

Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

As always, feel free to forward RUEX to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). If you want further details of any of the stories mentioned, look on the relevant website or, failing that, get back to me so I can send you the full text.

For details about group affiliation to Railfuture, see website [here](#) (from the "Membership Type" menu, select "RUG").

Sending out Rail User Express bulletins

I've finally admitted defeat! My internet service provider is determined to block outgoing emails to multiple recipients, so I've handed over the task to Railfuture's IT guru, Lloyd Butler. This month, I'm sending Lloyd my completed bulletin together with a list of contacts, then he'll send it out. If all goes to plan, you should receive it as if it came from me (ie from "ruglink@railfuture"), on or very shortly after the publication date. *Thanks Lloyd!*

Lists of Rail User Groups

I've uploaded new editions of Railfuture's **National A-Z list** and **Regional A-Z list** of Rail User Groups onto Railfuture's website [here](#) (both are now dated Aug 2014). Please take a moment to look at one or other list and check that details are correct for your rail user group and any others you may know about – *thanks!*

Guest User Group of the Month : Wirral Transport Users' Association

The Wirral Transport Users' Association got in touch to tell us that they now have their own website here: <http://www.wirraltua.org.uk/> - that's a good enough reason to feature them as Guest User Group of the Month! In fact, they've been affiliated to Railfuture for a number of years.

The group represents rail, ferry and bus passengers in an area bounded by the rivers Dee and Mersey, stretching from Chester to Birkenhead. A major campaign is for a half-hourly service (with eventual electrification) on the Wrexham-Bidston line through the centre of the Wirral peninsula. The group also wants to see new stations at Ledsham, Little Neston/Ness Gardens, Deeside Industrial Estate and other locations. There's disappointment that new trains for Merseyrail are not now expected before 2018.

Members enjoy outings to heritage railways in the area and the committee is considering a visit to the Llangollen Railway this autumn.

We continue with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK. As always, I'm very grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.

LevenMouth Rail Campaign – green light for feasibility study

The 160th anniversary of the inaugural train on the Leven Railway in August provided the LMRC with the opportunity to issue a press release telling the story of the line's inception and drawing parallels with the current reopening campaign. The press release points out that the line has been mothballed since closure in 1969 and remains substantially intact. The story attracted good coverage in the local press.

The LMRC is in the process of applying for charitable status and is looking at options for fundraising and sources of grant income. The group is pleased to have representatives from Fife Council on board - the focus at the moment is to develop links with the business community to build an economic case for reopening. The Fife Structure Plan calls for 1,650 new houses in Levenmouth, adding to the potential demand for a passenger service.

One idea to promote the scheme is a walk-the-line event which would be filmed professionally to demonstrate the route's potential. Paper and on-line petitions have so far attracted well over 1,000 individual supporters; the website www.lmrc-action.org.uk gives more details about the campaign.

Late news: Following positive talks held with the Scottish Transport Minister, Fife Council report that they have now received the green light to proceed with a Feasibility Study – either a completely new appraisal or simply a refresh of the 2008 study. The overall intention of the Council is to have a “shovel-ready” project in place and ready to go for 2017. LMRC says “To translate this progress into a firm final decision requires residents across Levenmouth and the East Neuk to get behind the project and demonstrate their support.”

Rail Action Group East of Scotland – members views will influence work of new CRP

The creation of a new “East Lothian Community Rail Partnership” for the lines from Edinburgh to North Berwick and Dunbar is announced in the August edition of “The RAGES Rag”, and a survey form is enclosed so that RAGES members can indicate their priorities for action over the coming year. The survey is also available online [here](#).

The shortage of car parking spaces at Drem continues to cause problems, and RAGES will be conducting a postcode survey at the station to get a picture of where the station users are coming from – they want the council and ScotRail to treat extension of the car park as a priority.

Volunteers at Dunbar have created a new garden to highlight the seaside attractions nearby. It features colourful plants, brightly-coloured buckets and spades, and a surfboard mounted to form a nameplate proclaiming “Dunbar: sand, sea and surf”. The surfing school based in Dunbar's station building donated the board. Elsewhere, we read that the management of the station at Dunbar is likely to be transferred to ScotRail in the near future.

I see the RAGES Rag editor is plugging Railfuture's photo competition which closes at the end of September - thanks for that!

South East Northumberland Rail Users' Group – disappointment with East Coast franchise spec.

In the run-up to the Northern and TransPennine franchise consultation deadline, SENRUG urged its supporters to send in their own responses, with reference to information on the group's website and in their special “aspirations” leaflet.

The group was disappointed that the DfT's specification for the new East Coast franchise did not include any of the improvements for South East Northumberland that they had been asking for. In some areas, the minimum service level enshrined in the specification is for a worse level of service than operates today. SENRUG raised this with the Dept. for Transport, and a local MP has also raised the matter. Disappointingly, only one of the three bidders met with SENRUG during the bid phase.

SENRUG is delighted that Northumberland County Council now appear to be fully committed to progressing the Ashington, Blyth & Tyne reopening project, but there are still some differences between the Council's somewhat timid proposals and SENRUG's approach – eg a Park & Ride station at Woodhorn is only shown as a possibility, whereas the group say it's essential. By far the greatest SENRUG concern however is the time and money it takes for Network Rail to complete the “GRIP” studies, and the eventual high price tag for the scheme (the cost of track and signalling renewals, which SENRUG argues are not required, are being factored in).

A number of schools are participating in SENRUG's competition to make a short DVD setting out the business reasons for re-opening the Ashington Blyth & Tyne Line. A cash prize of £250 to the winning school (and £50 to two runners up) has been promised by the Northumberland Development Company. SENRUG has also obtained sponsorship from East Coast, CrossCountry and Northern Rail to take a team of 4 students from the winning school to Westminster to present their DVD to their constituency MP. SENRUG's Chairman says he's been overwhelmed with the quality of the work, and with the enthusiasm and interest of the students he's met.

Lakes Line Rail User Group – photos can save a thousand words!

The Lakes Line Rail User Group's has submitted its 10-page response to the Dept. for Transport's Stakeholder Consultation for the North of England franchises. The document uses photographs to illustrate such issues as traffic jams on the A590 trunk road and luggage racks on trains which often overflow into gangways.

LLRUG considers that Lakes Line services should not be separated from the North West TransPennine network. The group's aim is for around seven through trains each day between Windermere and Barrow/Manchester Airport with branch shuttle trains making up the rest of the day's service – their regular surveys show this would meet the long-distance connectivity desired by the majority of passengers (the group's own survey data is included in the response document).

Elsewhere, the group expressed support for the restoration of through services between Liverpool and destinations in Scotland, as this would significantly improve the poor connectivity between the Lake District and Merseyside. They also took the opportunity to press for improved facilities at stations along the line.

Ribble Valley Rail - rail bosses see RVR stations for themselves

In his regular column, RVR's Chairman says: "All our stations are looking excellent with all the flowers in bloom. The cared-for stations must have made a favourable impression on the Dept. for Transport bid team, who stayed in the Ribble Valley on May 14th, and who travelled from Whalley Station the following morning. Our Secretary travelled with Alex Hynes, MD of Northern, from Manchester Victoria, and had the opportunity to talk about the aspirations that RVR have from the new franchise."

RVR's station adoption groups continue to ensure that the stations are clean, safe and attractive environments to wait for a train. They also provide information for passengers and assist when there are bus replacements and delays. With the introduction of the new Sunday service this summer, RVR members have travelled on every train providing information for passengers who are new to the area; they even helped the guard with fare pricing.

Art work and photographs have been mounted on the fences of Ribble Valley stations illustrating the venues described on the new running-in boards. The artwork was produced by children at schools in Whalley and Clitheroe, with photographs from local photographers. Fifty per cent of the funding for this project has come from the Small Grants Fund administered by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.

In their response to the Northern and TransPennine franchise consultations, the RVR took the opportunity to seek enhancement of services, rolling stock, connectivity and station facilities.

Colne Valley Connections – joining up local campaign groups

The Colne Valley has rather a lot of transport groups, so another one seems a bit greedy. However, the newly-formed 'Colne Valley Connections' is intended to act as an umbrella group for GLAM (Golcar Longwood and Milnsbridge Transport Campaign) SMART (Slaithwaite and Marsden Action for Rail Transport), FOSSLS (Friends of Slaithwaite Station) and OTR (Off the Rails).

It has already submitted a response to the Northern and TPE consultation and has declared its solidarity with GRAG (Greenfield Rail Action group). – from Paul Salveson's "Salvo"

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line (STORM) – new rules are bound to cause problems

The ban of the use of off-peak and other discounted tickets on afternoon peak-time trains, being introduced on the Northern Rail network, is provoking much comment such as this: “Passengers for Moston will be very hard done by - their last afternoon off peak train from Victoria will be as early as 15:26 and the next one will be 19:26, a four hour gap!” STORM sees problems enforcing the new rules on individual trains: “One can only sympathize with Northern Rail conductors and ticket inspectors who will have to impose these arbitrary restrictions.”

STORM argues that the Dept. of Transport’s policy of making Northern rail passengers pay more for their journeys is based on the rather dubious premise that Northern passengers are the most heavily subsidised in the UK – the group presents various reasons why the DfT statistics are ill-founded. The Northern/TPE franchise consultations, which closed on 18th August, provided members with the opportunity to challenge DfT assumptions and argue for more investment in the North.

Friends of Castleton Station – birthday event coming up

Castleton Station opened on the 15th September 1839. To celebrate its 175th birthday, the Friends of Castleton Station and Northern Rail, assisted by STORM members, will mark the event on the afternoon of Monday 15 September. Local school children, who have assisted the Friends over the years with the floral displays, will join local dignitaries and representatives of transport agencies at the station at 13:30. A photographic exhibition is in the process of planning and will be hosted nearby. All welcome. – *from STORM’s monthly bulletin*

Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users’ Association – line redoubling doesn’t go far enough

The front page of SCRUA’s August newsletter show encouraging progress on line redoubling between Rossett and Saltney. However, the group wonders whether the work is being done “on the cheap”, with redoubling beyond Rossett to Wrexham now unlikely to proceed. The group sought assurances from Network Rail that there is nothing technical to prevent further redoubling work in the future.

A representative of SCRUA attended a meeting about the North East Wales Integrated Transport Study, which includes a recommendation for a Parkway station in the Rossett area, dubbed “Wrexham North” (SCRUA hopes this will be examined further). The group has received an invite to address the North Wales Transport Advisory Group and is looking forward to the opportunity. They’re also hoping to meet Wrexham’s pro-rail MP, Ian Lucas, and will be keen to press for full redoubling of the line between Wrexham and Chester or, at the very least, line speed improvements. Other ‘wish list’ possibilities include extending some London Euston to Chester services a little further on to Wrexham and introducing direct services to Manchester: “It must be recognised that rail travel, especially in border regions such as our own is not driven by political maps but by the availability and proximity of work, leisure and other facilities.”

The Friends of Chirk station continue their excellent work. Spring has been particularly beautiful at the station with a wonderful display of spring flowers that have brought pleasure to passengers. July saw the planting of 66 red geraniums in baskets by young people, commemorating the start of the First World War - each geranium carries the name of a young man from Chirk, killed in the Great War.

Meanwhile at Ruabon, campaigners want to see improved disabled access – Ruabon station continues to see the greatest growth of any station on the line, with a 14% increase in 2012/13!

Harrogate Line Supporters' Group – *working hard to secure electrification*

HLSG welcomes the appointment of the MP for Harrogate & Knaresborough, Andrew Jones, as Chairman of the Northern Electrification Task Force, and his re-appointment to the role of Vice Chair of the Rail in the North All Party Parliamentary Group; Andrew has been a strong supporter of the original bid for electrification of the Leeds-Harrogate-Knaresborough-York rail line. HLSG will be closely following the work of the Task Force in case there is a need for further evidence to justify electrification of the Harrogate line. The group is also alerting members to the possibility of closure of certain level crossings along the line under Network Rail's programme of modernisation.

During a recent short visit to Leeds Bradford Airport, the new Aviation Minister, Robert Goodwill, said that "a new rail link to Leeds Bradford Airport is obviously desirable" – the HLSG agrees wholeheartedly! They've long campaigned for a link between the Airport and the Harrogate rail line which runs just half a mile from the end of the Airport's long stay car park, and only 1.1 miles from the Terminal Building. Initially, the link could be road based, but if rail-air traffic were to become significant, an automated people mover, as used at Gatwick and Stansted, could be justified.

Friends of the Barton Line – *"no justification to split service at Doncaster"*

In response to the Northern/TPE franchise consultations, FoBL have submitted their concerns which centre on the Dept. for Transport's proposal to cut short the TPE service from Cleethorpes at Doncaster, giving the reason that most passengers change there anyway. The Friends don't believe this to be the case and suspect the real motive is to free up paths on the East Coast Main Line. If the proposal does go ahead, the Friends suggest various service options to maintain some degree of connectivity across the region.

There's anger that dozens, if not hundreds, of prospective passengers to the Cleethorpes Air Show in July had to be turned away at Barton line stations because trains had not been strengthened and were therefore full to capacity – a problem that should have been foreseen. There's also concern that services continue to be cancelled at short notice due to unit failure.

Gainsborough Rail and Bus Users' Group – *arguing for a more coherent network of services*

GRaB has submitted a response to the Stakeholder Consultation on the TransPennine and Northern Rail franchises. Their proposal is for a self-contained rail network that operates on three routes between Sheffield and Cleethorpes, and builds on the Dept. for Transport's suggestion that Trans Pennine Express trains be diverted at Doncaster to run to Hull instead of Cleethorpes. This would leave Scunthorpe with just one slow train an hour to Doncaster - clearly this is unacceptable.

GRaB's solution is to extend the Lincoln to Doncaster via Gainsborough Lea Road service by running non-stop from Doncaster to Scunthorpe. The service would improve to hourly and would run in combination with the Lincoln to Sheffield service to provide a half hourly service between Gainsborough Lea Road and Lincoln. How many extra trains would be needed to run the proposed services? - GRaB calculates just three more trains would be needed.

You can download the group's response and associated documentation from their website [here](#).

Railfuture's press release and response relating to the Northern/TPE consultations can be read [here](#).

East Suffolk Travellers Association – members fill in questionnaires about their journeys

During the summer, ESTA members have been busy manning stalls at shows around their area and at the Community Rail in the City event at Liverpool Street station. They've also produced a new leaflet "Discover the Blyth Valley" which promotes local bus services and the bus/rail interchange at Halesworth. All members have received a questionnaire to fill in with details about their train and bus journeys made in August – results are compared with previous years, and are sent to transport operators and local politicians.

A question to the guest speaker from Abellio Greater Anglia at the group's AGM about scarcity of ticket machines brought the response that, at £20,000 each, these machines have to show a return on investment. It was also revealed that security company personnel employed to man ticket gates have no powers to issue tickets or to charge excess fares. In their newsletter, ESTA remind members of the advantages of the Anglia Plus ranger ticket, which is not well advertised.

A job for ESTA's committee in the coming months is to finalise its response to the forthcoming consultation on the next franchise for Greater Anglia, due to start in 2016. ESTA members' Christmas Lunch this year will be at the Coach & Horses, Melton.

Bedford Commuters' Association – committee manning recruitment desks at stations

Once again, the BCA committee will be manning desks at Bedford and Flitwick stations during September to persuade existing members to renew and new members to join. With Govia Thameslink Railway taking over the service from the middle of the month, a number of service improvements are due to be rolled out and the BCA will be monitoring these commitments very closely. Meetings are being sought with the new operator.

The BCA's chairman recently had a useful meeting with Labour's Shadow Transport Minister and the chairman of the Bedford Station Area Working Party to discuss issues affecting rail commuters, including: fares, the reduction in service due to the London Bridge station redevelopment, the future development of Bedford station and poor bus/rail interchange at the station. There are now 500 cycle parking spaces at the station; Sustrans staff have made regular visits over the summer months, talking to commuters about alternatives to taking their cars to the station.

The BCA recently attended a Flitwick Station Travel Plan meeting, where they questioned the continued lack of season ticket arrangements for the station car park.

Cotswold Line Promotion Group – slow progress towards hourly service

The CLPG's committee has been looking at timetable proposals for May 2015. They welcome plans for additional trains, but say "we're still some way from our objective of a regular hourly service". At a First Great Western Stakeholder meeting, delegates were told that talks are already taking place about operational interfaces with London's Crossrail. The CLPG committee has also responded to the consultation on a further Direct Award franchise to FGW for 5 years up to 2020 – they supported it in principle and took the opportunity to press for service improvements and better station facilities.

CPLG's Chairman has been looking at Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan update: while rail is seen as a real opportunity, the problem is that funding is now channelled through the Local Enterprise Partnership – an award of £63m from the Growth Fund has just been announced but only a proportion of this is for transport. Meanwhile, Worcestershire's LEP is pressing ahead with plans for a Parkway station just east of Worcester, but the CPLG has strong reservations about the idea arguing that it will impact negatively on existing services and will only encourage "rail heading", so abstracting revenue from existing stations.

The CLPG's delegate at the FGW Community Rail conference in Devon on 3 June reports that the most useful sessions were on the need for user groups to develop short-, medium- and long-term strategies, and on the importance of involving the whole community in station projects, esp. young

people. In fact, the CPLG had done just that – students from a local college had created an imaginative garden at Charlbury station, with a gloved hand as its centrepiece to commemorate the local glove-making industry.

The CPLG's charter train starting from Oxford on 24 June commemorated the 100th anniversary of the journey by poet Edward Thomas, who went on to write his famous "Yes, I remember Addlestrop" poem; the train stopped for 10 mins at the site of Addlestrop station and the CLPG's president, Lord Faulkner of Worcester, recited the poem over the train's PA system. Elsewhere we read that seats are selling fast for the group's next charter train: to Plymouth on 20 Sept.

Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers' Association – some good news on overcrowding and reliability

PRTA members have often complained about overcrowding on the 2-car 0908 train from Milford Haven - a 3-car set is now used, which has greatly eased the problem. It's reported that the Class 175 units used by Arriva Trains Wales have become increasingly reliable in recent years. However, members are reminded that, if their journey does suffer delays of an hour or more, they are entitled to some compensation which could help pay for their next trip.

It's been noted that Network Rail are in the process of removing the run-round loop at Fishguard Harbour – the group is concerned that this could cause a problem for any future steam-hauled excursion trains. Another problem noted recently is that request stops are no longer announced on local trains.

After some long-serving committee members have left or passed away, the Association finds itself in the position of having to change the signatories on its bank account, a process so complex and protracted that they've had to waive membership fees for the year. [*Treasurers of other rail user groups will sympathise! – Ed*]

Association of Public Transport Users – ear to the ground regarding change of operator

The Association has its ear to the ground regarding the changeover to Govia Thameslink Railway and advises its members that very little will change immediately – the only thing they've heard about is the likely ending of the mobile ticketing facilities on Gt Northern services. APTU has been looking at new research by Passenger Focus about passengers' relationship with train companies – they note that neither First Capital Connect nor Southern score well in the report, and will be looking to work with GTR to tackle these sorts of issues.

After continually lobbying for an adequate number of trains during the forthcoming blockade of London Bridge station, APTU is still unclear as to the service frequency between Elephant & Castle and Gatwick Airport from Dec 2014 (*but see news from East Surrey, below*). However, they've found out that there's to be a timetable consultation this autumn about the Thameslink service level for Dec 2015, and the group will be reviewing proposals and commenting at that time.

East Surrey Transport Committee – campaigning pays off!

On 1st Sept, Charles King, Chairman of ESTC, circulated the good news from Govia Thameslink Railway that they will continue operating the standard pattern of four trains per hour between Bedford and Gatwick Airport, when the London Bridge blockade begins in December 2014. Rail user groups along the Thameslink route (including APTU and the BCA) had mounted a vigorous campaign challenging the Dept. for Transport's proposal that only two trains per hour would extend beyond Elephant and Castle during the rebuilding of London Bridge station.

"Our campaign has paid off," declares Charles, "now on to the next one!"

...news from Railfuture follows...

LAST CALL FOR RAIL USER GROUP AWARD BIDS

Local rail campaign groups across the country have a few weeks left to enter for Railfuture's annual RAIL USER GROUP AWARDS. Nominations for the awards, now in their third year, close on 30th September.

"We're looking to recognise and reward the hard work of grass-roots rail campaigners" said Railfuture Director and principal awards organiser Roger Blake. "Successful campaigning by local rail users can be a drawn-out and thankless task - but usually with bits of fun on the way! We want to do our best to encourage those who fight the good fight up and down the country, and to highlight their successes and innovative campaigning ideas."

Awards will again be presented for the rail user groups with the best web site, best newsletter, most effective campaign, most effective new group, and outstanding individual campaigner (open to Railfuture members only), and there will also be the judges' special award. Entries will be judged by Railfuture Vice-Presidents such as Adrian Shooter, Chris Green, Ian Brown, Roger Ford, and Barry Doe. They'll be under the watchful eye of Railfuture's President Christian Wolmar, who will announce the winners and present the awards at Railfuture's next national conference on 1st November, in London.

"Anyone can nominate anyone for these awards, and the process couldn't be simpler. You just drop me an e-mail" says Roger. His e-mail address is roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

"These awards are unique. Only Railfuture is rewarding the efforts and successes of committed local volunteers campaigning for a better railway for passengers. Almost every successful rail campaign there's ever been in this country started off with a voluntary group of users campaigning at the grass-roots level. It's their knowledge and energies which are absolutely vital to improving our railways for everyone's benefit. These annual awards are Railfuture's way of promoting them."

-Railfuture press release

For guidelines on how to enter, and to see previous years' winners, click [here](#).

Special plea from Roger: "When sending me items, please use a strong envelope and signed-for delivery. I've just received an envelope that split in transit and some of the contents have gone missing!"

RAIL USERS' CONFERENCE, - on 1st November at the University of Westminster, London

Bookings are still being taken for Railfuture's autumn conference and RUG Awards ceremony at the University of Westminster, New Cavendish Street, London. Guest speakers include: Transport Minister Baroness Kramer; Head of Capacity Planning at Network Rail, Fiona Dolman; Karen Boswell, the Manager of East Coast; Anna Matthews from Delta Rail; Sharon Hedges of Passenger Focus; Jenni Borg, Head of Smart & Integrated Ticketing at the Dept. for Transport.

The conference fee is £35 which includes buffet lunch and conference report. More details and conference booking form [here](#).

PHOTO COMPETITION - £50 now offered!

Our photo competition remains open to receive your entries - details [here](#). Railfuture's Finance Director has decided to spice up the competition by offering **£50** for each photograph which we use for a postcard, so get the camera out now! The closing date is 30th September 2014.

EUROSTAR SURVEY

Railfuture's International Group would like Eurostar travellers to complete a survey, either by post or online [here](#). The survey period covers journeys made between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015.

DISRUPTION SURVEY

Railfuture's Passenger Group is carrying out a review of disruption handling and is seeking input from passengers as well as the rail industry. How disruption is handled, both planned and unplanned remains one of the top concerns for passengers in complaints, stakeholder engagement and national surveys. There is often a focus on the negative side of disruption but equally there are examples of good practice that should be shared with the rail industry, and pioneering work among the train operating companies and Network Rail. You can complete the survey online [here](#).

RESOURCES FOR RAIL USER GROUPS

It's that time of year to start planning campaigns and projects for the next year. Did you know that there's a large and growing library of resources freely available on the Railfuture website?

- Under **Membership > Resources**, you can find information on how to conduct station surveys and passenger counts, how to apply for a grant from Railfuture's Fighting Fund, and references to books and pamphlets that could be of use.
- Under **Local Action > Campaigns** there's information about campaigning for such things as new stations and electrification.
- Under **Press Releases**, you can read Railfuture's viewpoint on recent issues which might be helpful when compiling your own reports. Regular visits to the **News and Views** menu on the right hand side of the **Home** page is also a great way to keep up to date.

In the **News and Views** area, I can particularly recommend Jerry Alderson's recent and very comprehensive **Fare Increase Viewpoint**. It says all you need to know about who's affected and how we arrived at this deplorable situation, complete with international comparisons and how TOCs can use the "flex" rules to their benefit.

RAILFUTURE PASSENGER GROUP

With several train fleets now on order, the Passenger Group is keen to view prototypes and try to influence designs on behalf of rail passengers. Attempts to arrange a meeting with IEP design consultants have been frustrated by an inability to arrange suitable dates, as apparently both the DfT and Hitachi also need to be present. Also a meeting with Passenger Focus is being sought to review the interior design of the Class 700 Thameslink units.

A policy briefing document on the subject of Seat Reservations was circulated amongst Group members in draft form and is now undergoing final revision. The next meeting of the Group is 27 Sept. in London.

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

The Branch is analysing results of its initial survey of overcrowding on Cross Country services in the Birmingham area during the morning (0700-1000) and evening (1600-1900) peaks, based on observations made from the station platform. It was felt that these observations were fairly representative of normal loadings - Cross Country management commented that the loadings recorded by this survey tallied with their own observations.

Elsewhere we read that there's relief at the decision of Cross Country to limit their problematic 10-minute reservations facility to seats in Coach C only.

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

UK RAIL INDUSTRY FORUM (11 Sept) – claim your 10% discount

This year's UK Rail Industry Forum takes place on 11th September in St. Pauls, London. The conference will bring together the Government, Network Rail and UK rail industry leaders to explore key strategic decisions that will shape the future of the railway. Largely discussion-based, this event will include in-depth panel debates and plenty of audience participation to ensure a wide range of stakeholders are heard from in an open and lively debate on current issues for Britain's railway.

See the conference [website](#) for more details including the full list of speakers. At the end of the conference all delegates are invited to attend a networking drinks reception. You can secure your place at the conference and get a **10% discount** by emailing conference@thewaterfront.co.uk or by calling **0207 067 1597**. Just quote discount code **239RFT**.

EAST-WEST RAIL LINK : “CENTRAL SECTION HAS SIGNIFICANT POTENTIAL”

In August, the East West Rail Consortium published a report that shows that extending the East West Rail line from Oxford to Cambridge has real potential. It shows that the delivery of attractive new rail services between key locations could deliver substantial economic benefits and support significant growth in the East West Rail corridor. The report concludes a study by Atkins Consultants and is the first step towards developing an outline business case for the East West Rail 'Central Section'.

Working closely with the East West Rail Consortium and Department for Transport, Network Rail will now lead the next phase of work which will consider and examine the engineering, operational and planning feasibility and cost of several potential route options. The aim is to establish a scheme with a robust and convincing business case that can be submitted to Government in 2016 to secure inclusion of the scheme, subject to funding availability, in the 2019-24 investment plans for the rail industry. More details [here](#). – eastwestrail.org.uk

Andy Long comments: “It might be sensible for Rail User Groups and other stakeholders to press their MPs on where they stand on EWRL - preferably before the General Election! I should also be interested to know whether the Consortium have given a recent briefing to MPs.”

In its press release, Railfuture said: "This new line, which has support across the political spectrum at all levels of government as well as from business leaders and transport campaigners, now has a solid economic case. What some once regarded as a 'pipe dream' in 1995 (when Railfuture wrote the original paper that led to local authorities across the region setting up of the East West Rail Consortium) will soon be a vital economic artery serving every part of the region". Full story [here](#).

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST FIGHTS OFF-PEAK TICKET BAN

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) has issued a press release deploring the decision by Northern Rail to ban the use of off-peak tickets at peak times during weekday evenings on all local rail services in Greater Manchester. The changes which will apply between 16.01 and 18.29 hours, are being made after the Dept for Transport asked Northern to look at several options to help reduce subsidy as part of its new franchise agreement.

Chairman Chris Dale said “this is a blunt instrument which will particularly hit those passengers travelling against the peak flow for an evening out in Manchester, when trains are not generally crowded. Lines where service frequencies are low will be especially adversely affected.”

TWNW understands that similar restrictions in London apply only to the direction of peak travel - i.e into London in the morning peak and out of London in the evening. For example a journey from Watford Junction to London Euston for an evening out leaving at 17.15 and returning at 22.15 would qualify for an off peak fare.

Chris Dale continued “yet again the North West is discriminated against. This decision must be reviewed”.

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

You are invited to attend the next conference of TravelWatch NorthWest to be held on Thurs 9th Oct at Merseytravel's offices, One Mann Island, Liverpool L3 1BP starting at 11.00 (refreshments from 10.30). Guest speakers include: Frank Rogers, Deputy Chief Executive of Integrated Services, Merseytravel; Chris Bowles, Managing Director, Stagecoach NW; Ian Jordan, Director of Phase Two, HS2 Ltd; and Sally Buttifant, Mid Cheshire CRP Officer.

Please book for this event by 29 Sept via admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk.

NORTHERN CITIES DEVISE THEIR OWN CROSSRAIL PROGRAMME

Amid long-running complaints that London receives a disproportionate share of funding for transport, leaders of Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle are backing a new transport programme which has parallels to the capital's £14.8bn Crossrail scheme. The One North plan is a £15bn package which focuses on significant rail improvements. Like Crossrail it has a central tunnelled section (under the Pennines) complemented by existing 'on-network' enhancements including a new stretch of line between Newcastle and Darlington.

One North responds to the challenge laid down by the Chancellor in June when he backed plans to create a northern powerhouse by upgrading links between cities including a new or upgraded cross-Pennine route dubbed High Speed 3. The One North package includes a new link across the Pennines although the proposal is for a 125mph route which, under European Union criteria, would not be classified as a high speed rail system.

The new tunnel would have freight terminals at each end and delta junctions to allow trains to continue north, south or straight on. According to the One North report: "We will need to examine the case for purpose-designed terminals so that the corridor can offer a drive-on facility for road freight too, in the style of Eurotunnel. This could offer an all-weather trans Pennine freight capability and in the longer term help transform the freight functionality of the north." One North estimates the cost of this new trans-Pennine rail connection at more than £5bn and suggests a target delivery date of 2030. It adds: "While this is a major investment, it should be realised that investments of this scale are now routinely contemplated for London and the south." - *Transport Briefing*

ELECTRIFICATION WORK 'COULD BE WASTED' IF NORTH DOESN'T GET NEW TRAINS

Millions of pounds of investment on electrifying rail lines in the north could be wasted due to a shortage of electrified stock to run on them, the boss of Rail North has warned. David Brown, chief executive of Merseytravel, gave evidence on behalf of the body representing northern transport bodies and councils at this week's House of Commons Transport Select Committee hearing.

The Department for Transport is preparing to award the franchises for the Northern and Trans-Pennine Express routes from February 2016. However if provisions aren't included in those franchises to make the most of the infrastructure work that is going on, such as electrification, then the work is being wasted.

Brown said: "We believe that now is the right time to include within the specification for those franchises the operational requirements that will make the most of the infrastructure that is being provided." He went on to say that while the infrastructure is in place there is a shortage of rolling stock that can use it.

He added: "Lines between Liverpool and Manchester are being electrified and you could run electric trains on those services very quickly, but there is a shortage of newer electric and diesel trains coming to the north to operate those services. That is where there would be a significant missed opportunity. Our view as local authorities in the north is that having adequate electric trains – or, indeed, bigger diesel trains – is absolutely essential to unlock economic growth. And constantly being at the end of a cascade to take trains that are fairly old from elsewhere into the north is not the best way of making the most of electrification." – *from a story in Rail Technology Magazine*

PM SUPPORT FOR WITNEY-OXFORD TRANSPORT LINK

David Cameron has agreed to help a campaign for better transport links between Witney and Oxford. The Prime Minister and Witney MP will write to Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, to ask about what can be done to ease pressure on the A40. It comes after a meeting with the Witney Oxford Transport group in August.

The group wants a 2001 feasibility study into reopening the railway line between Witney and Oxford, which closed in 1970, updated. It is estimated that an updated railway study would cost up to £20,000. This would be an alternative to changes to the A40, namely dualling the carriageway.

Three solutions previously suggested by the transport group are a metro-style commuter train service between Oxford and Witney using existing lines and a section of disused track, a new concrete road exclusively used by buses and a revolutionary "tram-train" service where European-style trams operate over disused railway lines. Group member Maurizio Fantato said: "One of our key objectives as a group is that there's an independent study which looks at alternative modes of transport." In June, members of the group walked along part of the former Witney railway branch line to highlight the campaign. - story in *The Oxford Times* spotted by Chris Wright

ALL ABOARD THE RAILWAY BANDWAGON!

There's a General Election on the horizon, don't you know, and it's readily apparent that MPs are keen to be noticed calling for rail improvements. Here are some examples from the last few days...

☺ Gordon Marsden, who represents **Blackpool South** in Parliament, has spoken out after responding to a consultation on the future franchising of rail services on the Fylde coast (*eh?*), which are set to be decided next year. Mr Marsden has called on ministers making the decision to help boost the town's economic growth and improve passenger access, as well as the quality of rolling stock on trains. He said: "Improved services should be seen as the essential driver for economic growth and other funding models for investment, as have been used in London, should be looked at.

☺ **North Lincolnshire MPs** met with the Rail Minister, Claire Perry MP, to lobby her for the retention of the direct Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport train. This line also serves Barnetby, Scunthorpe and the Isle of Axholme.

☺ Leading a Commons debate on transport infrastructure in Northumberland, **Hexham MP** Guy Opperman highlighted the 62-mile Tyne Valley train line, running from Newcastle to Carlisle via Hexham, saying trains used on the route "need improvement desperately".

☺ The **Ipswich MP** Ben Gummer has called for resignations after rush-hour trains were cancelled due to weekend engineering work overrunning again. Mr Gummer, said he was due to meet the chief executive of Network Rail in the next couple of weeks. "Other people in the country would not expect it travelling into London, but Network Rail feel they can still treat East Anglian commuters with a lower standard of service," he said. "I want to hear how it is going to stop and why engineering works have overrun yet again." Therese Coffey, **Suffolk Coastal MP**, tweeted to describe the disruption as "very poor".

So ... now is the ideal time to goad your local MPs into doing a bit of "Railway Improvement Calling". They won't need much persuading!

LEP MAP

As far as transport funding is concerned, our fusty old English counties have been thrown out in favour of shiney new Local Enterprise Partnership zones. You can see what the political map of England now looks like by visiting the Local Transport page on the Campaign for Better Transport's website [here](#), then scrolling down to the LEP Map. Click on your own perplexingly-unfamiliar "Partnershire" to see related documents, including the recent Growth Deal awards.

– thanks to Andy Long for alerting us to CBT's LEP Map.

PASSENGERS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RAIL INDUSTRY

Each year, Passenger Focus measures passengers' satisfaction with their individual rail journeys: "We wanted to understand why this can differ from passengers' overall perception of the rail industry, generally informed by the media and word of mouth."

New research into the relationship between passengers and their train operating companies found that some individual TOCs are well trusted. But there are others, particularly some of those operating in London and the South East, that inspire less trust and, at best, more ambivalence in passengers.

Trust consists of three elements: service, relationship and judgement...

- **Service** elements affect day-to-day issues such as punctuality, reliability, helpfulness of staff and value for money. They are the foundations for building passengers' trust. Also, they are features increasingly being incorporated into new railway franchises – something Passenger Focus has been calling for.
- **Relationship** factors are important to focus on to build trust once the service elements are in place. Some train companies have developed good relationships with their passengers.
- Many train companies score well on the third trust element – **judgement**. They are seen to have high principles, a good reputation and show leadership.

Read the full story [here](#).

Writing in Rail magazine, Barry Doe admits to being perplexed by some of the comparisons...

"... An £80 purchase with Amazon comes with guarantees and automatic return if dissatisfied, whereas £80 on a rail ticket is an intangible purchase, literally vanishing after use. It's hard to compare, for example, London Overground with the vast complexity and service variety of First Great Western. Expectations differ entirely, so I'm not sure it's really valid to try to compare across the whole system. ..."

FREE TAXI IF YOU'RE DELAYED?

I noticed a comment in STORM's weekly bulletin which says this: "I think a taxi must be provided by the TOC if a train is cancelled and it is more than an hour to the next scheduled service."

That sounded a bit optimistic, so I checked the [MoneySavingExpert.com](#) website. This advises that you can claim a refund but the train operator is very unlikely to pay for a taxi.

Railfuture's own [Rail User Help](#) tells us: "If you have a valid ticket but the last train of the night is cancelled, or you miss it because you are on a connecting train which is delayed, the train operator has a responsibility to get you home." – which would probably be by taxi.

You may like to [reply](#) with your own experience of being offered (or refused) a free taxi.

GIFT AID DONATIONS

In the last issue, I reported that the Don Valley Railway, as a registered charity, is able to claim tax rebates so wants to take advantage of Gift Aid – I asked if anyone had experience of doing this.

Graham Collett replied that Railfuture Yorkshire has just started using Localgiving.com as a way of getting online donations for the railway nursery. "We got a free account (normally £70 approx per year) as there was an offer in North Yorkshire. I'm not sure if such offers are available elsewhere."

As Graham's was the only reply, he wins this month's star prize: it's these 53 handy boxes of headed stationery, kindly donated by First Capital Connect.

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EVENTS *for the next 2 months*

The events listed here are copied across from the Events listing on Railfuture's website, which I now contribute to. Coloured blobs differentiate between types of events...

- National & regional rail events. ■ Community & environmental events.
 - Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are welcome to attend).
 - Events organised by other railway societies. ■ Party conference (a chance to lobby!).
- Local Rail User Group events are unblobbed.

8 September 2014. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meeting at Hastings Direct, Collington TN39 3LW. 19.00. More info: [BRAG](#) and [ESRA](#)

8 September 2014. Monday. Watford Rail Users' Group. Town Hall, Hempstead Road, Watford, WD17 3EX. 18:45. All welcome. Contact: [WRUG](#)

■ 9 September 2014. Tuesday. "The Borders Railway". Speaker: a senior member of the project team. Location: Borders Railway offices, Newtongrange, EH22 4QN. 14.00 for 14.30 start, until 16.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 9 September 2014. Tuesday. "A working volunteer's view of rebuilding and operating the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway". Speaker: John Hastings-Thomson. Location: Nottingham, NG1 4EZ. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)

■ 10 September 2014. Wednesday. London and South East regional branch, Eastern division meeting. 18.30. More info: [Eastern](#).

10 September 2014. Wednesday. Rail Action Group East of Scotland AGM. West Barns Bowling Club, 21 Edinburgh Rd, Dunbar, EH42 1UH, from 19:30. More info: [RAGES](#)

■ 11 September 2014. Thursday. Stakeholders briefing on Western Route Study in Rooms 1&2, Bristol Parkway Training Centre adjacent to Bristol Parkway station. 11.00-13.00. Contact: [WRS](#)

■ 11 September 2014. Thursday. UK Rail Industry Forum, London. More info: [conference](#)

12 September 2014. Friday. South East Northumberland Rail Users' Group public meeting (showing six school DVDs on rail reopening theme). Town Hall, Market Place, Morpeth, NE61 1LZ from 19:30. More info: [SENUG](#)

■ 13 September 2014. Saturday. Open day at Derby Etches Park train depot. Part of Derby's 175 celebrations. 10.00-16.30. £11. Tickets available from [TF](#)

■ 14 September 2014. Sunday. Commencement of new seven-year combined Thameslink/Southern/Great Northern management contract.

■ 14 September 2014. Sunday. "Bridge the gap - connect East Sussex" stall for [Lewes-Uckfield reinstatement at Lewes Racecourse Carnival Day](#). Lewes Racecourse, BN7 1UR. 10.00-17.30. More info: [LRCD](#).

■ 15 September 2014. Monday. "The Metropolitan Railway and Farringdon's 150 - one year on". Speaker: Lester Hillman, London Metropolitan University. Location: London Metropolitan University, N7 8DB. 17.45 for 18.30 start. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

17 September 2014. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line. No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes DN35 8AX. 19.00. More info: [FBR](#)

■ 17 September 2014. Wednesday. Railfuture North East meeting. Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle NE1 7BJ. 19.00. "New French light rail systems in the Twenty-first century". Speaker: Graham Jellett. Contact: [Railfuture NE](#)

■ 17 September 2014. Wednesday. "Reading development". Speaker: Chris Smith. Location: Eastleigh, SO50 9FE. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)

■ 21-24 September 2014. Sunday-Wednesday. Labour Party conference in Manchester. More info: [Lab conf](#)

■ 22 September 2014. Monday. "The Network South East story". Speaker: Chris Green. Location: Maidenhead, SL6 3AX. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#).

■ 22 September 2014. Monday. European Car-Free Day.

23 September 2014. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users Group meeting. Chesham Town Hall HP5 1DS. 19.30. More info: [CDTUG](#) *note change of date*

■ 28 September 2014 Sunday to 1 October 2014. Wednesday. Conservative Party conference. Birmingham. More info: [Con conf](#)

■ 29 September 2014. Monday. "Chiltern Mainline - delivering projects and change". Speaker: Rob Brighouse, Chiltern Railways MD. Location: Birmingham, B1 2NP. 18.00 for 18.30 start, to 20.30. Booking required for this event, free to CILT-UK members, £10 for non-members. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 30 September 2014. Tuesday. "Are we on the right track?". Speaker: Alan Stillwell, former Director of Integrated Transport, Merseytravel. Location: Cardiff University, CF24 3AA. 17.30 for 18.00 start. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 30 September 2014. Tuesday. Closing date for entries to **2014 Rail User Group Awards**. More info: [RUG Awards](#). See also: [RUEX](#).

October

■ 2 October 2014. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting, in Haywards Heath. 18.00. More info: [Sussex and Coastway](#).

2 October 2014. Thursday. Don Valley Railway meet at the Harlequin Pub, 108 Nursery St, Sheffield, S3 8GG. 19:00. More info: [DVR](#)

■ 2 October 2014. Thursday. Community Rail Awards ceremony in Scarborough. Association of Community Rail Partnerships. More info: [ACoRP](#)

■ 4 October 2014. Saturday. The next general meeting of TravelWatch SouthWest will be held at the Conference Centre in the Somerset College of Arts and Technology (SCAT), Wellington Road, Taunton TA1 5AX from 1030hrs (for 1100hrs) to 1500hrs. Free buses provided (booking essential). www.travelwatchesouthwest.org

■ 4-8 October 2014. Saturday-Wednesday. Liberal Democrat party conference. Glasgow. More info: [Lib Dem conf](#)

■ 6 October 2014. Monday. "The Inter-City story - 1964-2013". Speaker: Chris Green. Location: Ipswich, IP2 8DF. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)

■ 9 October 2014. Thursday. TravelWatch NorthWest AGM & conference at Merseytravel's offices, One Mann Island, Liverpool L3 1BP. More info: [TWNW](#)

■ 11 October 2014. Saturday. Railfuture branches and groups day at John Peek conference room at Birmingham Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS. 10.00-17.00. Contact: [Company Secretary](#)

11 October 2014. Saturday. East Suffolk Travellers Association meeting. URC Hall, 62 King George's Avenue, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4JG. 14.00. More info: [ESTA](#)

■ 13 October 2014. Monday. "The history of Network South East". Speaker: Chris Green. Location: Ashford, TN23 1RD. 18.30 for 19.30 start. More info: [RCTS](#)

■ 14 October 2014. Tuesday. "Crossrail developments". Speaker: John Goldsmith, Crossrail. Location: Holiday Inn London-Heathrow, UB7 0JU. 17.45 for 18.30 start. Booking not required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 14 October 2014. Tuesday. "Transform Scotland's Interchange Project". Speaker: Jolin Warren, Head of Research, Transform Scotland. Location: Edinburgh, EH2 3AB. 17.30 for 18.00 start, until 20.00. Booking not required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 15 October 2014. Wednesday. Rail Vehicle Enhancements exhibition at Pride Park, Derby. 09.00-16.30. [onyxrail](#)

■ 21 October 2014. Tuesday. "Reducing the environmental impact of ScotRail's operation". Speaker: Stewart Cahill, Head of Environmental Compliance & Sustainability. Location: Glasgow, G2 6HQ. 17.30 for 18.00 start, to 20.00. Booking required for this event, free to CILT-UK members, £10 for non-members. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 21 October 2014. Tuesday. "Rail links to airports worldwide". Speaker: Andrew Sharp, former Director, International Air Rail Organisation. Location: Redhill, RH1 1NN. 18.30 for 19.00 start, to 20.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 23 October 2014. Thursday. "The Croxley rail link". Speaker: Richard Boutal, Major Projects Group Manager, Herts CC. Location: St. Albans, AL1 3ER. 18.00 for 18.30 start, until 20.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 24-25 October 2014. Friday-Saturday. Plaid Cymru conference at Llangollen. More info: [PC conf](#)

28 October 2014. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users Group meeting. Chesham Town Hall HP5 1DS. 19.30. More info: [CDTUG](#)

November

■ 1 November 2014. Saturday. Railfuture autumn conference and Rail User Group Awards. London. More info: [conferences](#).

3 November 2014. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JN from 19:30. More info: [RVR](#)

■ 4 November 2014. Tuesday. "The future of fare collection: technology or customer experience". Speaker: Shashi Verma, Director of Customer Experience, Transport for London. Location: Lewes, BN7 2XH. 18.30 for 19.00 start, to 21.45. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 5 November 2014. Wednesday. "UK Rail Infrastructure (track, structures, electrification and signalling)". Speaker: Malcolm Pearce, Secretary, Thames Valley Section, The Permanent Way Institute. Location: Reading, RG1 3EU. 17.00 for 17.45 start, until 19.00. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

■ 5 November 2014. Wednesday. Station adoption seminar at ScotRail offices, Atrium Court, 50 Waterloo Street, Glasgow G2 6HQ. More info: [ACoRP](#)

■ 6 November 2014. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: [Sussex and Coastway](#).

6 November 2014. Thursday. Don Valley Railway meet at the Harlequin Pub, 108 Nursery St, Sheffield, S3 8GG. 19:00. More info: [DVR](#)

For events more than 2 months ahead, see the [Events listing on Railfuture's website](#).

Please say if you no longer want to receive Rail User Express, or if someone else in your organisation wishes to be included on the circulation list.

This bulletin has been sent by...

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