

**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").

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

LevenMouth Rail Campaign – stepping outside their comfort zone

In a bid to take their message to the people this summer, LMRC are heading out of their regular haunt — the *Fife Renewables Innovation Centre* at Methil Docks — to meet the general public in a series of 'roadshows' as they gather signatures for their petition and tell everyone how important it is that the Leven railway is restored: "The positive response by the local public is overwhelming."

LMRC are looking to recruit a Campaigns Manager with funding from Fife Council. In June, LMRC members had a productive meeting with a Principal Consultant from SYSTRA, the transport consultancy tasked with preparing the formal "options" study - the group was able to provide some useful background information and correct a few factual errors that had been circulated in the past. In parallel with the study, LMRC will be lobbying the Scottish Transport Minister to seek assurances that the Leven railway scheme will receive due consideration for funding. They're also looking to engage the services of Transform Scotland to help in lobbying for the cause, especially at national level.

The campaign has been given a major boost by the backing of one of Britain's top businesses — the Malcolm Group. *Malcolm Logistics* lorries are a regular sight around the vast *Diageo* plant at Leven, as they bring in the vital ingredients for the whisky distillery and ship out the finished product. They propose bonded warehouses with rail transport and terminal operations, making efficient use of the reopened railway. Among the most-significant moves would be the use of "Intermodal Units" — trailers that can readily be transferred between road lorries and rail wagons.

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland – seeking to prevent programme slippage

The RAGES committee has attended high-level meetings in recent months to make sure that deadlines for the completion of new stations at East Linton and Reston stand some chance of being met. The latest setback is that the initial costings from Network Rail for the two stations had increased, so cash from the Station Fund can't be released until new costings are published then independently audited. The earliest that contractors can start work is now Feb 2016.

Elsewhere it's reported that the group is pressing for a car park extension at Dunbar station, and is in talks about the congested station car park at Drem. Ways to re-invigorate the campaign for reopening the Haddington Branch are also being pursued.

South East Northumberland Rail User Group – franchise specifications: the good and the bad

Commenting on the franchise specifications for Northern Rail and TransPennine Express, SENRUG recognises both positive features and some unsatisfactory aspects. The Northern spec. requires the operator to run both an evening and Sunday service into Newcastle - both things that SENRUG has been campaigning for - but does not include the extension of service northwards to Pegswood and Widdrington as SENRUG had requested. Neither are station facilities such as opening hours for the toilet and waiting room specified.

In the TPE specification, SENRUG had requested the DfT include the requirement to extend services to Cramlington and Morpeth, effectively doubling service frequency at these stations to 2/hr. Whilst this is not included in the specification, the DfT has asked bidders for priced options for extending the service beyond Newcastle to Edinburgh. However, SENRUG fears these would run fast, cost more to operate and provide no additional calls in their area.

SENRUG welcomed the news that First Group are bidding as an Open Access Operator to run 5 trains per day between London and Edinburgh, calling at Morpeth. In a statement to the press, SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett said: "We have long argued that there is a strong commercial case for a regular inter-city service at Morpeth. Our aspiration is for a service every 2 hours in each direction..."

Northern Rail has introduced charges for car parking at Morpeth and Cramlington stations. These new charges mark the end of a 5 year battle in which SENRUG has opposed charges for parking at stations. With no buses serving either station, the group believes commuters have no other viable means of reaching the station to get to work - they calculate that a £2/day charge will increase the cost of getting to work in Newcastle by 30%, and point out that alternative options such as parking in Newcastle, or driving part of the way then taking the Metro, might now be cheaper. After making representations, the group has now learnt that Northern is to offer a season ticket scheme for parking, thereby softening the blow for commuters.

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group – *awaiting the outcome of franchise consultations*

Over the past twelve months, all three bidders for the Northern franchise have adopted a very positive approach to consulting with stakeholders on the Bentham Line and have appreciated the wealth of information and suggestions put forward by LASRUG: "Now we must wait - but the bidders will move on to consultations for other franchises."

Two members of the LASRUG committee had attended a meeting in Settle of a new South Dales Transport Action Group. Following on from that meeting, LASRUG's committee agreed to donate £50 towards the production of a new Dales Travel Guide that would include details of all public transport services in the south west dales area.

LASRUG members have also been working with their own Community Rail Partnership to develop new promotional material for the Bentham Line. In addition, a new series of 12 railway walk leaflets have been published, and weatherproof dispensers with flip-top lids have been fitted at stations to hold supplies of the leaflets.

At a stakeholder meeting for West Yorkshire on 13 May, representatives from LASRUG were able to quiz transport professionals about their development plans for the area. On the subject of the new stations for Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall, they were assured that the facilities under development would cope with patronage growth up to 2041. They also heard about plans for a new station at Low Moor and possibly one at Crosshills near Skipton. Major improvements to the main stations at Leeds and Bradford were also explained.

At a similar stakeholder event for North Lancashire, LASRUG members discussed the aspiration of an improved service on the Bentham line and heard about plans for Wennington station to be transformed into a transport hub. "The council's draft plan is described as a 'vision' with an implementation period up to 2031. Since the plan embraces many things that we have been struggling to achieve for so long, let us hope that their vision does not prove a mirage."

The station adopters at Bare Lane, the Lancaster & District Conservation Volunteers, are continuing their positive work to enhance the station, with gardens and containers on both platforms. The group recently installed a noticeboard to highlight their activities to local passengers and to encourage new volunteers to join the group.

On 30 May, the Friends of Bentham Station hosted the start of the Bentham carnival procession and kept the crowds refreshed in true 'Hyacinth Bucket' style from their pop-up platform café: "All in all a splendid day linking the railway and the community."

The next LASRUG fund-raising coffee mornings will be on 20 June at Gargrave Village Hall, then on 15 August at Bentham Town Hall. Drop in between 10:00 and 11:30 for the best coffee in town!

Ribble Valley Rail – going from zero to two million!

May 30th saw the 21st anniversary of the re-opening of the Ribble Valley line to regular passenger services, and the RVR's summer newsletter has a collection of photographs giving a flavour of developments over the 21-year period. The newsletter also celebrates the start of the new rail service between Blackburn and Manchester via Burnley.

Over the years, passengers in the Ribble Valley have seen the introduction of a Sunday service, the strengthening of the commuter trains to cope with ever growing demand, and now the year-round Sunday service to Hellifield. There has been a constant growth in passenger numbers: from **1.56m** in 2006/07 to **1.96m** in 2013/14, a rise of 23.9%. The group thinks the count for the coming year will exceed the magic **2 million** figure.

Lancashire County Council has been holding regular stakeholder meetings to arrive at a list of improvements needed to transport in the County, and RVR is pleased to have had input to this process: "some very interesting challenges have come to light ... an exciting time lies ahead!"

From the start of the May timetable, many Clitheroe services have been strengthened to two units (ie four carriages), but passengers boarding at Ribble Valley Stations have no idea if all four coaches will be available; some days they are, other days they are not. RVR says there needs to be some consistency as passengers are becoming frustrated ... and, in some cases, angry!

RVR members have been busy spreading the news of the timetable changes on the Ribble Valley Line. Timetables have been given out on trains, put in local shops and villages, handed out on the Rambler train service and placed in the café on Hellifield Station. Members also manned a stall at Clitheroe Market on a very cold Saturday morning to publicise the timetable changes. In addition, the group has purchased weatherproof Timetable Holders, which were fitted on the platforms of all the un-manned stations between Clitheroe and Darwen, and filled with the new timetable.

Ormskirk, Preston & Southport Travellers' Association – the lobbying continues

The tender specification for the new Northern franchise did not hold out any promise of improvements for OPSTA's services, so the group has been lobbying the shortlisted bidders in the hope of securing additional benefits – they've taken an evidence-based approach, backing up their demands with travel-census figures and passenger-survey reports. Some further dialogue with bidders may take place, but OPSTA thinks there's probably more to be achieved if they switch their attention back to Rail North, transport authorities and the Dept. for Transport. Recently, representatives from Transport for Greater Manchester welcomed OPSTA's survey and census work, stating that it produced some very valuable data.

It is anticipated that OPSTA's case for improved services for Edge Hill will be reinforced shortly by the results of a travel survey of students and staff at Edge Hill University, organised by One West Lancs Transport Group. Also it's reported that the reopening of Midge Hall station was being keenly discussed between OPSTA and local councillors ... until the hiatus caused by the May elections (it's hoped that talks will resume now the elections are behind us).

In OPSTA's newsletter, a detailed analysis of electrification options for the North West comes down in favour of extending Merseyrail's DC system for lines such as Wigan-Southport, and concludes that reinstatement of the Burscough curves would be an essential element of such a scheme. The

nightmare scenario is for lines such as Southport and Kirkby to Wigan/Manchester to be “left out in the cold” as the wires are extended elsewhere in the region.

Major events such as the Southport Air Show often lead to severe overcrowding, and OPSTA has been using its local knowledge to assist Northern Rail in planning for such occasions. Merseytravel’s Burscough Demand Study is to be released shortly, and OPSTA expects to be consulted about its findings. Meanwhile, the campaign to retain booking office facilities at Burscough Bridge station drags on.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line (STORM) – “pause” throws plans into disarray

The news that electrification schemes are to be “paused” because of the ongoing crisis at Network Rail prompts one STORM member to comment: “This means that rolling stock plans will be in disarray. There must now be the likelihood of Pacers being around after 2020 - so perhaps Porterbrook’s planned refurbishment [of Pacer units] was a good move after all.”

Members have been reviewing information given on the “Destination A-Z” sheets displayed at stations and found that they leave much to be desired. They have also uncovered a lack of publicity about new services using the recently-completed Todmorden curve, and predict that the authorities responsible for funding the project will not be pleased when they wake up to the fact that the rail service is not being properly promoted.

Northern Rail uses Twitter to communicate information in real-time about cancellations and significant delays, and STORM is conducting a survey into how often travellers use the service, what they think of it and how they think it could be improved.

A correspondent from Moston has received a letter from the Chief Executive of TfGM outlining the future for Moston station which recently suffered a service reduction. In the letter, there’s an assurance that, from Dec 2017, the half-hourly service will be reinstated. Also, station refurbishment is promised with the prospect of new information screens by early 2016.

STORM was founded in 1979 to fight the then proposed closure of the railway from Oldham to Rochdale - the letters “STORM” originally stood for “Save the Oldham Rochdale Manchester Line”. Before STORM was formed, the service between Rochdale and Oldham was 1 train/h, and between Rochdale and Manchester also 1 train/h. Now there are four trains an hour between Rochdale and Manchester, and five Metrolink trams an hour to Oldham and on to Manchester.

Friends of the Brigg and Lincoln Lines – group funds used to combat vandalism

FoBLL continue to make small improvements to the station at Brigg, but there have been setbacks in the form of fly tipping, dumping of litter and some minor vandalism. Anyone contemplating anti-social behaviour at the station in the future may be deterred by the CCTV camera, which the group obtained on e-Bay at a knock-down price!

The Penistone Line Partnership recently arranged a ramble from Barnetby to Brigg using the Brigg Line rail service. Following requests from the Partnership and FoBLL, Northern Rail allocated a Class 150 unit instead of the usual Pacer “cattletruck” for the event, giving campaigners the opportunity to photograph a family-friendly train on the line, an altogether better image that will help promote services in the future.

The group has endured a 2-year battle with North Lincs Council to get them to erect signs pointing to the railway station at Kirton-in-Lindsey, without success; they’ve now placed the matter in the hands of the Local Government Ombudsman.

According to a recent bulletin, the group has also suffered a 3-year period of “living hell” trying to communicate with Network Rail, and it’s hoped that a productive meeting (jointly organised with the

Gainsborough Rail & Bus group) on 10 July, with Northern's Stakeholder Manager and a manager from Network Rail, will result in better partnership working.

After a fact-finding visit from the magazine's editor earlier in the year, an article focussing on Gainsborough's two woefully-neglected stations has now appeared in the latest edition of RAIL. FoBLL is pleased that their complaints have received national coverage. The Friends of Littleborough Station contacted the group to say they have read a pre copy and said the article is "excellent and shocking" adding that "there are some extremely stark images taken by editor Nigel Harris" and "it's probably the bluntest article that we have seen in RAIL magazine in years."

Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association – upbeat assessment of the past year

At the Association's well-attended AGM in April, members heard an upbeat assessment of the year from Chairman, Richard Crane. Membership stands at just under 400, slightly down on the previous year. A motion was carried unanimously enabling the incoming committee to negotiate with relevant organizations about the best model for a line user group in advance of East West Rail Link services. A guest speaker from London Midland shared the Association's frustrations that it has not yet been practicable to extend Marston Vale service to/from Milton Keynes. Concerns raised at the AGM included the unreliability of bus substitution services, and the poor co-operation between bus and train operators at Bedford even though most of the services are run by the same company: Stagecoach.

Network Rail is carrying out consultation meetings into the future of all level crossings between Bletchley and Bedford in advance of the introduction of additional and faster trains under the East West Rail project. The BBRUA reports much local anger amongst residents who will be affected by the longer delays – the Association thinks NR needs to do more to update crossing equipment so that delays are minimised.

In mid June, 68 members and friends enjoyed a "Great Value Day Out by Train" to Chichester and Havant, with a coach connection to Hayling Island and the opportunity to ride the narrow-gauge sea front railway. The next events will be a Cream Tea Cruise on the River Ouse in August, and a Railway Ramble from Bow Brickhill station in September. Railfuture's Chris Austin has been booked for the Association's pre-Christmas meeting; he will be giving a talk based on his new book entitled "Disconnected – Rail Routes that should not have been closed". [*I'm sure we could all chip in with our own list of those! – Ed*]

Abbey Flyer Users' Group (ABFLY) – Guided Bus threat returns

ABFLY warns us that the Abbey Line is once again facing a threat to its existence as a railway line.

In June, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) updated their Rail Strategy and this was released for [public consultation](#), with a deadline for comments of 4th August. The updated draft Strategy presents a very poor deal for the Abbey Line. It gives little or no priority to enhancements which ABFLY believes are so desperately required, principally: enhancing the service frequency through installation of a passing loop and second train; running of later trains (post 10pm); and running through services, taking advantage of a recently installed connection at Watford Junction.

Worse, rather than champion straightforward rail improvements, HCC want to waste millions of pounds of taxpayers money on a potentially expensive, unreliable, environmentally damaging Bus Rapid Transit (guided bus) network. The prime motivator for Guided Busways is to lower operating costs – something we all agree with in principal. But the trackway itself does not have the durability of rail, and of course we know from the Cambridge to St Ives experience that this technology can go badly wrong, the project famously being pushed through against valiant opposition from CAST.IRON,

but then running three times over budget and 2.5 years late. Moreover it is already in a state of decay as this [article](#) on the Railfuture website explains at some length.

ABFLY point out that their existing trains, running on AC overhead electric, produce zero emissions at the point of use ... so why replace them with polluting diesel buses? The Abbey Line's rails and overhead line would have to be ripped up, and the character of the branch would be irrevocably changed through the pouring of millions of tonnes of concrete to create the guideways – equivalent to building a new A-Road through the heart of sylvan Bricket Wood!

“Those with long memories will recall that sadly we have been here before, in the mid-1990s, when similar proposals were thrown out after a public outcry,” says ABFLY. “Unfortunately, HCC seem to think that we’ll have simply forgotten.”

ABFLY's alternative vision is simple: keep the line as part of the national rail network; keep electric trains but improve their quality; improve the basic service by running later and more frequently; extend connectivity by introducing through trains to London; and, above all, attract more passengers by providing the service they actually want.

The group has been canvassing support for their ‘no2bus’ campaign via a dedicated campaign page on their newly-designed [website](#). The main focus has been on encouraging individuals to respond to the consultation, since this is the official way to lodge concerns about the Strategy - a large volume of objections would be difficult for HCC to ignore! On the website, you will find a template letter and a simple form asking for name, address etc – which takes about 30 seconds to complete (ABFLY will send the letter for you).

Please take a look at the website and lend you support to ABFLY's campaign.

Windsor Lines Passengers Association – 100yrs of electrics...and the case for Boxing Day service

The WLPA is looking forward to celebrations in the autumn to mark the 100th anniversary of the introduction of third rail electrics on the London & South Western Railway: a “Belle” unit is expected to be the star attraction at Waterloo, and Wimbledon Works will be mounting an open day.

London buses and some rail and tube services now run on Boxing Day when crowds are out travelling to the Sales or to sporting fixtures, so the WLPA thinks the time has come for South West Trains to run services on 26 Dec - at a recent meeting, a representative of the Company did give the impression that it would indeed be possible to run a Boxing Day service.

A member of the group argues that ticket machines at South West Trains stations should be programmed so that they can issue tickets for journeys starting from other stations – this would be handy if you already have a pass valid up to the Zone 6 boundary, but want to travel beyond.

Apparently, in a Class 450 train on a Windsor-bound service, standard-fare ticket holders can sit in first class without paying the extra, but not on a Reading-bound service. The WLPA says the average traveller will not know the difference and may end up having to pay a penalty fare.

A number of other issues have been raised with the train operator lately, including: misleading announcements of station stops at Hounslow Loop stations; trains without toilets for an hour or more journey time; door problems on Class 458/5s leading to unreliability; the blocking of Datchet station level crossing by 10-car trains; and unsightly lineside litter.

East Surrey Transport Committee – concerns about Transport for London’s growing network

The Mayor of London has proposed that control of all suburban rail routes in London are devolved to Transport for London, and the ESTC has responded to a consultation on the matter with a number of detailed points.

The Committee points out that not all rail services in the Capital will fit neatly into the “Overground” service model. Some should continue to be managed by the regional train operator but with TfL specifying the service level and station facilities (as happened in the previous Southern franchise).

Key problems at the moment, according to the Committee, are lack of reliability of some services and the high level of fares, exacerbated by a lack of flexibility in the fares structure when making cross-boundary journeys. They point out that, although Oyster can be used on National Rail, there are many facets of the Oystercard system that do not work in the passengers’ interest - at present, if there is a problem with an Oystercard or a wrong payment has been made, this cannot be rectified at national rail stations (only at underground stations, on the phone or on line).

There would certainly be many problems to overcome before rail passengers could enjoy a uniform journey experience across the network. ESTC quotes group-travel discounts as an example: TfL still maintains a group is 10 or more people, whereas the franchised operators reduced their definition of a group from 10 to 4 a number of years ago ... and then further reduced it to 3 in 2014.

In any new settlement, the Committee insists that TfL will need to maintain a regular dialogue with local authorities and user groups outside London.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA – bringing the railway back to Haverhill

Having shifted the campaign to reopen the line to Wisbech firmly onto the political agenda, the East Anglia Branch is now hoping to repeat their success by giving a new impetus to the reopening campaign for the direct rail link between Cambridge and Colchester via Haverhill, initially focussing on the Cambridge-Haverhill section.

The Branch has paid for the printing of 15,000 leaflets supporting the project. These are to be distributed to households in the communities that stand to benefit from the line’s reopening. People receiving the leaflets are asked to sign the enclosed petition; other supporters can sign up using the online petition [here](#).

The project has to be sponsored by Cambridgeshire County Council, then included in the Council’s Local Transport Plan as an ‘aspiration’. The petition’s presentation to the council will indicate the level of residents’ support.

RAILFUTURE NORTH EAST – meeting in Middlesbrough

The next meeting of Railfuture’s North East branch will take place at St Mary’s Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1 2RW (10 mins walk from Middlesbrough station) at 2pm on Saturday 18th July 2015. This is the first time that the branch has met in Middlesbrough for a number of years, and the event is being organised jointly with the Saltburn Line Users’ Group and Coastliners. All are welcome and refreshments will be available.

The speaker will be Alan Williams, Chairman of the Esk Valley Railway Community Partnership and renowned Modern Railways columnist. His presentation will be entitled “The Cinderella Line” and will major on the turnaround in fortunes of the Esk Valley Railway Line between Middlesbrough and Whitby.

RAILFUTURE PASSENGER GROUP

The Passenger Group met in Birmingham recently and made good progress on a number of issues:

Train Operating Companies – Issues with individual TOCs were discussed and members sought to identify examples of “best practice”. The Cross-Country franchise has been particularly under the spotlight in advance of formal refranchising.

Overcrowding - A common problem is the severe crowding on peak trains. The Government’s rolling stock strategy is still unclear; however, Railfuture’s Rolling Stock Advisory Panel continues to keep its finger on the pulse.

Fares - Advance tickets appear to be increasing in price and/or more difficult to obtain. The allocation is shrouded in mystery (as commercially confidential). The Passenger Group has called for more openness, especially since politicians like to claim that the high cost of rail travel is mitigated by good Advance ticket offers.

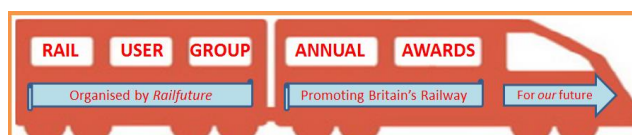
Disruption – The group’s final report is currently being circulated internally prior to publication. Thanks to all who took part in the survey!

“Station Design Principles” - This new design guide from Network Rail is now being examined. Your comments would be welcome (reply to the group Chairman, chris.fribbins@railfuture.org.uk).

RAILFUTURE’S AUTUMN CONFERENCE AND RUG AWARDS

Railfuture autumn conference and RUG awards ceremony takes place at the Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel, Redcliff Hill, **Bristol BS1 6SQ**, on **Saturday 7th November** from 10:45 to 17:00.

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



Railfuture’s *fourth* Rail User Group Awards competition is now open to receive your entries. Awards will be presented at Railfuture's November conference in Bristol.

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

The closing date for your submissions is **Tuesday 1st September 2015**. Full details about how to enter are on the Railfuture website [here](#). You can also read about who won in previous years – and how they did it!

PROPOSED VISIT TO BRUSSELS AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The Transport Committee of the European Parliament is due to hold one of its monthly meetings in Brussels over the three days of 9th – 11th November 2015 (on the afternoon of Monday 9th and all day Tuesday and Wednesday). If you have wondered what the MEPs on this committee do, here is your chance to find out.

The European Passengers' Federation (to which Railfuture is affiliated) is planning a visit to Brussels with an overnight stay and a meeting with an MEP; together with listening to a debate, dinner and sightseeing in the Belgian capital.

We cannot at this stage say exactly what the MEPs will be discussing in November, but it will certainly include rail matters. There are four British MEPs on the 40-strong committee and much of the proceedings will be, from experience, in English; but there will also be translations.

If you are interested in joining the visit, please contact [Trevor Garrod](#) and you will receive more details nearer the date(s).

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

FIRE SALE OF RAILWAY ASSETS – *Be warned ... and get ready to take action!*

Beleaguered Network Rail has hired bankers at Rothschild to look into selling a commercial property portfolio that could be worth over £1bn.

The Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin told the House of Commons that Network Rail directors would not be getting a bonus this year and its governance structure would be simplified. He added that rising costs and engineering issues meant that £38.5bn of upgrades would have to be scaled back or delayed, just one year into Network Rail's five year modernisation plan.

Exasperated officials and ministers at the Dept. for Transport and Treasury are keen on Network Rail refocusing on its core engineering work. They have been devising plans to let the private sector manage or take over aspects of its existing work, including telecommunications and the power supply to the network.

With Rothschild's appointment, bankers will look at a number of options for how, as an industry source put it, Network Rail can "maximise value" from its commercial property – probably in the form of a number of sales. The bank was quietly appointed around three weeks ago.

Network Rail is landlord to more than 7,000 small and medium-sized businesses. They range from scrap metal merchants to nightclubs, are largely found beneath railway arches, and collectively paid Network Rail £266m in rent last year.

It is thought that railway land and properties no longer required for operational use might also be included in the potential sale. However, the portfolio does not include the stations, which the Government is also considering selling or outsourcing.

A valuation of this bag of properties and land is difficult, given that their locations, condition and suitability for sale vary widely. For example, a rail source said that regulators would probably block the sale of any disused land near lines that could one day be brought back into operational use.

However, land and property that could be sold should bring in at least £1bn. A source close to Network Rail said the organisation has "a pretty good understanding of what they are worth" and hoped that Rothschild would verify these assumptions. A banking source added: "Valuing 7,000 parcels of land is quite a lot of work and will be quite difficult. The political pressure is such that Network Rail needs to see what can be sold. **They will want Rothschild to get that stuff under the hammer quickly.**"

There is also a growing feeling in the industry that Network Rail could eventually be broken up entirely, perhaps loosely along the regional boundaries that could be established under the Government's devolution plans. – *The Independent*, 26 June

The following is an extract from "The Times Summer Budget" supplement, spotted by Andy Long

Network Rail is facing a further shake-up as part of plans to improve performance on Britain's railways. The government announced that Nicola Shaw, Chief Executive of HS1, would lead a review of the "longer-term future shape and financing" of Network Rail. The announcement will fuel speculation over the pending break-up of the taxpayer-funded rail infrastructure company (the status of which changed earlier this year).

Ministers will also introduce a "new approach to station development", with **the creation of a body to generate cash from stations**, potentially taking much of this responsibility from Network Rail.

Public funding will be directed through individual TOCs, allowing them to commission work for maintenance from Network Rail, the government has said. Concerns have been raised over Network Rail's performance after two electrification projects (MML & TPE) were suspended last month.

A spokesman for ORR said: "A new approach which channels government financial support for the railways closer to passengers will allow better decisions with a greater focus on the needs of rail users".

ROLLING STOCK PERSPECTIVE: MOVING BRITAIN AHEAD

This is the title of a document that sets out the Dept. for Transport's perspective on rolling stock and their aspirations for the sector as a whole. You can view the document [here](#).

With regard to passenger rolling stock, the aim is to: make the DfT act as better client of rolling stock for passengers and taxpayers [*only the Ministry could write a statement like that!* – Ed], drive improvements in terms of passenger quality, and offer improved information and transparency for stakeholders.

The publication is an important first step and will be the basis for dialogue between passengers, representative groups, industry and the Department in this key policy area. The DfT intends to update the publication annually, as part of Rail Industry Day, based on: feedback from stakeholders, the Government's latest policy position, and market and technological developments. If the Government's policy position evolves, the Department will be open and transparent about it. They will feed comments on the document into their annual update.

If you have views on the document and its annexes, please provide them to the Department's rolling stock team at this email address: rollingstockperspective@railexecutive.gsi.gov.uk

RAIL PASSENGER SATISFACTION DROPS

Transport Focus has just published the results of the latest National Rail Passenger Survey – see [here](#). They surveyed more than 31,000 passengers in spring 2015 and found that overall satisfaction had dropped again.

The latest results show poor performance, particularly in south east England. This has led to another drop in overall satisfaction at 80 per cent: down from 82 per cent for the same period last year. Other key results include: (i) satisfaction with punctuality is down to 75 per cent (from 77 per cent in 2014) – this figure drops to 65 per cent for commuters (ii) value for money ratings remain below the half-way mark, at 45 per cent. – *Transport Focus announcement*

NEW GUIDE WILL DEMYSTIFY RAIL FRANCHISING FOR PASSENGERS

The Campaign for Better Transport and the Department for Transport (DfT) have put together an invaluable guide - the **Passengers Guide to Franchising**, which is a new, simple and effective guide to rail franchising answering some of the questions most frequently asked by passengers and which will help to explain how the franchising process works. You can download the guide [here](#).

Martin Abrams, Public Transport Campaigner, Campaign for Better Transport said:

“Passengers are the most important part of the railway network and they need to understand that they can have their say and make a valuable contribution to the franchising process.

When a franchise is up for renewal it is important passengers know they can make suggestions on improvements in areas that really matter to them, such as services, fares and stations and which in turn will be of real benefit to all rail users.

More franchises will be awarded over the coming years and the guide will give passengers a real insight into the decision making process of the DfT when awarding a franchise to a new or existing Train Operator, improving transparency and boosting passenger confidence.” - *CBT announcement*

- *The latest edition of the Department for Transport’s Rail Franchise Schedule can be seen [here](#).*
- *A new Franchise Competition Process Guide has also just been published by the DfT - see [here](#).*

NOT-FOR-PROFIT MODEL for SOUTH WALES METRO

Phase two of the South Wales Metro system will cost around half a billion pounds to deliver and will be integral to the new train operating contract for Wales. Minister for Economy, Science and Transport Edwina Hart told the Welsh Assembly that the project has an estimated capital cost of £500-£600m. She said an agreement has been reached with the UK Secretary of State for Transport for a contribution of £125m towards these costs and a bid is being made for a further £150m from the European Regional Development Fund.

Metro phase two will consist of a package of bus and rail improvements. The rail portion is to be operated and managed by the not-for-dividend company being set up by the Welsh Government to operate the rail franchise on its behalf after 2018. The company will be run on a model similar to that used by Transport for London. Hart said that the Welsh Government Transport Company, which was incorporated in April, will significantly reduce the amount of profit being taken out of the rail system by train operators, leaving more money to run the service.

Hart also revealed that the Welsh Government is looking at "innovative solutions which may be better value and deliver improved outcomes than the original contractual model for the Valley Lines electrification proposals". This suggests that the new operator could take a lead in delivering the electrification or alternative investment in the Valley Lines.

She added: "By combining the procurement of the Metro with the All-Wales Franchise we will be able to ensure a step change in quality for rail-users right across Wales. We are expecting real benefits to passengers, including faster journey times, higher quality services, improved reliability and less overcrowding."

Hart said work on Metro phase two could start in 2017. Phase one included the recently-opened Ebbw Vale Town station and enhancements to the Ebbw Vale line which will allow additional services to be introduced in the future. *- Transport Briefing*

<p>It has just been announced that a study to consider opening a new railway station in Ceredigion is being funded by the Welsh government. There has been a long running campaign to reopen Bow Street station outside Aberystwyth. <i>- bbc.co.uk</i></p>
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ARRIVA TRAINS WALES PILOTS VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

Arriva Trains Wales is piloting face to face video technology to help its customers get the best priced fare for their journey. Similar to Apple's FaceTime and Skype systems, the 'Video Assist' Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) will connect customers with Arriva's customer services advisors based at its headquarters in Cardiff Central station. Video Assist is being trialled at Llanelli and Barry Docks and will also provide live updates and information on train services.

Lynne Milligan, Arriva Trains Wales customer service director, said that the system will improve the customer's experience and help reduce reliance on other staff. 'We believe we can make it more of a personable and relaxed experience for the user. It will help resolve any queries that much quicker and provide that extra support to our manned station ticket office in busy periods.'

The 'Video Assist' TVM will be open from 11am until 6pm Monday to Friday. If successful, Arriva Trains Wales hopes to roll out to more stations across Wales later in the year. – *Rail Professional*

NORTHERN IRELAND RAIL UPGRADES GET £17M EU FUNDING

EU funding of 24m euros (£17m) has been secured for two railway upgrades in Northern Ireland. The Derry-Coleraine line will receive 14,373,993 euros (£10.2m), while the Knockmore to Lurgan line has received 9,684,520 euros (£6.9m). Transport Minister Danny Kennedy said the funding was "great news". He said it was a success to obtain the money, as competition for the funding across Europe had been unprecedented. – *CILT website*

FOUNDATIONS LAID TO DOUBLE TRACK CORBY RAIL ROUTE

Network Rail has confirmed that work to redouble the railway between Corby and Kettering is on course for completion in 2017. From 22 June to 20 July 2015 piling work to strengthen an existing railway embankment near Kettering will be completed to allow a second track to be put down. This forms part of the £103m upgrade to allow more passenger and freight trains to use the Corby line by the end of 2017.

An hourly passenger service operates on the single line between Corby and Kettering following the opening of Corby station, nearly 20 years after passenger trains to the town were withdrawn. The second track on the route between Corby and Kettering was removed in 1986 when traffic decreased with the end of steel making in the town.

Steve Hughes, Network Rail area director, said: "This vital work will double capacity on this stretch of the network, boosting rail travel for thousands of passengers on this route." – *Transport Briefing*

- Corby station re-opened in 2009 as a result of a sustained lobbying campaign by Railfuture, supplemented by the running of special trains from the town's old station.

START OF WORK ON LEA BRIDGE STATION

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited East London on 10 July to mark the start of works on a brand-new rail station that will transform travel for residents of Waltham Forest. The transport minister joined representatives from Waltham Forest Council for a ground-breaking ceremony at the site of Lea Bridge station, a £11.6 million facility partly-funded by the government's New Stations Fund. The station was last operational in 1985. Initially 2 trains per hour will serve the station, rising to 4 trains per hour in 2018.

The station between Bishops Cleeve and Stratford, is 1 of 5 to receive funding from the first round of the New Stations Fund, with the government putting £1.1 million into its construction. The other 4 stations to have benefited from the first round of funding are: Pye Corner in Wales, Ilkeston in Derbyshire, Kenilworth in Warwickshire and Newcourt in Devon. Earlier in July, the Chancellor announced a further round of the fund, with up to £20 million available to provide even more new stations. – *gov.uk*

BEAM PARK STATION - FUNDING AGREEMENT SEWN UP

Full funding for Beam Park railway station has been confirmed as part of a major east London regeneration package. A 29-hectare site in Beam Park, bisected by the Beam River, is one of the largest areas of land earmarked for new development currently owned by the Mayor of London and the last major site released for development. Two thousand new homes could be built with the potential for up to 5,000 in associated nearby developments.

To support the planned development, Beam Park station would be built between the existing Dagenham Dock and Rainham stations on the C2C route into Fenchurch Street. Transport for London has allocated £9m for the project from its Growth Fund, set up to provide targeted investment in transport improvements. As a result the station is said to be fully funded. An option for construction of Beam Park station was included in the C2C franchise signed last year. - *Transport Briefing*

ETCHINGHAM STATION – A HARD ACT TO BEAT

In his latest *Salvo*, Paul Salveson draws our attention to a former derelict station building, impressively transformed into a community centre complete with bistro and garden. It's at Etchingham on the London to Hastings line.

The main part of the building is used for meetings and classes, while the bistro provides round-the-clock refreshments: morning coffee for commuters, fine dining at lunchtime and a pint outdoors in the evening. The station has its own website: www.bistroatthestation.co.uk

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.

- 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
- 13 July 2015. Monday. Skipton & East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership open members' meeting at Herriots Hotel, Broughton Road, Skipton BD23 1RT. 19.00. <http://www.selrap.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
- 15 July 2015. Wednesday. AGM of the Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers' Association will be held at the Cricketer's Arms 24 Chapel Street, **Ormskirk** L39 4QF from 19:30. <http://www.opsta.btck.co.uk/>
- 16 July 2015. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting at Haywards Heath. 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
- 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>
- 10 August 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
- 11 August 2015. Tuesday. East Norfolk Transport Users' Association AGM at St Paul's Church Hall, Salisbury Road, **Great Yarmouth** from 18:30; followed by a public open meeting at 19:30, with representatives from the local bus and rail operators and from Norfolk County Council. <http://www.entua.org.uk/>
- 15 August 2015. Saturday. Railfuture London & SE regional branch, Kent Division meeting in **Deal**. 14.00.

■ 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>
- 2 September 2015. Wednesday. AGM of the LevenMouth Rail Campaign at Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks, **Leven** from 18:30.
- 3 September 2015. Thursday. Railfuture London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+and+Coastway>
- 6 September 2015. Sunday. Borders Railway opens.
- 7 September 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe** from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
- 9 September 2015. Wednesday. Railfuture London & SE regional branch, Eastern division meeting. 18.30.
- 16 September 2015. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line meet at the No 1 Inn, **Cleethorpes** from 19:00. enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk
- 16-22 September 2015. European Mobility Week promoting active travel and public transport. www.mobilityweek.eu. Car free day is on 22 Sept: www.etatruck.org.uk/2015/05/world-car-free-day-2015/
- 20 September 2015. Sunday. Official opening of Birmingham New Street station after major rebuild.
- 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>
- 5 October 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe** from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
- 8 October 2015. Thursday. NorthWest TravelWatch Conference in the Offices of Merseytravel, **Liverpool**, to include AGM. Details: admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk
- 10 October 2015. Saturday. East Suffolk Travellers' Association autumn meeting, in the parish church hall, **Aldeburgh** from 14:00. www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk
- 19 October 2015. Monday. Avocet Line RUG's AGM at Malthouse, The Globe, **Topsham**. www.avocetline.org.uk
- 21 October 2015. Sustainable Transport Conference, **London**: www.greeningtransport.co.uk/event-home
- 23 – 25 October 2015. "Revolving Words – the Festival of Railway Literature", part of the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of the Wensleydale Railway Association, takes place at **Bedale** on the Wensleydale Railway. The full programme can be found at www.revolvingwords.com. Tickets are on sale now.
- 2 November 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe** from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.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>

■ 18 November 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

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

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 from Dorset by...

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