



October 2022

Welcome to the Rail User Express

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RUX joins the nation in mourning the death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Chris Hillyard, who managed the Royal train from 1977 to 2010, is confident of its future under King Charles III: "His Majesty has a great love of the train, and finds it fits in with the way He and His household work. I'd like to think that His Majesty and the new Prince of Wales possibly will use its facilities around the realm to visit the populous."

Roger Smith

We continue with news from groups around Great Britain. All contributions are gratefully received.

Friends of the Far North Line

Appendix 5 of the Scottish Rail Holdings Framework Agreement cites Transport Scotland's [Rail Enhancements & Capital Investment Strategy](#) that seeks to optimise value for money in terms of "economic, social and environmental benefits". Planners need to look at how far Highland railways have fallen behind this test, and what it would take to catch up; there is a very long way to go. FoFNL looks forward to the "Helmsdale Hub" recast of FNL services and additional passing loops that would open up new possibilities for both passengers and freight.

Scotrail Trains plans to replace 65% of its stock in the period 2027-2035. Trains for rural routes will be procured in Phase 2 (2024-25), to enter service around 2030. Decarbonisation is likely to justify electrifying the FNL as far as Tain. The remaining 74%, to Thurso and Wick, will require a self-powered alternative to diesel traction. David Shires, Editor of RailEngineer Magazine, believes that to provide the required range, this will have to be hydrogen.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

The Bawbee Bridge that carries the A955 over the River Leven and the new Levenmouth Rail Link is in poor condition and deteriorating further, so NR is replacing it at a cost of around £8,150,000. The new Bridge near the site of Leven station should enter service next August.

After unveiling its plans for the new Leven and Cameron Bridge stations at two community drop-in events, NR has submitted the planning applications to Fife Council.

NR is to close all three of the ancient rights of way across the Levenmouth Rail Link between Thornton Junction and Windygates/Cameron Bridge. Doubledykes is legally a private crossing, though this was never enforced while the railway was non-operational. However, campaigners say the closures “will cause particular difficulties for residents and other users of the three crossings that presently exist south of Coaltown of Balgonie.”

Lakes Line Rail User Group

Platforms at Oxenholme and Staveley have been extended to accommodate the 6-car trains that relieve the congested Castlefield corridor in Manchester. But rather than split them half way, which needs more staff and costs time, peak hour trains to and from Central Manchester and the Airport will run as 6-car trains for the whole journey.

Northern has consulted on changes and improvements users want in its next generation of trains. The LLRUG Chairman listed items such as luggage space, connections between units, and a higher top speed that would make it easier to path Windermere - Manchester services on the main line.

To mark the 175th Anniversary of the Windermere branch, the [Cumbrian Railways Association](#) is soon to publish a second edition of Dick Smith’s history of the Kendal and Windermere Railway. It includes new chapters on “The World the Railway Changed”, proposals to extend the railway beyond Windermere, and its connections with Croppers paper mills in the Burneside area.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines

Salford Central station will be closed for improvement between 2 January and 21 May 2023, with trains running through non-stop. There will also be a number of Sunday possessions across the route from January to March.

Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership

From December, EMR is restoring direct weekday services between Matlock and Nottingham in the morning and evening peaks, although outside these times passengers will still have to change at Derby. The change is partly thanks to the 10,570 who signed Gary Parsons’ online petition. The hope now is for a full service to resume in May 2023.

With support from MEMRAP, Peaks and Dales Railway is seeking to use the DfT ‘Ideas Fund’ for a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to reinstate the former Midland main line from Derby and Matlock to Manchester via Millers Dale, and then to seek a Transport and Works Act Order. It would facilitate public access to the Peak District, and also create an alternative freight route, taking HGVs off the roads, and relieving the congested Hope Valley line through Edale.

Friends of the Barton Line

Cleethorpes MP Martin Vickers drew the attention of ex-Transport Minister Karl McCartney MP to the ‘appalling service’ that his constituents were enduring from Trans Pennine Express. TPE said that this was due in part to high levels of staff sickness.

EMR has returned the Barton train service to a high level of reliability, although the DfT will not after all fund the winter extension of the Sunday service. The Chairman will ask Martin Vickers MP to press the DfT to reconsider, as there was a demand for this service outside of the summer months, including the Easter holidays.

The Chairman will raise the problem of TPE units blocking in EMR units at Cleethorpes with TPE, and also ask EMR whether Barton trains could be stabled at Lincoln. Restoring Platforms 5 and 6 at Cleethorpes to passenger use would also allow greater flexibility in their stabling.

FBL attended the reopening of Barrow Haven station on 14 October after ‘Unforeseen issues on site’ had delayed its rebuild.

Solar 21 is proposing a Green Energy Park at Flixborough that would include reinstatement of the rail link to Scunthorpe to serve a new freight complex.

East Suffolk Travel Association

Most of the 13,000 copies of ESTA's five "Discover" leaflets printed in May have been distributed. The 3,000 copies of "Discover Lowestoft & Oulton Broad" had almost all gone by the end of August, so a reprint of 1,000 was ordered. And prompted by ESTA and the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association, two of the CRPs came to an agreement with Greater Anglia to print timetables for the East Suffolk, Wherry and Bittern Lines.

English Regional Transport Association

A new parkway station at Ampthill would relieve Flitwick and, with access from Fordfield Road to the west, provide a more direct link to Center Parcs.

A King's College London, Imperial College London and University of Leicester [study](#) has shown that adults exposed to high levels of traffic-related air pollution are more prone to mental disorders. Air pollution is not the only factor that may damage mental health, but it is a preventable one, eg by taking freight off the road and on to rail.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

In partnership with Hertfordshire CC, [Watford Borough Council](#), Three Rivers DC and NR, three transport consultancies - Atkins, SYSTRA UK and Wood Group – have a budget of £275k to explore a wide range of proposals and offer innovative solutions to repurpose the former Croxley Green branch on which services were 'suspended' in March 1996, but never resumed.

[TfL](#) expects to receive further base funding of around £1.2bn from Government to 31 March 2024, as well as ongoing revenue support should passenger numbers not recover at the rate budgeted. It can now commit £3.6bn to capital investment over the period, including some £200m of new funding, and increase its asset renewal programme to help maintain a reliable network.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

BTPG asked GWR to restore one IET that would enable four additional direct services each way between Bedwyn and Paddington. GWR said that the idea was well thought out and would work, but they had no spare IETs to do it. Existing services need 80 IETs/day, but Hitachi typically supply only 75 from a stock of 93 due to the cracking problem, so that has to be resolved first. However, GWR has agreed to look into making the 1636 from Paddington off-peak for Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn, as the 1507 departure makes for a very short a day out in London. MPs Laura Farris and Danny Kruger have raised these issues with GWR and the DfT.

BTPG also asked if the two 5-car sets that make up a 10-car IET could be split and four coaches added to make a 9-car set and a 5-car set. The additional coaches would have to be purchased, but GWR said it would then be possible, as a 9-car set would have roughly the same seating capacity as two 5-car sets joined together.

Tarka Rail Association

Tarka Rail Association's 'ACE Rail' campaign has secured a grant from GWR's Community Fund. Together with a grant from Rf's Fighting Fund and a donation from TRA, it has enabled an Initial Business Case to be commissioned to examine restoring mainline rail services to Bideford by extending Tarka line from Barnstaple, and adding an extra hourly fast service to the county capital. The final report will be published in March 2023. Rf's Director for Infrastructure & Networks Roger Blake commented: "The financial support of the train operator is a symbolic as well as practical vote of confidence in the credibility of the campaign".

Avocet Line Rail Users Group

In December, GWR introduced an extra evening train and then two more in May, so the line now has a half hourly service from St Davids until 2153 and from Exmouth until 2224. May also saw the earliest train of the day reinstated. Passenger numbers are now higher than before the pandemic, but rolling stock provision has become worse through the year, with far too many instances of only two carriages, often resulting in overcrowding and passengers left behind. The line has also seen more cancellations, as well as skip-stopping to make up time. ALRUG argues that following trains should call at missed stations, but this has not happened.

RAILFUTURE

Rf welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more weight to its 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 on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Consultation responses](#).

NEWS

History repeats itself...unless we learn from it. Rail staff may not remember that the prolonged ASLEF strike in 1955 killed the wagonload freight business as customers transferred to newly deregulated road transport and never returned. Many rail jobs were lost, and BR's investment in modernising marshalling yards was wasted. A win/win outcome is possible with meaningful negotiation. Otherwise rail will snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. – *Chris Page writing in Railwatch*

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

An all-party Transport Select Committee (TSC) report says that the Integrated Rail Plan must be thoroughly reassessed to ensure this once-in-a-generation investment in rail is not wasted. If full analysis of its wider economic impacts and alternative options for Northern Powerhouse Rail offer better value and outcomes, the Government must make the necessary changes. The most urgent is for a through underground station at Manchester Piccadilly, as this would open up a whole raft of new North - South services, and relieve the Castlefield corridor. TfN's preferred NPR route to Leeds via Bradford would follow naturally.

TPE is expected to start a Manchester Piccadilly - York service via Wakefield and Castleford in May 2023 by extending the Stalybridge line stoppers that currently terminate at Huddersfield. Castleford station, where stopping trains from Leeds to Sheffield and Knottingley reverse, is gaining a second platform so that trains to and from York via Church Fenton can call.

The rail group of Pontefract Civic Society has written to DfT to support the SOBC to reopen (Leeds) - Pontefract – Doncaster to passenger service, and restore connections to the south. It would include a station at Askern, and at least one extra platform for trains to serve Knottingley. Although the SOBC sets out alternatives, the existing route between Askern and Doncaster via Shaftholme Junction offers obvious benefits in terms of cost and journey time. Getting a service going is the primary aim, but a longer-term objective could be for a through service to Lincoln. The group's second priority is York – Baghill - Sheffield, which has barely a handful of trains daily, and a particularly unusable pattern on Sundays. Their third aim is to turn the few trains each day on the Goole line into a useful service that connects with Doncaster – Hull - Scarborough trains.

Following progression of the SOBC to the next stage of Restoring Your Railway, NR and local councils are in talks to reinstate passenger services to the Sheffield - Chesterfield freight line via Barrow Hill (the original North Midland Railway route), with stations serving Whittington, Staveley, Eckington and Killamarsh.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

A NR report “Wisbech to March: Potential for Light Rail” recommended a Tram-Train solution, as it would enable operation on both the national rail network and roads into Wisbech town centre and the Garden Town. The same NR team noted that Rf’s recent Restoring Your Railway bid to reopen a link to Haverhill “has potential as a Tram-Train scheme, especially if access to the West Anglia Main Line into Cambridge is required. A light rail solution would reduce [its] capital infrastructure costs. The development of a Tram-Train fleet in the area could also tie with other opportunities such as Wisbech.”

Improvement of the Bittern Line from Norwich to Cromer and Sheringham is back on the agenda. A Norfolk CC and Broadland DC study in 2016 concluded that a positive case could be made for a half-hourly service to North Walsham, with a new station close to the Broadland Business Park, and now also a large new residential development. A broad time frame allows for a further feasibility study, design and development running through to 2027, and construction around 2028.

RAILFUTURE LONDON & SOUTH EAST

Infrastructure grants for the Hoo peninsular are contingent on 10,600 new homes. A Medway Council [report](#) recommended that work be taken forward pending development of the Local Plan. A consultation on the Hoo Development Framework is open until 25 November (see below).

Rf’s [response](#) to Transport for the South East’s draft Strategic Investment Plan sought to convince the sub-national transport body that, for most-value ‘East-West Connectivity’ for Gatwick Airport, it must abandon its fixation with Ashford and turn north-east to the Medway Towns / Maidstone conurbation to create an orbital economic corridor to Guildford and Reading via Tonbridge and Redhill / Gatwick Airport.

In August, Rf Chair and L&SE Vice-Chair presented Rf’s distinctive, growth-based [campaign](#) to “Bridge the gap” between Uckfield and Lewes to the Planning Committee of Lewes Town Council. If the people of Lewes and Wealden Districts can decide through their elected representatives to agglomerate the inevitable housing growth somewhere outside the South Downs National Park, then Rf and others have a very good chance of justifying a new rail link to serve it

RAILFUTURE SEVERNSIDE

After the West of England Combined Authority agreed to contribute £10m, the Portishead - Bristol line could reopen in four years time. The DfT still has to approve the development consent order (hopefully by February 2023) and the business case, expected in October 2023. There are still “possible minefields” ahead before it can sign off the whole project, possibly in January 2024. Construction could then take two years, followed by testing and certification.

RAILFUTURE WESSEX

Rf Wessex Chair Mike Southgate has had some success in getting CrossCountry to reinstate calls at Winchester and Brockenhurst. All of its trains will once again call at Winchester from December, and the regional manager has promised to “keep nagging for resolution of other service issues”, including the omitted Brockenhurst stops.

COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK

On 24 August, Northern Trains and the Leeds-Morecambe CRP supported the Bradford based Refugee Action Group with a trip along the scenic Bentham Line to the seaside at Morecambe. Guided by Catherine Huddleston, the CRP’s Partnership Officer, the visit came as a respite from the day-to-day worries of the families, many of whom had never previously travelled by train or visited the seaside.

In 2021, GWR and CrossCountry Trains provided funding for the Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Severnside and TransWilts CRPs to work in partnership to develop their education provision. The delivery of this scheme could not have come at a better time, as schools severely curtailed most outdoor activities during the pandemic. GWR, West Midlands Trains and Transport for Wales are supporting the scheme by offering free travel for school trips.

At the Community Rail Awards, Julie Levy, Chair of Bolton Station Community Partnership and South East Lancashire CRP, was awarded 'Outstanding Volunteer Contribution'. She has used her wide expertise in the arts, education, and community work to develop and deliver a range of projects that have engaged with people from all ages and backgrounds, and made a significant impact locally. SELCRP also won first prize for its pioneering Wigan Mural Project. A new film featuring the work of Bolton's 'Platform Poets' was shown during the event.

CRN's Days Out campaign from 17 October to 6 November will draw on local knowledge and insights from members to deliver inspiring ideas focused on family days out, short breaks and longer stays through its [Scenic Rail Britain](#) tourism website.

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

The new Government's Growth Plan includes ten rail schemes: the Northumberland Line; the Transpennine route upgrade; Northern Powerhouse Rail; electrification of the Midland Main Line to Derby, Sheffield and Nottingham; East West Rail (EWR); stations at White Rose, Thorpe Park and Cambridge South, and improvements to Leeds station and in the Manchester area.

A section of the line between Inverness and Aberdeen is closed until 26 October to substantially complete the new Inverness Airport station, install a passing loop, and enhance track in the area. A new pedestrian bridge will enable the closure of the level crossing at Petty.

Glasgow's subway operator expects to run its new open-plan Stadler trains with no staff on board from 2025. They have been test running since April, and will start carrying passengers next year.

England's Economic Heartland, sub-national transport authority for the Oxford - Cambridge arc, says that EWR will drive innovation and productivity, and encourage investment from abroad. Cllr Steven Broadbent, Chair of the [East West Main Line Partnership](#) of local authorities, said: "We welcome the inclusion of EWR on the list of major infrastructure projects which the Government wants to prioritise. As businesses in the region told us for our [Building Better Connections](#) report, its delivery in full to Aylesbury, Bedford and Cambridge cannot come soon enough." And in an interview with BBC Look East, Prime Minister Liz Truss also gave her backing to the £5bn project.

The Direct Air-Rail Transit (DART) that will connect London Luton Airport with the rail network in just over three minutes was due to open in 2020, but will now not operate until next year at the earliest. Testing is well advanced, but there are issues with the system's revenue and ticketing, and more time is needed to complete all the regulatory, operational and health and safety testing.

In Southeastern's new service pattern, reductions from stations like Hayes to Charing Cross, Cannon Street and Waterloo East will force more people to change at London Bridge, which is already a busy station. However, it has restored peak time services between Beckenham Junction and London Blackfriars, and there will be a new all-day service between Maidstone East and Charing Cross via London Bridge. Southeastern says that removing bottlenecks from routes will increase reliability, with more trains running on time, and fewer cancellations.

An economic feasibility study is being drawn up for a £200m rail freight terminal on a 22-acre site at the former power station at Huncoat, north of Accrington. The project has the support of Sara Britcliffe MP, Miranda Barker of East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Debbie Francis of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

To reduce its environmental footprint, Royal Mail is planning to treble the amount of material it sends by rail. A fully automated parcels hub at Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal near Rugby should open next year. Another in Warrington, also rail connected, opened in June.

Connection of the Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange at M1 Junction 15 to the WCML has been delayed until next September or early 2024, as it "did not fit into the wider industry planning timescales". Currently, the warehouses cannot be occupied without the rail link, and were this planning condition to be removed, local MP Andrea Leadsom has "grave concerns" that the freight terminal could become "yet another lorry park". Residents are concerned that HGVs will use local roads to avoid delays on the M1 and A43. And when the rail link does open, will the WCML have enough capacity to service it?

,,,and finally

In August, the East Coast Main Line was closed while overhead lines near Biggleswade were cleared of straw, lest it foul the train pantographs and bring the wires down. Is this a one-off, or a sign of things to come due to climate change?

CONSULTATIONS

- Worcestershire County Council: [Rail Investment Strategy-2 - 2022-50](#), closes 21 October.
- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport: [Regional Transport Strategy](#), closes 28 October.
- South Gloucestershire Council: [Planning Application for new Charfield Station](#), closes 31 October.
- Welsh Government: [Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance](#), closes 3 November.
- West Oxfordshire District Council: [Main Modifications to the draft Area Action Plan for Salt Cross Garden Village](#), closes 4 November.
- Medway Council: [Hoo Development Framework](#), closes 25 November

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

EVENTS

Please keep your events coming, and update websites with any changes as soon as they are made. Stand-alone lists are helpful, as newsletters may be discarded. Also copy [Roger Blake](#), who maintains lists of [Events](#) and [Key Dates](#) on the Rf website.

Blob colour indicates the type of event:

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

October

- Saturday 15. East Suffolk Transport Association, Market Hall, High Street, **Saxmundham**, 1400.
- Saturday 15. English Regional Transport Association, St Peters Court House, Church Lane, **Berkhamsted**, Hertfordshire, HP4 2AX, 1400.
- Saturday 15. Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association AGM, Friends Meeting House, St. John's Street, **Bury St. Edmunds**, Suffolk, IP33 1SJ, 1415.
- Friday 21. TravelWatch SouthWest, Taunton Brewhouse Theatre, Coal Orchard, **Taunton**, Somerset, TA1 1JL, 1030.
- Friday 21. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Manor Hotel, **Exmouth**, 1930.
- Saturday 22. Connect Bude AGM, Falcon Hotel, Breakwater Road, **Bude**, EX23 8SD, 1100.
- Tuesday 25. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Ajax Way, **Methil**, Leven, KY8 3RS and **Online**, 1830 (Also the last Tuesday of every month).

- Tuesday 25. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, HP5 1EP, 1930 (Also 6 Dec.)
- Saturday 29. English Regional Transport Association, Rodboro Buildings (Wetherspoons), 1–10 Bridge Street, **Guildford**, Surrey, GU1 4RY, 1400.

November

- Tuesday 1. Community Rail Network AGM, **Online**, 1400.
- Thursday 3. Rf London South East, Sussex and Coastway Division, **Brighton?** 1800 (Also 1 December).
- Saturday 5. English Regional Transport Association, Methodist Church, Northampton Road, **Market Harborough**, LE16 9HE, 1400.
- Tuesday 8. STORM, Blue Pits Inn, 842 Manchester Road, **Castleton**, OL11 2SP, 1400 (Also the second Tuesday of each month).
- Wednesday 9. Rf London South East, Eastern Division, **Online**, 1900.
- Monday 14. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, BB7 2JN, 1900 (Also 12 December).
- Wednesday 16. England's Economic Heartland, MK Dons Stadium, **Milton Keynes**.
- Wednesday 16. Friends of the Barton Line, White Swan, **Barton**, 1800 (NB change of time) (also 19 January at the No.1 inn at Cleethorpes station, 1900).
- Wednesday 16. Lakes Line Rail User Group AGM, Town Hall, **Kendal**, 1930.
- Wednesday 16. Rf London South East, Herts & Beds Division, **Online**, 1930.
- Friday 18. MarshLink Action Group AGM, Rye Town Hall, Market Street, **Rye**, East Sussex, TN31 7LA, 1900.
- Saturday 19. Rf London South East, Kent Division, **Ashford?** 1400.

Further Ahead

- 3 December. Rf East Anglia, The Signal Box Community Centre, Glenalmond Avenue, **Cambridge**, CB2 8DB, 1400.
- 30 March 2023. Rf Annual Conference, St Georges Centre, 60 Great George Street, **Leeds**, LS1 3DL

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

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