

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").

RAIL FREIGHT GROUP CONFERENCE IN LONDON

You are invited to this year's annual [Rail Freight Group conference](#) taking place on 4th June in St. Pauls, London.

This year's conference will explore the impact of HS2 for the freight industry, the opportunities and challenges it presents and what it means for the future of rail freight in the UK.

Get your **15% discount** off the registration fee by registering online, by email or by calling **0207 067 1597**. Just quote discount code **230RAF**.

Stephen Hammond MP will give the closing keynote at the conference before all delegates are invited to attend a networking drinks reception. See the full list of speakers [here](#).

Other themes explored at this year's conference include:

- How are customers' expectations changing and how can we rise to the challenge?
- What is the Government's investment plan for the rail freight sector and what are their ambitions for market growth?
- How will Network Rail provide more capacity?
- What are the ORR's plans for stimulating growth in rail freight, and how will freight access be awarded and priced?

See the conference [website](#) for more details.

You can secure your place at the conference [online](#), by [emailing](#) or by calling **0207 067 1597**. Remember to quote your discount code **230RAF** to claim your **15% discount**.

We look forward to seeing you in June. – *The Waterfront Conference Company*

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

Friends of the Far North Line – investment stops at Inverness!

FoFNL welcome the announcement of an upgrade plan for the Aberdeen-Inverness line and the promise of improvements on the Highland Main Line. They say: "it's good to see some of the expenditure starting to come north", but insist that "capital investments to reduce journey times north of Inverness must follow on". The group has searched in vain for any positive statement in either Network Rail's plans for the next five-year funding period, or the Invitation to Tender for the next ScotRail franchise. However, FoFNL's committee has been busy meeting with the various franchise bidders – they report that the bidding teams are very receptive to the group's suggestion for an enhanced timetable based on using existing resources more efficiently.

A contributor to the group's newsletter *Far North Express* has been looking at fares and cheap ticket offers (such as Club 55) available to those planning a day trip from Far North Line stations to Edinburgh. He finds that there are so many restrictions on the use of cheap tickets that people are being deterred from making the journey by train: "the rail industry is handing traffic over to the buses without a fight!"

The group has complained to First ScotRail about the frequent incursion of "Haymarket" class 158 units in place of those especially refurbished for use on Highland services. Apart from the inconvenience for users, their substitution torpedoes the seat reservation system.

A regular feature of the *Far North Express* is a roundup of questions asked in the Scottish Parliament. The answers given reveal the timescales for improvement projects and the attitude of ministers to rail development in general.

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland – expectation that new franchises will deliver improvements

The group's RAGES RAG newsletter has been given an impressive makeover for the May 2014 edition (*a potential prize-winner in Railfuture's Rail User Group Awards! - Ed*). It leads with news about the refranchising processes for both ScotRail and East Coast, and how RAGES has been working to influence the outcome by meeting with all the various bidders. Railfuture North East had drawn the group's attention to an item in the Invitation to Tender document for East Coast implying that Dunbar is to be transferred to the control of ScotRail. RAGES thinks this makes sense, but stresses that Dunbar should continue to be recognised as an important interchange station.

RAGES would like the bidders for the ScotRail franchise to put some money into the building costs of new stations at East Linton and Reston. Meanwhile, the group welcomes the news that the relevant local authorities have both announced increases in the amount of money set aside for the building of the stations: "This commitment is the latest positive step for the proposal, after an announcement by Transport Scotland in November last year that any companies bidding for the new ScotRail franchise would need to consider new stations at Reston and East Linton."

RAGES has been following the fortunes of the new rail-link bus service between Haddington and Wallyford station – it seems patronage is falling off but it's hoped that a new fares structure will entice more users. The group has a long-term aspiration for the branch line to Haddington to be reopened.

Campaign for Borders Rail – statement issued following a speech by the First Minister

Alex Salmond, First Minister of Scotland, gave a speech at Carlisle on 23 April addressing Scotland's future. He believed the Borders Railway will be profoundly successful and said that its success will 'calibrate' any feasibility study on further extension to complete the connection between the Borders, via Hawick, and Carlisle.

Simon Walton, the chairman of the Campaign for Borders Rail, told the First Minister this unfairly means the economic prospects for those communities depend on the patronage of the line between Tweedbank and Edinburgh, rather than their own merits.

Mr Walton said "The First Minister spoke at length about harnessing the potential of communities on both sides of the Border, but the Central Borders communities are being missed out. We still lobby for the reinstatement of the remainder of the line, because we believe that the Borders communities deserve their economic regeneration as soon as possible, and the railway would be a direct, tangible and effective means of doing so."

A reopened line from the Borders to Carlisle would give an important link, initially to the West Coast Main Line through to the North West, Midlands and London. It would subsequently allow High Speed Rail services running through onto HS2 south of Crewe. The benefits of this link to the Borders' economy are there and must be explored and identified sooner rather than later.

In a separate statement, the CBR reveals it has written to Transport Scotland's chief executive, David Middleton, calling for urgent action if services on the new Borders Railway suffer reliability problems, as a result of a cutback in the length of double track, when trains start running in 2015. The group first raised concerns over a year ago after it emerged that plans for double track on the new railway had been reduced from almost 16 miles to just over 9½ miles.

A "Friends of Galashiels Station" (FROGS) group has already been formed so that it can be a "leap ahead" in persuading people to use the new railway. – *ACoRP's Train On Line bulletin*

Skipton - East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership – progressing to *GRIP Stage 3.

Consultants ARUP have now completed Parts 1 and 2 of the 3-part study commissioned by SELRAP in 2013, and have stated that the benefit-to-cost ratio could be as high as 6.5-to-1. Long distance, inter-regional services and freight traffic could increase that figure still further. Previous studies have shown that the project is technically feasible.

The Stage 2 travel-demand study found that 414,000 new passenger journeys (rising to 620,000 within 10 years of opening) would be made as a result of the reopening of the Skipton-Colne rail line with stations at Earby and West Craven Parkway. A single track scheme with a half hourly service between Leeds and Rose Grove (with interchange for Manchester) offers the most economically viable case.

SELRAP now seeks to progress to Stage 3, ie the "GRIP 3" study that will ultimately decide the future of the Skipton to Colne rail line. This will require coordinated input from professional organisations - Lancashire County Council has begun the process of contacting appropriate partners with a view to forming a Project Development Group that will oversee GRIP 3. SELRAP will have a significant role within the PDG and will be raising funds towards the cost of the study. Local authorities have already pledged at least £15,000 towards the study cost.

GRIP 3 comes with no guarantee that the Skipton-Colne route will reopen. SELRAP can, however, guarantee that, without it, the line will remain closed!

*GRIP = Governance for Rail Investment Projects. There are 8 stages leading to project completion.

Ormskirk, Preston & Southport Travellers' Association – time to redress 50 years of neglect!

Much of the committee's time in the early part of 2014 was taken up with formulating a response to the draft West Lancashire Transport Masterplan. Useful meetings were held with both council officers and local MPs, and the group is hopeful that many of its suggestions will be incorporated in the final Masterplan. The lack of any statement about the Southport-Wigan line was an omission; also the group wanted to see a firm commitment to carry out further studies into the merits of a south-west curve at Burscough.

OPSTA has been involved in meetings about the role of Rail North, and the development of the railway in their area - especially prospects for electrification. The group notes that Northern has been tasked to refocus on revenue collection during their franchise extension period, and OPSTA members are asked to report incidents where ticket checks are not conducted on trains. The group will be monitoring patronage of the additional service on the Ormskirk-Preston route from the May timetable change, and they've persuaded Northern to at least produce a cost estimate for a Sunday service on the line.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the closure of the direct Southport-Preston line, and an event in September to mark the occasion is being planned. Correspondents to OPSTAs newsletter make the point that routes to Southport have been neglected in the intervening period, not the least because the town was perversely placed in Merseyside, while the railways to the east run primarily through West Lancashire. Reinstatement of the Burscough curves would once again facilitate easier journeys between Southport and Preston.

The OPSTA stand at Preston Model Rail Club show generated a good level of interest – and 4 new members! The stand will be out again at events in June. The Friends of Meols Cop Station have started work on a new wild flower garden, despite suffering the attention of vandals earlier in the year. At Croston Station, the Friends group has been working tirelessly for three years to turn the overgrown wilderness on the disused platform into a neat and colourful garden; “before” and “after” photos on the back cover of OPSTA’s magazine amply illustrate the fantastic transformation.

Huddersfield, Penistone & Sheffield Rail Users’ Association – grand plans but no rolling stock

After the announcement of a franchise extension for Northern Rail, HPSRUA is preparing to state its case in advance of the next long-term franchise from 2016. The group has been in discussion with Northern over the proposed timetable changes for May 2014 in an attempt to bring about some improvements, but were unable to prevent the loss of the through Leeds to Sheffield via Penistone evening service on Mondays to Fridays. The major timetable revision has been prompted by the decision to increase the frequency on the Manchester-Huddersfield-Leeds route from four to five trains per hour – however, HPSRUA thinks the plan is going to be severely compromised by the lack of rolling stock in the North, and the group has been in discussion with local MPs about the situation. HPSRUA has been able to report some welcome investment in station facilities on their line, including information screens, public address speakers and a new waiting shelter. Northern has assured the group that there will be extra trains on Sun 6 July when the *Tour de France* cycle race comes to the area. Recent experience with football fixtures is that the crowds attending games overwhelm the 2-car trains leaving many passengers stranded.

To save money, the South Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority has withdrawn free rail travel from its concessionary fares scheme. HPSRUA believes that, although the South and West Yorkshire fares are becoming more equal, there will be a great reduction in passenger numbers, particularly cross boundary, following the withdrawal of free travel.

SYITA has published a report about road and rail connectivity when HS2 services begin. HPSRUA has voiced its concern that extensive remodelling of the train/tram interchange at Meadowhall will mean that Penistone services would no longer be able to stop there; passengers travelling from both the Hallam and Penistone routes would have to change onto a tram at Barnsley to continue their journeys. HPSRUA is completely opposed to the proposal to operate the Barnsley route with light weight trams. All this seems to fly in the face of Rail North’s strategy to restore lost capacity on the heavy rail network.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line (STORM) – timetable leaflet not fit for purpose

STORM was sent a batch of new timetable leaflets but says that one of them (Northern Rail leaflet 36) shows such poor coverage of trains on the Greater Manchester side of the Calder Valley that the group feels it cannot help with distribution, saying: “this print of the timetable should be withdrawn” It shows only one train a day each way on Sundays at some stations and omits certain peak hour trains at others. STORM commends West Yorkshire PTE for publishing a comprehensive rail timetable book, but says that Transport for Greater Manchester do not produce any rail timetables, and they don’t even publish a Metrolink timetable as the predecessor PTE used to do.

A second cause for anger is the retiming of a train from Walsden to Manchester, which used to depart at 0939, but will now leave at 0929 taking it just outside the start time for off-peak fares ... and the next train is an hour later. When challenged about the fares hike, Northern refused to relent.

Yet another cause for concern is the failure of Rochdale Council to reopen a key pedestrian subway after redevelopment work around Rochdale station. At first it was thought the reopening was merely being deferred to coincide with other developments, but STORM was astonished to hear that the subway may be abandoned altogether. They are seeking assurances that this is not the case.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Pennines, the Halifax & District Rail Action Group is stepping up its campaign for a new station at Elland, one of the biggest communities in Yorkshire without its own rail station. “We hear that the prospects are good but we need clear and immediate action from Metro and Network Rail on this. Getting a new station opened should not take the best part of a decade.” - *HADRAG news item highlighted in STORM’s weekly bulletin*

Don Valley Railway – seeking innovative solutions for trains and station facilities

DVR and managers from Parry People Movers met with representatives of Abelio (Northern Rail’s parent company) regarding the possibilities of including an innovative project to utilise Parry Light Rapid Transit Technology on the Don Valley Railway in their bid towards the Northern Franchise.

Representatives from the DVR attended a meeting of Stocksbridge Town Council earlier this month with the intention of updating members on their campaign and discussing the group’s petition for a regular passenger service on the Don Valley line. Also, the group intends to contribute to the Stocksbridge Neighbourhood Plan. A church suffering from low congregations is situated adjacent to the railway line in an ideal spot for a station serving central Stocksbridge, and there’s a suggestion that a mutually-beneficial arrangement for sharing the site could emerge.

Selby & District Rail Users’ Group – we’d like DOR to continue running East Coast, but if not...

SADRUG is pleased that refurbishment of the footbridge at Selby station has been completed and a new cleaning regime has been put in place, resulting in a tidier and more attractive station. Discussions about the best way of spending the £82,000 due from a Section 106 grant are ongoing

A number of meetings have taken place to ensure that the summer closure of the river bridge for repairs causes the least inconvenience for passengers, but Northern have yet to finalise details of train shuttle and replacement bus services during the works.

SADRUG took part in the campaign to keep the East Coast franchise under Directly Operated Railways, not the least because its members had been impressed by the improvements made by the Company. Nevertheless, the group met with the various private-sector bidders for the franchise to put forward their aspirations for service improvements, including: an additional Hull to Kings Cross return service, a Hull to Newcastle return service, additional trains to Harrogate and Bradford, and an increased service for Lincoln. The group also lobbied on behalf of disabled passengers, and for the franchise headquarters to remain at York.

Substantial timetables changes are planned for May, and SADRUG has been looking at the implications for local travellers on TransPennine and Northern services.

Friends of the Barton Line – local service back on track

The reliability of trains on the Barton Line had been so poor that FoBL suspended their efforts to promote use of the rail service, but we’re now told that the service has improved considerably with only 3 reported unplanned cancellations from January to March. Promoting the line is now back on the agenda.

In February, representatives of the group attended a Network Rail presentation on planned resignalling in northern Lincs; the meeting had been facilitated by Railfuture. The upgrade is welcomed, but the group noted that there were no funds for any other improvements.

In May, it’s hoped that a representative from the Arriva Trains Bid Team will attend a meeting of FoBL to hear their views in advance of the renewal process for the TransPennine Express and Northern rail franchises.

FoBL regularly raise money from tombolas and from the sale of merchandise on their stall, which they take to various local events. They’re also experimenting with selling their “trinkets” through a local curiosity shop, who get to keep 10% of the proceeds.

Friends of the Brigg & Lincoln Lines – 300 signatures result from information stall

On the 15th April the group, in partnership GRaB (Gainsborough Rail and Bus Group), acquired a stall in the busy Gainsborough Market to promote both the [Gainsborough Rail Action Plan](#) and bus services that run in the town. According to FoB&LL, feedback from the public was tremendous. Nearly 300 people signed their petition for better rail services for Gainsborough with the main complaints being (i) the issue with Gainsborough Central - dubbed “Beirut Central” after being voted Britain’s worst station - and (ii) the poor Northern Rail Brigg Line services which only run on a Saturday.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users’ Group – new homes must have good access to station

5,000 extra homes are planned for Croxton and Kilverstone, which are quite close to Thetford station, and PENRUG is keeping an eye on proposals to make sure that good access to the station is an integral part of the developments. The increased population in and around Thetford is further justification for improved rail services along the lines of the aspirations set out on PENRUG’s web pages [here](#). Growth Point funding has already resulted in some excellent facilities at Thetford station, and PENRUG says that the clean toilets and warm waiting rooms should now be made available to passengers for at least 70 hours a week.

Passengers have recently remarked to PENRUG’s secretary on the striking “Moving Thetford Forward” posters which now brighten up the platforms at Thetford, and on the colourful spring flowers at the entrance to one of the footpaths.

The group has concerns over the somewhat-obscure positioning of train information screens at Peterborough station. They’re also at a loss to explain differences in certain ticket prices: “A regulated monthly season ticket between Ely and Cambridge will cost you £111; over the same distance between March and Peterborough, the cost is £136.40, and Attleborough to Norwich is just £99.90. An Anytime Return ticket between Ely and Peterborough, costs £11.70; over the same distance between March and Cambridge, the cost is £15.10, and between Thetford and Norwich it’s £14.40.”

Cotswold Line Promotion Group – Grand Draw to boost the Oliver Lovell memorial fund

In order to boost contributions to the Oliver Lovell Memorial Fund, the CLPG has launched a Grand Draw with generously-donated prizes including a mini-break using the Night Riviera sleeper service, rail tickets and lunch-for-two vouchers. The draw will be made by CLPG President Lord Faulkner at Moreton-in-Marsh station on 6 Sept. Meanwhile, donations are still being sought to boost the group’s Station Enhancement Fund, which has so far received a total of £1178.

It’s apparent that additional car parking at various Cotswold Line stations, for which the CPLG campaigned hard, is being well used, and work on increasing the parking at Kingham station is due to start soon. Disabled access to the “up” platform at Kingham is scheduled to be completed in 2015 – the CPLG tell us it’s the only platform on the Cotswold Line that is currently inaccessible to disabled passengers. A concern for the group at the moment is overcrowding on a late afternoon train from Paddington; on one occasion, the train was so overcrowded that the Hanborough stop was omitted (passengers for Hanborough were turned off at Oxford and told to await the next train).

In his regular column, ex-chairman Derek Potter is in mischievous mood, suggesting that the recent problems at Dawlish were caused by the Environment Agency’s wilful refusal to dredge the English Channel, although he does make the serious point that we have to accept our human limitations and work within the forces of nature.

The CLPG, in conjunction with First Great Western, has arranged for a special train to operate between Oxford and Moreton-in-Marsh on 24 June to celebrate the centenary of a visit to the line by poet, Edward Thomas, which inspired him to write the famous poem about Adlestrop. The special

train will stop at the site of Adlestrop station and Thomas's poem will be read over the public address system.

Bookings are now being taken for the group's charter train to Plymouth on 20 Sept, organised in association with FGW – paid up members get a substantial discount.

Bedford Commuters' Association – DfT repeats that service levels are a matter for train operators

The BCA has received a formal reply from the Thameslink Programme Manager at the Dept. for Transport to its letter expressing concerns about off-peak service levels during the 3-year rebuilding work at London Bridge. The reply poured cold water on the idea of extending some trains to Gatwick Airport and said that the final decision on service levels rests with the new franchisee.

Central Bedfordshire Council has taken over operation of a car park adjacent to Flitwick station, and the BCA is concerned that monthly, quarterly and annual season tickets are not being issued for using the facility. The council has agreed to consider the matter, so the BCA is asking anyone affected to lobby for season tickets via their local councillors. It's also reported that cycle racks at the station have been affected by vandalism and the BCA is asking First Capital Connect to get to grips with the problem.

In common with other rail user groups, the BCA has been asked by East Midlands Trains to comment on possible initiatives for the franchise extension period of 2015 to 2017, should it be awarded to the company. The group took the opportunity to tell EMT what they could do to further improve their services, and to lobby for their top campaign priorities.

Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton Rail User's Group – getting youngsters involved

The group has been working with First Capital Connect to improve the safe access to platforms at Shepreth station and secure extra car parking spaces. FCC has confirmed that parking at the station will remain free as a gesture of thanks for the community gardening work being undertaken.

The group is pleased to have teenage volunteers helping out at their railway station gardens; some were recruited through community involvement schemes run by the Girl Guides or as part of the Duke of Edinburgh awards. Volunteers of any age are invited to turn up for gardening duties on 14 May at Meldreth, 24 May at Shepreth and 28 May at Foxton.

Cambridge Heath & London Fields Users' Group – ensuring a smooth transition to "Overground"

London Overground, which takes over the Liverpool Street services to Enfield, Cheshunt and Chingford in May next year, has started the process of buying trains. CHLFUG believe designers of the new trains should modify the Overground seat pattern to suit their line: "On the Overground all the seats are on the sides of the train, facing in, but on the Underground's Metropolitan line, there is a mix of bay seating and longitudinal seating. The Met style would be the best pattern for our line."

The group welcomes the prospect of new trains, but says there are plenty of other improvements needed. They will be asking Transport for London to consider a wide range of measures, including: more frequent trains in the peaks and a better Sunday service, additional train information screens, live monitoring of CCTV, staff in attendance while trains operate, improved access to platforms (including lifts) and better waiting facilities. "We expect TfL to give assurances that it has considered the suggestions and can implement some or all of them in time for the start of the new operation."

New research from Passenger Focus has revealed that passengers in Merseyside like to sit facing each other during journeys. About half of passengers choose to sit facing each other in twos. The reasons given were that it allowed them to sit as a group and talk to family and friends. Even those travelling on their own felt it gave them an opportunity to make conversation with strangers.
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Chesham & District Transport Users' Group – site plan shows loss of station parking

Approval in principle has been given for 11 dwellings on the site of the former coal yard adjacent to Chesham Station but it had been specifically stated that there would be no loss of car parking spaces, contrary to what was indicated on the accompanying site plan. In the circumstances, CDTUG decided to lodge a formal objection.

A member of the group had experienced an off-peak train leaving Baker Street 8 minutes late, which still managed to arrive on time at Chesham despite stopping at all stations - CDTUG comments that this is indicative of the slack built into the Met Line timetable. The group has learnt that the Croxley Link project is delayed and is now not likely to open until Spring 2017.

Barking - Gospel Oak Rail User Group – “don't use our trains!”

On the eve of the recent tube strike in London, BGORUG took the unusual step of pleading with London Underground passengers not to transfer to the London Overground Barking - Gospel Oak Line. In a press release, Group Secretary Glenn Wallis said, "The small 2-carriage trains on the line cannot carry all those who want to travel on a normal rush hour. There is just no room for any extra passengers." Photos accompanying the press release show the crowded conditions on the platforms and inside the trains.

Driver-only operation is being rolled out along the Barking – Gospel Oak Line and BGORUG had suggested that conductors should be redeployed as Travel Safe officers. It was widely believed that the DOO decision was a *quid pro quo* for approving electrification of the line.

TransWilts Community Rail Partnership – new service a roaring success

TWCRP reports that passenger numbers on the new Swindon-Melksham-Westbury service are likely to exceed expectations. There has been good coverage in the local press in the form of adverts for the service and editorials, and the Melksham Carnival in July is seen as another opportunity to promote the service. The group has held discussions with the train operator about adjusting some train timings to improve connections, and about the long-term development of the service (extension beyond Westbury to Salisbury is the main goal).

New sign boards, shelter and bus stop at Melksham Station, together with extra car parking are all improving the travel environment and helping the station to handle previously unheard-of passenger numbers; also the new rail-link bus service has already attracted a core of regular commuters. Further developments at the station, including a ticket vending machine, are in the pipeline.

Tunbridge Wells & District Railway Travellers' Association – AGM arrangements

TW&DRTA got in touch to say that the group's AGM will be held on Tuesday 20th May at the Trinity Arts Centre, Church Road, Tunbridge Wells at 7.00 pm. "Mike Gibson will represent South Eastern and we hope to have someone from Network Rail. We're delighted that Cllr Alan McDermott, Chair of the Tunbridge Wells Public Transport Forum, and the borough council's Economic Development Officer will be joining us as well. The meeting is key opportunity to talk about rail traveller issues so please attend and support the association."

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE RUG AWARDS 2014

Railfuture's third **Rail User Group Awards** competition is now open for receiving your entries. The competition aims to recognise and reward the various achievements of rail user groups over the past year. Prizes will be presented at Railfuture's Rail User Conference in London on 1st November 2014. The closing date for your entries is 23:59 on **Tuesday 30th September**.

By the end of May, you will be able to download full details about the competition and how to enter via the Rail User Group page on Railfuture's website. In the meantime, these are the categories you may like to consider entering...

- Best Campaign
- Best Individual Campaigner
- Best Website
- Best Newsletter
- Best New Group

...and, of course, the Judges' Special Award.

RAILFUTURE SUMMER CONFERENCE IN CAMBRIDGE – 21st June 2014

There's still time to book for Railfuture's Summer Conference, entitled "The Engine for Change", which takes place at the University Centre, Granta Place, Mill Lane, Cambridge on 21st June from 11:00 to 17:00.

Top-line speakers at the conference include the Managing Director of First Capital Connect, Network Rail's Director of Freight, and senior managers from both Cambridgeshire County Council and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. You can see further details and book your place at the conference online [here](#). The fee is just £30 (£20 for holders of the 16-25 Railcard) which includes lunch and the conference report.

Future date: Railfuture's **Rail Users' Conference** and **RUG Awards Ceremony** is at the University of Westminster, London, on 1st November 2014.

RAILFUTURE PROMOTES INTERNATIONAL RAIL TRAVEL

Railfuture's International Group has compiled a leaflet aimed promoting rail for travel abroad. The leaflet provides tips about using Eurostar services to Lille, Paris and Brussels, and using ferry services to the Continent and Ireland. Following on from this, there is expert advice about planning and booking rail travel abroad, and about passenger rights in the event of travel disruption. If you would like a stock of the new "Going Abroad" leaflets for your information stall, please email [Chris Brown](#).

Of course, it's impossible to pack all the information you would need into a pocket-size leaflet, so the International Group has added special pages of detailed advice entitled "Going Abroad" to the "Rail User Help" section of Railfuture's website. Take a look [here](#) and let us know what you think!

NEWS FROM RAILFUTURE'S PASSENGER GROUP

The appointment of "TOC Liaison" officers is beginning to bear fruit, with each officer sending in reports about the relevant Train Operating Company for consideration at Passenger Group meetings. Overcrowding on CrossCountry services and new rules about seat reservations continue to be areas of concern; the Group hopes to conduct passenger counts and is putting together a discussion paper on the subject of seat reservations.

A paper setting out Railfuture's fares policy is under discussion, and another looking at standards for station design is being considered in the light of some mixed reactions to the station rebuilding work taking place at Peterborough.

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

RAIL JOURNEYS CONTINUE TO RISE ACROSS ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES

New statistics published in April by the Office of Rail Regulation reveal that the total number of rail passenger journeys across England, Scotland and Wales increased by 3.3% over the past year to 1.27bn – more than double the number of journeys in 1995-96. The 'Regional Usage Profiles' show passenger rail travel divided between 11 regions within Great Britain from 1995-96 up to 2012-13. Details can be seen on the ORR's data portal [here](#). – ORR announcement

Martin Abrams, Public Transport Campaigner for the Campaign for Better Transport, commented: "There is a big disparity in the quality of services in London and the South East compared with part of Northern England. Also the comparison between Scotland and Wales is stark, with devolved management of services in Scotland delivering significantly better results for journeys being taken by train than the equivalent in Wales."

RAIL EXECUTIVE GOES LIVE

The Department for Transport's new **rail executive** has become operational. Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin announced the creation of the new rail executive in February, saying it would help build an enhanced culture of commercial expertise and innovation and ensure greater coordination of improvements to track and trains.

A single team will manage the interdependencies between rolling stock, track, stations, freight and passenger services and between existing services and High Speed 2. The rail executive will also develop a framework agreement for Network Rail ready for September 2014 when it becomes part of the public sector. Within the rail executive there is to be a new **Office of Rail Passenger Services** with responsibilities including delivery of the franchising programme and the management of existing franchises.

DfT Director General Rail, Clare Moriarty, said the aims of the rail executive were to focus on the needs of rail users, work more closely with the rail industry and offer a positive career choice for rail professionals. – *Transport Briefing*

ACCESS-FOR-ALL FUNDING

At the end of April, Rail Minister Baroness Kramer announced that 42 stations in England, Scotland and Wales will receive a share of a £100 million government fund to improve access for disabled passengers. The stations will benefit from improved access as part of the [Access for All scheme](#). Previous work under the scheme has included improvements such as new ramps, lifts or tactile paving. The full list of stations approved for funding is:

London and the South East: West Hampstead (Overground), Queen's Park, Tottenham Hale, Peckham Rye, Seven Sisters, Chatham, Hither Green, Walton-on-Thames, Battersea Park, Streatham, Petts Wood, Blackhorse Road, St Mary Cray, Goldalming, Whitton, Virginia Water, Theale and Barnes.

East of England: Luton (Midland Road), Grays, Southend East and Manningtree.

Midlands: Lichfield Trent Valley, Market Harborough, Warwick, Alfreton and Kidsgrove.

North West: Liverpool Central, Penrith and Leyland.

Scotland: Hamilton Central, Blairhill and Elgin.

South West: Cheltenham Spa and Weston-Super-Mare.

Wales: Trefforest, Cathays, Barry Town and Llanelli.

Yorkshire and the Humber: Hebden Bridge, Garforth and Northallerton.

The Access for All scheme will have delivered step-free routes at more than 150 other stations by 2015, while a further 1,100 stations have already benefited from smaller-scale improvements. The rail industry is also required to make access improvements in line with line with EU and UK standards whenever they carry out infrastructure works at stations. – *DfT press release*

Ministers have been accused of funnelling taxpayers' money into Conservative and Liberal Democrat constituencies ahead of this month's local elections, intended to improve access to railway stations. Last week the DfT announced that it was spending £100m over the next four years on lifts and other measures for the disabled at stations. "Access for All" funding has been slashed under the coalition, to the outrage of charities. But analysis of how the reduced spending pot has been allocated reveals that nearly two thirds of constituencies which will see improved rail access are held by Conservative or Liberal Democrat MPs, many of them in marginal seats. Of the 42 constituencies receiving the money, 26, or 61 per cent, are coalition-held, while 15 are Labour and one SNP. – *The Independent*

ACoRP COMMUNITY RAIL AWARDS

This year sees the 10th annual Community Rail Awards competition organised by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships. The emphasis of the awards has always been about rewarding excellence and promoting best practice in community rail development, recognising ordinary people doing extraordinary things on behalf of the railway and the community.

ACoRP is now calling for entries to the awards. The Awards brochure and the nomination form can be downloaded from the ACoRP website - [Community Rail Awards page](#). You will see that, once again, there have been a few changes to some of the categories.

Entries must be sent in hard copy format by post or in person as per 'Rules of Entry' in the brochure. The closing date for entries is **20th June 2014**. If you have any queries please ring Hazel on 01484 481052 or email hazel@acorp.uk.com.

“PASSENGER POWER” BROUGHT TO BEAR ON RAIL FRANCHISE BIDS

Passenger Focus continues to press for better outcomes for passengers to be delivered in franchise agreements through their *Passenger Power* agenda. For the first time Passenger Focus has provided input to inform the formal evaluation of bidders' delivery plans for the Essex Thameside and the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchises.

The Dept. for Transport asked Passenger Focus to review how well proposals for the Customer Experience section of the bids met the requirements of the Invitation To Tender (ITT). This section covered a range of important issues for passengers, including quality of customer service, information, stations, the end-to-end journey experience and plans for two-way engagement. PF's staff members read the detailed bid documents before finalising their views and preparing reports for submission to the DfT procurement team.

Announcement of the awards for these franchises are expected to be made in the early summer.

TYNE & WEAR “METRO 2030” STRATEGY – a chance to comment on proposals

Plans to buy a new fleet of trains for the Tyne and Wear Metro system have been put out to public consultation.

Passenger transport executive Nexus, which owns and manages Metro, is drawing up a strategy designed to secure the next tranche of investment required by the system. It has published a draft Metro strategy outlining how it sees the light rail service developing over the next 15 years.

With Metro mid-way through a £389m investment programme, work which includes infrastructure renewals and rolling stock refurbishment, consideration is being given to what happens when the

current programme ends in 2021. Nexus says that a further refurbishment would be one option. But it notes there is scope to extend the reach of Metro beyond the current network - and the boundaries of Tyne and Wear - which would be impossible without acquiring extra vehicles.

Three possible Metro extensions have been identified: Sunderland to Seaham, Sunderland (South Hylton) to Washington and Pelaw, and the Cobalt link. In addition, Nexus has shortlisted four street-running options which could see trams or tram-trains operating under the Metro brand.

Comments on the proposals have been invited with a formal 12 week public consultation due to run through May and June 2014; details [here](#). – *Transport Briefing*

RAIL NEWCASTLE INVITE YOU TO THEIR NETWORKING EVENT

The RailNewcastle 2014 Networking Event takes place on Weds 9th and Thurs 10th July 2014 in Newcastle. RailNewcastle is a three week intensive programme in railway and logistics held each summer at Newcastle University's School of Mechanical and Systems Engineering.

The 2-day Networking Event includes thematic seminars where RailNewcastle students present outcomes of their research projects and rail professionals judge their performance. In addition, networking lunches and an awards ceremony create a pleasant environment for exchange of thoughts and experiences.

To register, please complete this [online form](#) by 30th June 2014. More information about RailNewcastle can be found online [here](#).

NEW "RAIL INVESTMENT DELIVERY AGREEMENT" TESTED IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

Network Rail, Northern Rail and First TransPennine Express have signed a formal collaboration agreement aimed at putting value for passengers at the heart of the rail improvements planned for the rail network in the north of England over the next five years.

This formal agreement is designed to improve efficiency through putting whole life costs at the centre of the planning and delivery of work. It is an idea which was developed by the Rail Delivery Group and is being piloted by the three companies. It is designed to supplement the close working which already exists between Network Rail and all operators, and will see the three companies sharing expertise to develop capacity improvements at Leeds station and in the east Leeds area. Both schemes are due to complete by spring 2019.

– *from a Network Rail news release spotted by the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester group, STORM*

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST CONFERENCE IN MANCHESTER

The next conference of TWNW will be held on Thursday 5th June 2014 at Transport for Greater Manchester's offices, 2 Piccadilly Place, Manchester, M1 3BG starting at 10:00. The conference, with the theme *Personal Transport from Door to Door: Delivering the Total Journey Experience in Greater Manchester*, will include a buffet lunch. After lunch there will be an opportunity for delegates to travel by vintage bus to visit Manchester's Museum of Transport in Boyle Street.

There is no charge but donations would be appreciated. You are asked to register in advance for the conference; for details and a registration form, please email: admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk.

GREAT WESTERN FRANCHISE CONSULTATION LAUNCHED

The Dept. for Transport has just launched a consultation seeking views on a proposed franchise specification for GW with a focus on changes planned during the 5-yr period from Sept 2015. The closing date for responses is 26 June 2014. Details [here](#).

SINGING THE CAMBRIAN LINE INTO EXISTENCE

Artists and singers are backing plans for a Cambrian Express rail link from Carmarthen to Aberystwyth via Lampeter. Eleven artists hope to sing the 56-mile line back into existence. They will walk along sections of the old railway line and along the way, dance, sing, film and record to highlight the benefits of the ambitious rail reopening scheme and also to raise money for it in a 60-day campaign.

The artists and musicians taking part include Ceri Rhys Matthews, Elsa Davies, Lynne Denman, Claire Parry and Mary Jacob, while Jacob Whittaker and Naomi Heath will make the videos. Joanna Bond and Ruth Hogg will be dancing to routines inspired by the landscape and the railway, while Peter Stevenson and Guto Dafis will share evocative and atmospheric stories around imagined and real journeys. There will be a culminating performance in a vintage railway carriage travelling along part of the old route which is now part of the Gwili Steam Railway, based at Bronwydd Arms, near Carmarthen. There will also be an exhibition at Bronwydd Arms.

For more information and to donate towards the project, go to [Sing the line](#). If you can donate, you will receive a range of gifts/perks created by the artists. If you can, please spread the word and forward the news via Facebook or Twitter. Please visit the project's [website](#) where you can leave your comment. Sign the petition to reopen the line [here](#). - trawslinkcymru.org.uk

HONORARY TREASURER? – YOU'RE NOT ON YOUR OWN!

The [Honorary Treasurers Forum](#) is a membership organisation originally formed in 2004 to provide a source of information, research and knowledge for the Treasurers of charities large and small. The mission of the Forum is to benefit the voluntary and community sector by providing networking opportunities and resources to improve the effectiveness of existing Honorary Treasurers and to encourage more volunteers to take up this essential trustee role.

A helpsheet explaining the role of an Honorary Treasurer can be downloaded from the Forum's website [here](#). Although this document is aimed at larger charities, some of the advice could be helpful to medium- and large-size rail user groups, especially where the amounts of money being handled are considerable.

EVENTS

National & regional rail events are highlighted in yellow. Community & environmental events are in purple. Railfuture events are in green, and rail user group representatives are welcome to attend!

Special Notice

Passenger Focus **regional rail user workshops**, are highlighted grey (you are asked to register at the email address indicated). The Midlands workshop is on 29 May, not 29 April as originally advertised.

Mon 12 May [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Mon 12 May [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Tue 13 May [ACoRP](#) members' spring seminar for the North of England, held in York.

Tue 13 May [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Wed 14 May Railfuture London & SE [Eastern Division](#) meeting at 18:30.

Sat 17 May Railfuture London & SE [Kent Division](#) meeting in Faversham.

Sat 17 May [ESTA](#) AGM at St Mary's Church Hall, Halesworth from 14:00, with guest speakers.

Sat 17 May [Friends of the Wes Highland Lines](#) lunch and AGM at the Alexandra Hotel, Fort William from 12:30. Guest speakers: Charles Kennedy MP and a representative from ACoRP.

Sat 17 May [Cotswold Line Promotion Group](#) AGM at Moreton-in-Marsh WI Hall from 11:00.

Sat 17 May [HPSRUA](#) AGM at St John's Centre, Penistone from 14:00. Spkr: MD of Northern Rail.

Sun 18 May National rail timetable change.

Sun 18 May [FoBL](#) "Start of Summer Service" lunch at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes from 12:00.

Tue 20 May [ACoRP](#) members' spring seminar for the South of England, held in London

Tue 20 May [ACoRP](#) "Community Rail in the City" events: London, Glasgow, Preston, Leeds & L'pool

Wed 21 May [ACoRP](#) "Community Rail in the City" conference

Tue 20 May [TW&DRTA](#) AGM at the Trinity Arts Centre, Tunbridge Wells from 19:00.

Wed 21 May [FoBL](#) will be at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes for 19:00 meeting start.

Wed 21 May [OPSTA](#) AGM at the Disraeli pub, 26 Church St, Ormskirk from 19:30.

Thu 22 May UK Local and European Community elections.

Fri 23 May Melksham Rail Development Group meet at Melksham town hall from 19:30.

Tue 27 May [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) AGM, Salvation Army, Cobbold Rd, Felixstowe from 19:30.

Thu 29 May [Passenger Focus](#) Midlands workshop at the Library of Birmingham from 11am.

Fri 30 May 175th anniversary celebrations at Derby station

Sat 31 May [Friends of the Far North Line](#) AGM at the Conon Bridge Hotel, 10 mins from Conon Bridge station, from 11:30 – followed by lunch and conference with rail industry speakers.

Sat 31 May Edinburgh's tram system opens to the public, 3 yrs later than planned

1-7 Jun [Volunteers' Week](#) - an annual event which celebrates the fantastic contribution millions of volunteers make across the UK. At the very least, an excuse for a press release about your group!

Tue 3 Jun [Saltburn Line User Group](#) meet at the Conservative Club, Saltburn from 19:15.

Wed 4 Jun [Rail Freight Group conference](#) in London. 15% discount for rail user group members.

Thu 5 Jun [World Environment Day](#) - a global day for environmental action and to encourage support for sustainable development.

Thu 5 Jun [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) conference at TfGM offices in Manchester from 10:00.

Sat 7 Jun Railfuture London & SE, [Sussex & Coastway Division](#) meeting & "Seaford 150" celebration

Sat 7 Jun Railfuture London & SE, [Surrey Division](#) meeting at Redhill from 10:30.

Mon 9 Jun [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Mon 9 Jun [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Thu 12 Jun [APTU](#) meet with rail operator and Network Rail at Trinity Church, St Albans from 19:30.

Sat 14 Jun [Railfuture North East](#) meet at Newcastle Art Centre from 14:00. Speaker: Paul Salveson

Sat 14 Jun Railfuture [East Anglia](#) & London joint meeting at the YMCA, Colchester from 14:00

Sat 14 Jun [SARPA](#) meet at the Railway Hotel, Borth from 11:45.

14-22 Jun [National Bike Week](#). Shout about the cycle facilities at your station!

Sun 15 Jun [Avocet Line Users](#) outing to the Dartmoor Railway.

Tue 17 Jun [Passenger Focus](#) North of England workshop, The Bar Convent, York, from 11am

Sat 21 Jun [Railfuture summer conference](#) at the University Centre, Cambridge. Doors open 10:00.

Sat 21 Jun [Railfuture North West](#) committee meeting at the Station Hotel, Preston from 13:00

Sat 21 Jun (Belated) D-Day commemorations on the Lymington-Brockenhurst Line

Tue 24 Jun [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Tue 24 Jun [Passenger Focus](#) Scotland workshop, Stirling House Hotel, Stirling, from 11am

Tue 1 Jul [Saltburn Line User Group](#) meet at the Conservative Club, Saltburn from 19:15.

Tue 8 Jul [Passenger Focus](#) Wales workshop, Plas Derwen Hotel, Abergavenny from 11am.

Sat 9 Jul Railfuture London & SE [Eastern Division](#) meeting at 18:30.

9 & 10 Jul [RailNewcastle](#) networking event at Newcastle University.

Sat 12 Jul [SARPA](#) meet at Tywyn Wharf, Tallylyn Rlwy, from 11:45.

Sat 14 Jul [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Wed 16 Jul [FoBL](#) AGM at the Sloop, Barton-on-Humber from 18:00 for 20:00 meeting start.

Thu 17 Jul [Passenger Focus](#) South West workshop, Queen's Court Hotel, Exeter, from 11am

Thu 17 Jul Railfuture London & SE, [Sussex & Coastway Division](#) meeting in Brighton from 18:00.

Sat 19 Jul [DRS Gresty Bridge](#) depot charity open day (Crewe). £5/adult; under 16s free.

Tue 5 Aug [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Tue 5 Aug [SARPA](#) meet at The Sportsman, Newtown from 18:45.

Mon 11 Aug [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Sat 16 Aug Railfuture London & SE [Kent Division](#) meeting from 14:00.

Tue 16 Sep [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Wed 17 Sep [FoBL](#) will be at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes for 19:00 meeting start.

Wed 17 Sep [Railfuture North East](#) meet at Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle from 19:00. Talk about French light rail systems in the 21st century.

Mon 22 Sep [European Car-Free Day](#). A chance to promote the alternatives!

Thu 2 Oct [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards ceremony in Scarborough.

Sat 4 Oct [TravelWatch SouthWest](#) general meeting, College of Arts & Tech, Taunton from 10:30.

Sat 11 Oct [ESTA](#) Autumn meeting in the URC Hall, Leiston.

Tue 28 Oct [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Sat 1 Nov [Railfuture autumn conference](#) and RUG Awards, Univ of Westminster, London

Wed 5 Nov [ACoRP](#) Station Adoption seminar, ScotRail offices, Waterloo Street, Glasgow

Tue 11 Nov [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the North of England, held in York

Tue 18 Nov [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the South of England, held in London.

Wed 19 Nov [FoBL](#) will be at the Sloop Inn, Barton-u-Humber; 18:00 for 20:00 meeting start.

Tue 9 Dec [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.

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 all the way from Wool in Dorset by

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