every alternate month.)
- 14 March. English Regional Transport Association, The Red Well, 16 Silver Street, **Wellingborough**, Northants, NN8 1BD, 1500
- 25 April. Rf West Midlands AGM, Priory Rooms, Bull Street, **Birmingham**.
- 25 April. English Regional Transport Association Conference, The Courthouse, Church Lane, **Berkhamsted**, HP4 2AX, 1400.
- 19 June. Friends of the Far North Line AGM and Conference, Ross County FC, Dingwall.

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

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