

**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").*

I've recently updated these lists on the **Rail User Group** page of Railfuture's website [here](#)...

**National A-Z List of Rail User Groups**

**Regional List of Rail User Groups** (as above, but sorted by region)

**National A-Z List of Rail Reopening Campaign Groups** (scroll down the page for this one)

Please take a moment to verify that the details for your group are correct; also please check the details for any other groups you may know about. *Thanks.*

Railfuture's lists appear near the top of any internet search, so it's important we get them right!

*We continue with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK, starting in the Far North and proceeding via the Northern Powerhouse to soft underbelly of the Nation. As always, I'm very grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.*

**Friends of the Far North Line – continually "pushed aside" when it comes to investment**

FoFNL's Convenor uses a technical term to describe recent performance on the line between Inverness and Wick/Thurso: "lousy!" Problems include trains sets being moved south for the Commonwealth Games and wind-blown trees. Reflecting that a few tens of thousands of passengers in the Borders region are being connected to the rail network at considerable expense, he suggests that the similar numbers of rail users north of Inverness should expect something (considerably less!) to be spent on their line. The problem, as confirmed by an exchange of letters with Mark Carne (CEO of Network Rail), is that, when it comes to investment, priority will always be given to schemes which benefit the largest number of people – thus the Far North Line is for ever being pushed aside.

With three new train operators running services from Inverness, the group is seeking meetings at a senior level to articulate their aspirations for the next four years. Earlier in the year, the group submitted detailed comments in response to the Scottish Government's inquiry into freight transport – the group cited a number of infrastructure deficiencies such as the weight restriction on the Oykel viaduct meaning that oil tanks can only travel 75% full.

There were a few changes to the timetable in May, and FoFNL is disappointed that, once again, schedules are being extended by a minute here, two minutes there. However, there is some good news: catering is being reintroduced for all trains between Wick and Inverness and, thanks to representations from the group, Tain will get an additional Sunday service.

Brora station building, elegant but in a deteriorating condition, is one of only three unused stations on the entire ScotRail network, so it's heartening that the village has set up a Station Building Sub-group to look at ways of bringing it back to life. They say that a viable business proposition would unlock funding from ScotRail and the Railway Heritage Trust for its refurbishment.

Members routinely send in their travel experiences. One sorry saga on 16<sup>th</sup> April was pieced together from three separate reports to see what lessons could be learned: "It is interesting, though not surprising, that three different explanations for the delays and cancellations were being given out that day!"

### **Friends of the West Highland Lines – some questions asked about the new franchises**

Several pages of FoWHL's magazine, West Highland News, are devoted to reports about the new rail franchises for Scotland and the impact on rail travel in the Highland region. Regarding the Caledonian Sleeper franchise, FoWHL has taken up some fundamental issues regarding the operator's website and ticket offers & availability; they're also looking at the vexed question of sleeper bookings. The start of the ScotRail franchise coincided with controversial news that four Class 170 units were to move south to England: "Not a great start to the new franchise ... and come September there will be a need for several units to work the new Borders Railway too!" The group has also made its views known about ScotRail's Club 55 ticket offer, to be renamed "Club 50" in a rethink about minimum age requirements.

Two members of FoWHL's committee paid a visit to Yoker signalling centre in Glasgow, which controls West Highland services out as far as Helensburgh Upper, handover point for Radio Electronic Token Block working. The pair was able to follow the progress of several West Highland trains on the screens, interleaved with the City's intensive electric train services. They thanked staff for their help and hospitality after their interesting visit.

The Friends held their AGM on a cold, wet and windy day in Oban during May. There was no further tree clearance work to report, but the good news was that the new ScotRail operator, Abellio, has agreed to invest £50,000 per year in tree clearance for the recovery of iconic views. The Webmaster reported that there were 7,000 visits per month to the group's continuously-improving website and 618 "fans" on their new Facebook account, several from abroad. The Publicity Officer told the meeting that 10,000 updated FoWHL leaflets had been produced for targeted distribution. A representative of FoWHL was announced to serve on the new West Highland Community Rail Partnership, and the group expects to be represented on the Lorn and Lomond CRP if and when it's established.

There's a report that two Aberdeenshire councillors are launching a campaign to re-open the 14-mile line between Dyce and Ellon off the Aberdeen-Inverness main line. The line would not only serve the town of Ellon, but would act as a park & ride facility for Fraserburgh, Peterhead and central Buchan.

*A copy of West Highland News landed on my doormat on the morning that the untimely death of former Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy, was announced. Mr Kennedy was the much-respected Honorary President of the Friends of the West Highland Lines. - Ed*

### **LevenMouth Rail Campaign – almost 5,000 signatures for their petition**

LMRC's campaign to reopen the Thornton-Leven rail link is nearly halfway to reaching its target of 10,000 signatures on its petition – supporters are asked to sign up on [www.gopetition.com](http://www.gopetition.com). In their latest newsletter, the group acknowledges the help they've received from Railfuture.

Fife Council have expressed their full support for the railway to reopen, and have set aside resources to assist with publicity. The Council's feasibility report was recently assessed by the relevant rail authorities with the result that the scheme will now progress to the next stage in the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) process - the scheduled reporting date is 2 Aug 2015.

The latest official station-usage figures show that Thornton station itself is witnessing above-average passenger growth (up 3.44% in the year to April 2014), further strengthening the case for rail investment in Fife.

### **Lancaster & Skipton Rail User group – 20 years of campaigning for service improvements bear fruit**

In a press release, LASRUG welcomes plans for more trains between Leeds and Morecambe, and for improved train units on the line. A new Northern rail franchise is due to begin in April 2016, and three companies are bidding to operate the franchise - Abellio, Arriva and Govia. LASRUG has met with each of these to press the case for a more frequent service and for higher quality trains.

There are currently five weekday trains each way between Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe; by 2019 at the latest these are to be increased to seven, timed to provide commuter trains to and from Lancaster and Leeds, a later last train from Leeds, and a roughly two-hourly service through the day. The Sunday service is to increase from four to five trains each way. As well as specifying this new service level, the Invitation to Tender document also requires the operator to cease using “Pacer” trains by the end of 2019, and to make improvements to all its stations.

LASRUG Co-chairman Hugh Turner said, “The prospect of an improved timetable for the Leeds to Morecambe service is tremendous news and I pay tribute to the hard work put in by LASRUG members to promote the line over the last 20 years and to press for a timetable convenient for a greater range of today’s travel needs.”

LASRUG is an active member of the Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe CRP, and notes that the new operator will be required to continue to work closely with the CRP and to support it financially.

### **Skipton – East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership – Output Definitions Group gets to work**

During 2014, two senior representatives from the Dept. for Transport spent a day with SELRAP representatives and were shown the Skipton to Colne trackbed; they also looked at existing rail services in the area. This led to a “milestone” 1-day forum in January 2015 which was brokered by the DfT and hosted by SELRAP. Senior representatives from Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive attended, alongside those from Network Rail and Northern Rail. This was a crucial meeting for the campaign group as it considered whether there was to be a future for the Skipton to Colne Line. The re-instatement of the line would provide a direct link between Lancashire and Leeds, complementing existing Pennine routes.

Following on from the 1-day forum, an Output Definitions Group was set up, led by Lancashire County Council and consisting of the same stakeholders outlined above. A representative from SELRAP will also attend. The group is tasked with considering the best ways of improving connectivity in order to promote economic growth, sustainable tourism, and increased access to employment, education and training opportunities. Findings from this in-depth analysis, which must be completed by the end of 2015, will be fed into the North of England rail review to be carried out by Network Rail in 2016. The outcome from that review could be a key factor in determining whether the Skipton-Colne scheme features in the DfT’s long term planning process for Network Rail’s Control Period 6, which would see construction between 2019 and 2024.

### **Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line – hours spent lobbying bring results!**

With the publication of the Invitation to Tender for Northern Rail, FoSCL say they now know the shape of S&C passenger services in the next franchise: the existing Leeds-Carlisle service is to be guaranteed for 10 years, plus some useful improvements. “So all those hours spent lobbying the Dept. for Transport and the politicians have paid off!” However, the group is still pressing for an hourly service, faster line speeds, more appropriate rolling stock ... and for local management.

There’s a warning that some of the line’s traffic is on a precarious footing: freight is in decline; rail replacement buses are used instead of diversion via the S&C when the West Coast Main Line is closed; and steam charters were recently under threat when the West Coast Railway’s operator

licence was suspended on safety grounds. There is evidence that usage by local residents is also falling; however tourists still flock to the line, so much so that prebooked coach parties have to be rationed at busy times of the year. FoSCL says that, despite the rail industry apparently hiding ticket options via the S&C, rail users are increasingly discovering that the route offers good value for travel between London and Scotland. The group is working hard to promote bus services linking to the railway – they say the picture for Summer 2015 is “better than many had feared”.

The S&C Railway Conservation Project is continuing its work to record, by photographs and description, all the structures and artefacts on the route, right down to mileposts - the data compiled will then be used to assess priorities for maintenance funding, preservation, re-use etc. There are also volunteers recording and preserving artefacts relating to the line, such as signal-box diagrams, uniforms, books and photographs.

The private owner of the famous name “Midland Railway Company Ltd” has generously donated it to FoSCL, enabling them to trade under that name. This has enabled the group to take out a lease on an industrial unit just opposite Settle station; the unit is to be their new home, pending finalisation of the tenancy agreement. FoSCL has published a new Volunteer Brochure, highlighting the 40,000 hours a year that members put in to support the railway: “no other voluntary rail organisation comes near this figure”. [*Does anyone want to challenge this claim? – Ed*]

### **Harrogate Line Supporters' Group – group welcomes local MP's appointment to the DfT**

HLSG is delighted that their local MP, Andrew Jones, has been appointed to the ministerial team at the Dept. for Transport, and they hope that he will be able to persuade his Treasury colleagues to provide the funding for the electrification of the Harrogate Line.

The group was surprised to learn that Northern Rail is now charging £2 per day to park cars at Pannal Station. When they challenged the Company, they were informed that this was one of a number of stations where charges were being introduced in response to the Government's economic conditions for the short term extension of their franchise. The group protested that this policy is directly contrary to the previously agreed aim of increasing patronage on the Harrogate Line, which formed the basis of the Business Case for electrification.

HLSG was very pleased to be short-listed for an award in the Business Achievement of the Year category of the Harrogate Hospitality and Tourism Award. The citation reads - "The winning nomination will be either an individual, or a business that has made significant positive change to enhance the customer experience, or grown their business against market expectation/conditions."

### **Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association – passenger counts help make the case for more trains**

Prior to meeting with bidders for the replacement Northern franchise, MCRUA had been busy putting together information about their line – this included the results of recent passenger counts. Volunteers have counted passengers on over 1500 trains over the last few years!

There was very good news in the Invitation to Tender document for the new franchise that the minimum service specification for the line will see a doubling of the Sunday train frequency and the introduction of an extra hourly semi-fast service. MCRUA has some issues with the latter and so has supplied information to the bidders to enable them to make the case for further improvements. The ITT specifies a move towards “Driver Controlled Operation” of trains, and MCRUA thinks that retention of a second member of staff on every train is essential.

MCRUA was surprised and pleased to find that, in the Electrification Study for the North, their line was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in priority out of over 30 routes. However, the group was alarmed by Stockport Council's recently-published Rail Strategy document which envisages conversion of the Stockport-Altrincham line to tram-train operation: “Would our service have to be truncated to only operate between Chester and Altrincham with through passengers having to change...?”

MCRUA's new "Take the Train" leaflets have been published for each station on the Mid Cheshire Line in time for the start of the summer timetable. The 2015 programme of Music Trains got off to a fine start in April, but the group's annual excursion train has been cancelled this year due to the operating difficulties which are afflicting charter trains nationally.

### **Friends of the Brigg and Lincoln Lines – busy helping to promote their line**

In an update, we read that the group has been working with train operators to produce a standard-format poster which will be displayed at stations from Sheffield to Cleethorpes in order to promote the Brigg Lines and, in particular, events in both Brigg and Gainsborough.

### **Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association – public recognition of SARPA campaigns**

Just before the arrival of extra train services on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth line in May, SARPA issued a press release in which Chairman, Angus Eickhoff, is quoted as saying: "Everybody we speak to is looking forward to having better choices for using rail brought about by the introduction of the extra trains. Having a morning arrival into Shrewsbury at 08:14 will open up educational and job opportunities for people in the upper Severn valley. We started campaigning for extra trains in 1997 and Committee members have even been stopped in the street and congratulated by members of the public. It's a real boost for Mid Wales!"

SARPA will not be resting on its laurels and will be monitoring the new services, in particular the number of carriages provided on certain trains. SARPA is encouraging Mid Wales stakeholders not to think that the "rail" box is ticked in Mid Wales, and to use the anticipated success of the new services to campaign for a fit-for-purpose, 21st Century replacement for the current Wales and Borders franchise in 2018.

### **Stourbridge Line User Group – a successful AGM at Kidderminster**

Most of the Summer 2015 newsletter is taken up with an account of SLUG's AGM which was held at Kidderminster Town station on 12 May. The AGM was preceded by a public meeting addressed by representatives from Worcestershire County Council, Centro and London Midland.

Over the last year SLUG's committee had several meetings with representatives of the County Council, London Midland and Chiltern Railways (unfortunately they had been unable to meet with Centro, although they did receive written reports). At these meetings, the committee raised individual passengers' complaints affecting the line, in addition to issues relating to train services, and concerns about such things as revenue protection and car parking provision. They also argued for more co-operation between the operators when passing on information about late running and cancellation. It was also reported that SLUG representatives attended the regular meetings of various other groups, including the Worcestershire Rail Users' Group Alliance.

There was a suggestion at the AGM for local communities to adopt stations along the Stourbridge line, and it was agreed that this is something for the new committee to look into. The incoming committee will also be reviewing the group's targets for the year, and these are expected to include: additional trains (esp. evenings and Sundays), better connections and station improvements. The campaign to reopen the line from Stourbridge to Walsall via Dudley is ongoing; also the group will continue to monitor the design of the new station at Kidderminster.

### **Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers' Association – wish list to be updated in the light of developments**

Their participation in discussions about the Welsh National Transport Plan prompted the PRTA to update its wish list and reflect on past aspirations that have actually come to fruition such as the redoubling of stretches of single line and the reinstatement of Goodwick station. A start has been made on transport interchanges for Pembroke Dock and Milford Haven, and the PRTA is pressing for their completion. They point out that there is scope for improvements to interchanges at a number of other stations.

The group wants assurances that electrification from London to South Wales will not result in a reduction of direct trains to London from Carmarthen. Furthermore, they say that South Pembrokeshire stations should be capable of accommodating the new IEP trains. A daily fast train between Milford Haven and Cardiff is called for, with the target of knocking half an hour off the usual journey time.

Members of the committee attended the Welsh Assembly Government's *Rail Interest Groups* meeting in Swansea recently, and there were similar meetings in Shrewsbury and Cardiff. Of interest to Pembrokeshire rail users were the agreed aims to increase the frequency of trains to both Milford Haven and Tenby from 2-hourly to hourly, and to reopen St Clears station. There were also calls for faster services, better station facilities and more appropriate rolling stock. The case was made for reopening the line between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth, and for restoring services to Brecon and to Caernarfon.

A current concern is the poor condition of paintwork at Narberth station. Arriva Trains Wales advised the group to contact Network Rail about the matter. While NR confirmed that they will be repainting the canopy in the near future, they said the rest of the structure is the responsibility of the train operator! ... "Oh, the joys of privatisation!" Elsewhere we read that the group is concerned that they seem to be the only Welsh *Community Rail Partnership* line without a community rail officer: "We would like one again please."

### **Hitchin Rail Users' Group – growth in passengers underlines need for adequate services at Hitchin**

At a meeting with Govia Thameslink Railway, HRUG learnt about forthcoming developments on their line including power supply upgrades, new signalling and the future train-service pattern. The group's representatives raised some "interesting points" on the operation and reliability of the core service in the light of delays to driver route familiarisation. In addition, they were concerned about connections with East Coast services and the need for improved bus links between Hitchin and Luton. A number of deficiencies with GTR's timetable booklet were also mentioned.

Underlining the growth in passenger numbers at their station, the HRUG representatives opened a detailed discussion on the service provision for Hitchin. Improvements were sought for the interim period leading up to the introduction of full Thameslink services in 2018, and the group wanted to see that due consideration is given to Hitchin rail users in the planning stages for the 2018 timetable.

Members of HRUG had also attended a Railfuture forum in St Albans on the Greater Thameslink service and were able to put forward their primary concerns. Bedford line users alerted those present to the need for getting the balance right between fast and slow trains, and the Hitchin users thought this was "a point to watch". The group agreed to prepare a "Hitchin based" perspective piece and feed this back to Railfuture.

### **Chesham and District Transport Users' Group – *Croxley Link brings risk to direct train frequency***

The Croxley Link project has been given the go-ahead by Government but the County Council appeared to be talking in terms of only “minimal work” needing to be effected in order to run through trains from Amersham and Chesham to Watford Junction. However, CDTUG reiterated its desire to retain the current two trains per hour from Chesham direct to London rather than losing one of those through services to a direct service to Watford Junction.

Ongoing issues for the group include: instances of short journeys and missed station calls as delayed trains make up time, inappropriate Uxbridge-line stock with longitudinal seating being used on their line, and poor staff awareness of timetable alterations during engineering works. The group continues to be involved in discussions about disabled access at Amersham station, and they've been in touch with the National Childbirth Trust to elicit support from mother and baby groups.

### **Essex Rail Users Federation**

The Essex Rail Users Federation represents the interests of rail users in Essex, predominately along the Great Eastern Mainline and branches - it comprises individual Rail User Groups from stations along the line. In February 2015, ERUF sent three pages of comments to Network Rail in response to NR's consultation on their **draft Anglia Route Study**. Then in March, they submitted a 22-page document to the Dept for Transport in response to the DfT's **East Anglia Rail Franchise consultation**.

ERUF supported many of the proposals in the **draft Route Study**, but thought that the Study did not address the principal problems that are present in the infrastructure of the Anglia lines: “We suspect that the reason for this is that most of these problems are going to cost serious money to put right. The infrastructure cannot cope with the massive increase in number of rail passengers using the Great Eastern main line.” They cited recent station usage statistics and planned housing developments to back up this claim. ERUF thinks there is potential for extra stations in the region, and gave three examples: Clacton North, Great Cornard (a new housing area south of Sudbury) and Great Blakenham (midway between Ipswich and Needham Market).

Inadequate infrastructure and population growth were the dominant themes in ERUF's response to the **East Anglia Rail Franchise consultation**. They mentioned that the Greater Anglia franchise is currently one of the least popular in the whole country according to official passenger-satisfaction figures. There's been no new rolling stock for over 10 years, so most trains look very shabby, and the group thinks they compare unfavourably with those of almost every other franchise that serves London. ERUF believes that every station in Essex should have a train serving it at no more than half-hour intervals throughout the day, including weekends. The Great Eastern Main Line has only two tracks north of Shenfield, making it one of the busiest two-track sections in the country with no satisfactory diversionary route - ERUF says that four tracking, at least between Beaulieu Park and Witham, has to be a medium to long term recommendation.

ERUF tell us that their franchise consultation response was reported in the local press, in particular their proposals to reopen the Brightlingsea branch line, and their recommendations for new stations at Essex University and at Clacton North.

### **Friends of the Lymington-Brockenhurst Line – *summer celebrations on the line***

The Friends will be helping to organise further events on the line this summer. On 4 July and 22 Aug, there will be Second-World-War-themed tea and entertainment in a canvass marquee at Brockenhurst station, where the “Bunker Girls” invite you to dust off your dancing shoes, put on your party frock or trilby and take a musical trip back in time!

In addition, on 11 July and 8 Aug, the Lymington Town Band will be in residence from 11am to 2pm on Platform 4 of Brockenhurst station, playing a selection of popular melodies.

### **Friends of Wool Station – a shameless box-nicking exercise**

Members of the group were left reeling after Wool Station was robbed of its signal box over the weekend of 30/31 May. The gang, cleverly disguised in bright orange hoodies, made off with the historic structure under cover of ... er ... daylight. This comes just weeks after men from the Council paid a visit with their ride-on mower and accidentally demolished the concrete memorial seat in the station forecourt. "At this rate, there'll be nothing left" said a spokesman [*namely: me*], adding that he hoped the demolition gang would soon be back for the CLASP prefabricated station building.

### **Friends of Crewkerne Station – token support from supermarket**

Friends of Crewkerne Station were delighted to have been selected again as one of the three local groups that Waitrose is supporting in June. Every green token that supporters drop in the box at the Waitrose store in Crewkerne means a bigger share for the group of the £1000 available. FoCS members will make sure they spread the word about this at their next Station Open Day.

### **Avocet Line Rail Users' Group – promise of better trains and a more regular service pattern**

ALRUG's newsletter carries a review of the direct franchise award to First Great Western and the group is very pleased that their mix of inadequate Pacer units and single-car Class 153s are to be replaced within two years by fully refurbished 4-car Class 150/2 units, complete with more luggage/cycle space and accessible toilets. The core service is to be Exmouth-Exeter-Paignton every half hour which represents a frequency improvement for the Paignton line – ALRUG will keep up the pressure for half-hourly trains on Sundays as well. The group also wants to see ticket machines at every station on their line.

Following ALRUG's work compiling station standards for their line, the local Line Forum has now agreed a programme of improvements to stations with FGW. The plan includes additional ticket vending machines at Polsloe Bridge & Lymptone Village, CCTV to deter unsocial behaviour at Polsloe Bridge & St James Park, and reliable rolling-screen train information at all stations.

On a stormy day in February a few members of ALRUG's committee were invited to travel to Plymouth and back on Network Rail's New Measurement Train, a bright yellow HST packed with instrumentation. As well as lasers and sensors it uses a sophisticated video system which takes a narrow sweep view of the track many times per second - the clarity of pictures is good enough to read the small print on a crisp packet! It was a fascinating trip and the participants wish there had been longer to take in all the technical detail.

ALRUG's committee were recently invited to attend a meeting of the new Friends of Newcourt Station group, so they took along the ALRUG displays and literature, and hoped to gain a few new members as a result. The lively meeting was attended by about thirty or so Newcourt residents... although an opening date for the new station is still awaited.

***...news from Railfuture follows...***

### **RAILFUTURE INTERNATIONAL GROUP**

The International Group has updated its popular "Going Abroad" leaflet which provides basic information about planning a trip to continental Europe or Ireland by train or train+ferry. A batch is being sent to subscribers of the European Rail Timetable. If you can use some at a forthcoming meeting or event, please apply to [trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk).



## RAILFUTURE CONFERENCES IN 2015

**The Summer Conference in Newark. Our Autumn Conference in Bristol.** *Further details below...*

20 June 2015 Railfuture summer conference at **Newark** Town Hall NG24 1DU, from 10:45 to 17:00. Theme: *Enhancing capacity in the East Midlands*. The fee of only £30 includes refreshments and buffet lunch. There's an impressive line-up of speakers from the rail industry and local authorities, as well as reports from rail campaigners. *Still open for bookings!*

7 Nov 2015 Railfuture autumn conference and RUG awards ceremony at Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel, Redcliff Hill, **Bristol** BS1 6SQ, from 10:45 to 17:00. Theme: *Rail Resurgence in the West of England*. The conference fee is £30, but there's an early bird discount for members booking before 31 Aug 2015.

For further information and full list of speakers, see: [www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences)

## RAILFUTURE RUG AWARDS COMPETITION SETS OFF...



### **Let the oxygen of publicity breathe fresh life into your campaigning for railway development!**

Railfuture's *fourth* Rail User Group Awards will again aim to recognise and reward the various achievements over the past year among the country's 300 RUGs in fulfilling Railfuture's mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users. Awards will be presented at Railfuture's November conference on 7 November in Bristol.

For some general clues to what's involved you can do no better than draw on the experience of the first three years' RUG Awards. The key website links are...

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups)

[www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+Awards](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+Awards)

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Express](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Express)

[www.railwatch.org.uk/backtrack](http://www.railwatch.org.uk/backtrack)

The award categories for 2015 are:

1. \*Best Newsletter GOLD
2. \*Best Newsletter SILVER
3. \*Best Website GOLD
4. \*Best Website SILVER
5. Best Campaign
6. Best New Group
7. Best Campaigner – *Railfuture members only*
8. Best Social Media Promotion – *a new category for 2015*
9. Judges' Special Award

\*not available to last year's winners

### RUG Awards - Entry Rules

The closing date for your submissions is 23.59 on **Tuesday 1st September 2015**. There are no application forms. Just one nomination in any category will be sufficient for the nominated newsletter, website, campaign, new group, social media promotion, or individual to be considered; as in previous years these awards will not be decided by popular vote but on merit by a panel of independent judges. The same person or group can nominate in more than one category. RUGs and individuals can nominate their own newsletter, website, campaign, new group, or social media promotion, as well as others; there will be no self-nomination accepted in category 7! The Judges' Special Award is reserved to the sole discretion of the judging panel, which as in previous years we plan to include our Vice-Presidents.

For best newsletter and best social media promotion, please confirm your wish to be considered for an award by sending an email to [roger.blake@raifuture.org.uk](mailto:roger.blake@raifuture.org.uk) or a letter, and in either case please post a paper copy of your latest and up to three other most recent newsletters, or disc/memory stick etc, to Roger Blake, 70 Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, London, N16 0DX.

Please do NOT email the newsletters themselves otherwise you will overload Roger's Inbox!

A lesson from previous years: Roger very strongly advises the use of padded envelopes for postal submissions, and the use of Signed-for Delivery.

For best website, which will be judged at any time during September-October, again please send an email or letter confirming your entry, with a link to your website, to Roger Blake as above.

For best campaign, best new group, and best individual RUG campaigner, please email or post your nominations to Roger with your submissions of up to 200 words each. A limited selection of supporting evidence can be sent to him by post, or by email if just plain text.

All submissions must please:

...identify the individual making the nomination,

...indicate whether nomination is personal or on behalf of a named group and if so in any particular capacity,

...include a full postal address and at least one telephone number where possible.

The intention is that these awards are open to Railfuture members and RUGs affiliated\* to Railfuture, with eligibility to entry being one of the benefits of membership. However, we do recognise that many currently non-affiliated groups and their members do sterling work in a wide variety of ways which should not be allowed to pass unremarked. Such groups should nevertheless be able to enter the Awards competition by identifying at least one currently-subscribing Railfuture member, by membership number or postcode.

\*The Directory of Rail Users Groups on the national website shows affiliated RUGs with an 'A'

The national website [www.raifuture.org.uk](http://www.raifuture.org.uk) has details of how to join Railfuture, including online payment using Paypal. As in previous years, the prizes will include a year's subscription to Railfuture, so that will be a 'free introductory offer' for non-member RUGs whom we trust will then renew their affiliation a year later.

All nominees will have their current membership status (individual or affiliated RUG) confirmed together with date of expiry of any current subscription. Non-members are asked to confirm a wish to apply for individual or RUG membership if a prize-winner. Railfuture wishes to be inclusive and while all membership applications are ultimately at the discretion of the national Board of Directors, it is very rarely withheld.

With apologies for all the terms and conditions, please feel free to raise any queries with Roger Blake as above. There's now a month's LESS time this year to make your preparations for nominating. This is so that one of our Vice-Presidents may be able to pay you a visit during September/early-October while they are in your area.

And finally, book no later than Monday 31 August at [www.raifuture.org.uk/conferences](http://www.raifuture.org.uk/conferences) to benefit from the Railfuture members' early-bird-discounted Bristol conference fee of just £20.00 (includes refreshments and buffet lunch). Be there to collect your framed RUG Award, have the occasion photographed for your own local publicity, and maybe have the further opportunity [available only to conference participants] to earn yourself a prize for correctly guessing one of the Award winners.

*Roger Blake, June 2015*

Best of luck ... and may Bristol be as "awarding" an experience as it was for those who came to the previous RUG Award ceremonies at London, Oxford and Birmingham!

## RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE BRANCH

Branch Chair, Nina Smith, is making enquiries to establish the facts and sequence of events behind the “ghost train” service (2 trains/day) on the Leeds-Goole route. It’s thought that the continued neglect stems from the fact that the service crosses local authority boundaries. Metro at one time wanted to run a two-hourly service, but that aspiration has long gone. The Branch warns of the risk that the present “ghost” service will be perpetuated into the next Northern franchise. They suggest the eastern terminus could be Hull ...and that additional trains on the route would address the wider issue of Pontefract’s poor train service.

The Branch committee had very good feedback from Northern bidders about the productive all-day sessions which Railfuture had organised so that their bid teams could meet with all relevant user groups: “The depth of local knowledge and commitment, and the high level of professionalism showed Railfuture and its affiliates in an excellent light.”

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

## APPOINTMENTS AT THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

These appointments were announced by the Prime Minister following the General Election...

1. Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP continues to be Secretary of State for Transport
2. Robert Goodwill MP continues as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (responsible for: HS2, aviation, Europe and international, maritime, devolution, cycling and walking)
3. Claire Perry MP continues as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State but is no longer responsible for freight and logistics. (That leaves her with: rail major projects and growth, rail infrastructure, safety and security, passenger services, strategy, funding and sponsorship, integrated delivery and accessibility, rail fares and ticketing)
4. Andrew Jones MP is appointed as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (responsible for freight and logistics, and also the following: Northern Powerhouse including Northern & TransPennine Express franchises, environment, Low Emission Vehicles, technology and innovation, roads, bus policy, Local Sustainable Transport Fund, city growth deals and smart ticketing).
5. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon is appointed as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (responsibilities within the DfT are to include skills and the supply chain). Lord Ahmad is also a member of the Home Office Ministerial team.

*-www.gov.uk*

Michael Dugher MP, who was re-elected as Labour MP for Barnsley East, has been reappointed as Shadow Secretary of State for Transport.

## RAIL PASSENGER JOURNEYS REACHED A RECORD HIGH OF 1.65 BILLION

New statistics just published by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) show that the number of passenger journeys on franchised rail services in Great Britain reached 1.654 billion in 2014-15. This is the highest recorded figure since the series began in 2002-3 and an increase of 4.2% (67.3 million) on the previous year. This is also an increase of 69.5% since 2002-3, when only 975.5 million journeys were made. – *ORR announcement*

- You can view the most recent statistics from the ORR on their website [here](#).

## **BURNLEY GETS DIRECT TRAINS TO MANCHESTER**

Following a multi-million pound investment and almost a decade of partnership work between Burnley Council, Network Rail, Lancashire County Council and Northern Rail, on Sunday 17th May 2015 the direct Blackburn to Manchester via Burnley service returned to the region. The scheme was part-funded from the government's Regional Growth Fund.

Northern operated the historic first train, over 40 years after the closure of the Todmorden Curve in 1972, following the completion and opening of the line by Network Rail. There was a community celebration at Burnley Manchester Road and Accrington stations to herald a new chapter in rail travel and the start of a range of benefits for the two communities.

Commuters were welcomed with tea, coffee, muffins and a 'goodie bag' at Burnley Manchester Road and Accrington stations, handed out by teams from Northern, Burnley Council, the East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership and Lancashire County Council.

Burnley Manchester Road's fantastic new station building opened its doors to the public last November. Built with the help of funding from Citizens' Rail as part of the EU Interreg IVB programme, the new building will transform the town's busiest station and aid Burnley's economic regeneration. – news from [www.citizensrail.org](http://www.citizensrail.org)

## **SHORTLIST FOR EAST ANGLIA FRANCHISE ANNOUNCED**

Three train companies shortlisted to transform rail services in East Anglia were announced on 2 June 2015 by the Government. They will work with the Government to develop their proposals before receiving an invitation to tender in August. Bidders will be asked to show how they will improve the region's railways, including providing reduced journey times to London, more reliable services, and better connections. They will also be expected to show how they could achieve the recommendations of the Great Eastern Main Line Taskforce, which includes reducing London to Norwich journey times to 90 minutes.

The three shortlisted bidders are: Abellio East Anglia Limited (a joint venture between Abellio and Stagecoach), First East Anglia Limited and National Express East Anglia Trains Limited.

The new operator is due to take over the franchise in October 2016. The East Anglia franchise, which is currently operated by Abellio Greater Anglia, carries 354,000 passengers a day on 5 routes across the region. A public consultation on the future of rail services in East Anglia closed in March and the responses will be taken into account as the franchise proposals are developed further.

– DfT announcement

## **PARTNERSHIPS EXCHANGE IDEAS**

Community Rail Lancashire hosted a visit by Sally Buttifant from the Mid Cheshire Community Rail partnership earlier this year at their educational facility known as the Bunker. Sally is planning to set up a similar venture at Ellesmere Port station and used the visit to look at how CRL runs its educational programme.

Brian Haworth and Marjorie Birch explained the set up at the Bunker and described a standard day for school children who attend and the various tasks they undertake. Sally asked lots of questions, took lots of pictures and came away with some really great ideas to try with schools in the Ellesmere Port area. Sally fully enjoyed her visit and said "Community Rail Lancashire have really inspired me – it is amazing the work that they do with young people. I hope that all their good practice will give me a head start to offer meaningful sessions on the railway to local children."

It was really good to see Sally and to be able to help her in her exciting new project and we hope to visit Ellesmere Port Station over the next few months to see what community rail is achieving there.

- from CRL's newsletter

## A CABOOSE ON ITS WAY TO LLANDEILO STATION!

In rural Mid Wales a local company, Presteigne, has come up with the 'caboose' concept. For those of you old enough to remember, it looks like the classic BR 'fitted van' some of which can still be found in farmers' fields across Britain. But it's built to modern standards using sustainable materials and it isn't expensive. It provides room for small businesses, station adoption groups, local community groups. It could be used as a small shop, a booking office and convenience store, a bike hire business – or whatever the local need might be. Art gallery? Tourist information? Local food shop? Bike hire? The list is endless and will be determined by local opportunities rather than any top-down 'model'.

It isn't the kind of place that should be run by the train operator, or by a local authority. It needs people like you – local social entrepreneurs – to activate the concept. But it does need a supportive framework, and I'm delighted to say that Network Rail, the Welsh Government and the train operator (Arriva) is keen to see a pilot 'caboose' installed at Llandeilo. The project is being encouraged and promoted by the Heart of Wales Line Forum and its newly-formed subsidiary Heart of Wales Line Enterprise Network. The caboose will be ready soon and I hope some of you will be able to get over to Mid Wales and see it. Even better, start talking to your train operator and Network Rail about getting one installed at your station.

*-from Paul Salvesson's paper delivered to ACoRP's Station Adopters' Conference in Manchester*

## NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER OPERATORS' MAP

A revised edition of Barry Doe's franchise map has just been published. A number of changes take place between June and October, so to obviate the need to have several editions these are all included. New lines are an extension to Ebbw Vale Town (now open) and the Borders route to Tweedbank (opens September). Govia Thameslink absorbs Southern, TfL is a new operator (becoming Crossrail in 2018) and London Overground expands.

As usual anyone may download copies for private or commercial use, including printing any size, from the 'Rail Operators' section of [www.barrydoe.co.uk](http://www.barrydoe.co.uk) where links to this and previous editions appear.

## EVENTS

**Events for 2015, lifted from newsletters and emails received in recent weeks, are listed below.**

Further events for the year are shown in the [Events listing on Railfuture's website](#)

Coloured blobs differentiate between types of events...

- National & regional rail events.
- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are welcome to attend).
- Local Rail User Group events.

- 8 June 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, **Bexhill** from 19:00. [www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk](http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk)
- 10 June 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, **Methil Docks** from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
- 13 June 2015. Saturday. Railfuture Yorkshire Branch meet at Leeds Civic Hall, Calverley Street, **Leeds** LS1 1UR from 13:00. Guest speaker: Cllr James Lewis, Chair of the W. Yorks Combined Authority & Director of Rail North. [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

■ 19 June 2015. Friday. Closing date for entries in ACoRP's Community Rail Awards competition. Details from [hazel@acorp.uk.com](mailto:hazel@acorp.uk.com)

■ 19 June 2015. Friday. Friends of the Far North Line AGM in **Inverness** from 11:00 with guest speaker from Abellio. <http://www.fofnl.org.uk/>

■ 20 June 2015. Saturday. Railfuture's Summer Conference in the Town Hall, **Newark**, from 10:45 with speakers representing train operators and local authorities in the area. Details [here](#).

■ 23 June 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at **Chesham** Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>

■ 27 June 2015. Saturday. Railfuture East Anglia Branch Meeting at St Mary at Stoke Church Hall, Stoke Street, **Ipswich** IP2 8BX from 14.00.

■ 29 June 2015. Monday. Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group meet at **Foxton** Village Hall from 19:30. All welcome. <http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/>

■ 6 July 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe**, 19:30. [www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk](http://www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk)

■ 8 July 2015. Wednesday. London and South East regional branch, Eastern division meeting. 18.30. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Eastern>

■ 11 July 2015. Saturday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at Wharf Station, **Tywyn**, Talylyn Railway from 11:45. <http://sarpa.info>

■ 11 July 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of Bus Users UK Ltd will take place in **Cardiff** at the Pierhead Building from 11:00. <http://bususers.org/>

■ 13 July 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, **Bexhill** from 19:00. [www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk](http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk)

■ 14 July 2015. Tuesday. AGM of the Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association in the Conservatory at The Golden Pheasant, **Plumley** from 19:15. Guest speaker from Warrington Borough Council on the subject "rail developments in the North". <http://www.mcrua.org.uk/>

■ 15 July 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, **Methil Docks** from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>

■ 15 July 2015. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line AGM at the Sloop Inn, **Barton-on-Humber** from 20:00 (food and ale from 18:00). [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk)

■ 16 July 2015. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+and+Coastway>

■ 18 July 2015. Saturday. Railfuture North East branch meeting in Middlesbrough, in association with Coastliners and Saltburn Line Users' Group. Guest speaker: Alan Williams of Modern Railways.

■ 20 July 2015. Monday. Harrow Public Transport Users Association rail meeting at Harrow Baptist Church Hall, College Road, **Harrow** from 19:30.

■ 25 July 2015. Saturday. London and South East regional branch, Herts & Beds division meeting. 10.45. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Herts+and+Beds>

■ 3 August 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe** from 19:30. [www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk](http://www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk)

■ 4 August 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at **Chesham** Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>

■ 4 August 2015. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at The White Lion, **Machynlleth** from 18:55. <http://sarpa.info>

■ 1 September 2015. Tuesday. Closing date for Railfuture's Rail User Group Awards competition.

■ 1 September 2015. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at The Royal Oak, **Welshpool** from 19:20. <http://sarpa.info>

■ 16 September 2015. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line meet at the No 1 Inn, **Cleethorpes** from 19:00. [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk)

■ 1 October 2015. Thursday. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2015 competition gala dinner and awards ceremony at the Riviera International Centre, **Torquay**. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>

■ 10 October 2015. Saturday. East Suffolk Travellers' Association autumn meeting, in the parish church hall, **Aldeburgh** from 14:00. [www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk](http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk)

■ 19 October 2015. Monday. Avocet Line RUG's AGM at Malthouse, The Globe, **Topsham**.  
[www.avocetline.org.uk](http://www.avocetline.org.uk)

■ 7 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture's Rail User Conference at The Mercure Hotel, **Bristol**, just a short walk from Temple Mills station. Details [here](#).

■ 10 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar North in **Manchester**.  
<http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>

■ 17 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar South at the Dept. for Transport offices, Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, **London** SW1P 4DR. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>

■ 13 January 2016. Wednesday. Harrow Public Transport Users Association rail meeting at Harrow Baptist Church Hall, College Road, **Harrow** from 14:00

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*This bulletin has been sent from Wool in Dorset by...*

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