

**Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.**

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

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

**RAIL USER EXPRESS**

As many of you already know, I gave notice to the Railfuture Board back in January that I wanted 2015 to be my last year as Rail User Group Liaison Officer, after about 14 years in the job. The December edition of Rail User Express will be my last. However, the Board is hopeful that a replacement editor can be found and the bulletins will continue to be produced. An announcement about this will appear in the December edition.

Thank you for subscribing to the monthly bulletins and for your support over the years.

*Tony Smale*

**+++ Results of the 2015 Rail User Group Awards appear on Page 8 +++**

*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 – draft report eagerly awaited**

With the consultants' draft report into the reopening of the Leven Rail Link expected this month, LMRC members are looking forward to providing constructive feedback; after that, it's hoped the report will be approved by the executive committee of Fife Council.

LMRC has been in contact with all parties contesting the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, arguing that reinstatement of the rail link would be the single, most effective means of investment in the future of the area. The local MSP met with the Scottish Transport Minister and stressed the importance of the business case (including the freight option) and the need to secure the backing of SESTRan, the regional transport partnership.

LMRC members are kept busy presenting talks to various groups around the Levenmouth area and beyond, explaining the background of the rail campaign and seeking support. Social media activity continues to be lively, and the push for petition signatures continues (nearly 8,000 have signed to date). One LMRC member attends the regular Cross-Party meetings in Holyrood, and another is researching Leven rail reinstatement campaigns since the line closed.

**Rail Action Group East of Scotland – keeping everyone on board**

The preoccupation for RAGES at the moment is to keep all the various parties, especially local authorities, on board with development projects, notably: plans for a local rail service between Edinburgh and Berwick, and for the re-opening of East Linton and Reston stations.

The cost for the station rebuilds was reported to be considerably higher than original estimates but thankfully, as solutions are being found to the various engineering problems, these costs are coming down. RAGES notes that patronage on the newly-opened Borders Railway is higher than expected, and suggests that the modelling methods used to justify East Linton and Reston re-openings could be re-visited. The group had previously suggested that the local service could start before the re-

opened stations are available, but ScotRail has said that this is not possible due to rolling stock not being available until 2017 at the earliest.

Ongoing concerns for the group include shortage of car parking spaces at various stations and the overcrowding on trains at certain times, leading to passengers being left behind. The group wants to see improvements to bus replacement services during times of disruption.

Now that ScotRail has taken over management of Dunbar station, RAGES notes an anomaly whereby it is the only East Lothian station to make a charge for car parking. The group also reports that ScotRail has replaced the two ticket machines at the station with only one of their own, causing long queues. On a more positive note, RAGES discovered that Network Rail has been doing exploratory work with a view to possibly adding a north-bound platform at Dunbar.

And finally ... if you were wondering what happened to the mural at Prestonpans, we're told it's been removed for refurbishment by the artist.

### **Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line – winners of best newsletter in Railfuture's 2015 RUG Awards!**

In the introductory pages of the award-winning FoSCL Journal, the Chairman poses an interesting question as to whether FoSCL should become a pressure group once more, adding that "in my opinion, FoSCL ceased to be a campaigning organisation in 1989". He identifies some worrying trends: freight on the line has suffered a sharp decline, passenger numbers are reducing and new structures within the rail industry are bound to cause uncertainties. However there's the promise of new aggregates traffic on the line with the construction of a branch line into the quarry just south of Blea Moor (pictures in the Journal show construction in progress).

The group has been conducting travel surveys on trains to update their understanding of the type of passenger using the services, and how important speed and connections are to them. An anecdote from one passenger who was using the service simply to get from A to B as quickly as possible included this sobering thought: "...by the time we got to Carlisle, I thought we must know the name of every sodding sheep that we met on the way!"

It is now three years since a project group within FoSCL started to argue the case for a Manchester-Carlisle service via Blackburn and Hellfield. A survey to identify market demand resulted in over 3,700 replies, and the group has since devised a practical timetable and presented the idea to MPs, Network Rail and the bidders for the new Northern franchise. The project group now awaits the outcome of the franchise bidding process.

It may have taken four summers, but finally the repainting of Settle signal box by local volunteers is complete - contractors had been asked to quote for the work, but they all said it was too big a job! Volunteers are now being sought for re-decorating the Visitor Centre at Ribbleshead station over the winter months - the S&C Trust has agreed to fund the work, and we're promised that working inside will be dry and warm(ish) with hot drinks provided.

A new minibus for the volunteer-run Western Dales Bus was made possible after a grant from the Big Lottery and a generous contribution from FoSCL: "This is surely the first time that the FoSCL logo has been applied to a bus and will be a reminder in years to come of the special relationship between the two organisations." Elsewhere we read that FoSCL members are working with DalesBus Ramblers to offer some additional shorter Guided Walks in and around the Skipton, Settle & Malham area accessible by train and DalesBus - details are on the group's website or look out for the new leaflet.

The 2016 Settle-Carlisle Railway Calendar in full colour is available from the station shops at Settle and Appleby, or from FoSCL's webshop at [www.foscl.org.uk](http://www.foscl.org.uk) priced £10.50, including post & packing.

### **Leeds Northern Rail Reinstatement Group – reinstatement mentioned in Council's prospectus**

Dr Adrian Morgan, the Chairman of LNRRG, wrote to tell us that North Yorkshire County Council published their Strategic Transport Prospectus at the end of October, in which there's a recommendation (addressed to Rail North) to reinstate the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton rail line. Adrian says "this is something I have been campaigning for 27 years to reinstate."

The suggested date for reinstatement was given as 2045. Adrian considers this is too far away, so he's determined that the campaign continues to shorten the timescale to 10 years maximum to completion. The report puts the cost of the reinstatement of 24 miles of double track and electrification at £210m. He thinks this is a little optimistic at 2045 prices, but almost do-able now at that cost.

Adrian was made Deputy Mayor of Ripon in May and he really thinks that made a difference at County Hall because, with attending Civic events all over the County, he was able to access people that make decisions on these matters: "The current Chairman of NYCC is very supportive, as was the Chair of the Transport, Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee when I spoke to them earlier this year, voting 10:2 to support reinstatement of this line."

The Prospectus also mentioned the aim of reducing Leeds-Harrogate journey time to 13 minutes with an estimated cost of £180m, which includes upgrading the existing Harrogate Loop and electrification.

### **Harrogate Line Supporters Group – multi award winners in Railfuture's 2015 RUG Awards!**

Brian Dunsby has written to HLSG members about NYCC's Strategic Rail Prospectus, saying that the document includes plans to improve access to high speed and conventional rail, including transformational changes on the Leeds-Harrogate-York railway. Brian quotes a senior Councillor as saying "Our long term plan for the line is for a £170m investment to bring about the electrification of the line, transformation and modernisation of Harrogate Station, and double tracking all of the remaining single track sections to improve performance and resilience. These works are being phased over the next 10 years, with the first sections of double track that are being funded by the County Council to be completed by 2018."

Harrogate Line Supporters were due to find out more about this at a Traffic and Transport Update meeting on 2 Nov. Other speakers at the meeting included a representative from Virgin Trains, who presented the Company's plans for a new express service between Harrogate and London King's Cross.

Transport Minister, Andrew Jones (MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough) recently spoke about the Harrogate Line on local radio, and Brian was granted permission to circulate a recording of his statement to the Line Supporters in MP3 format.

### **Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association – Flirting with Stadler, or D-Train**

Two illustrated articles in HPSRUA's newsletter *Track Record* look at possible future rolling stock for the North of England. The first examines Stadler Flirt diesel units, in use in Switzerland and elsewhere – it's rumoured that bidders for the Northern franchise are looking into whether they would be suitable for British tracks. Optimistically, the article's author is looking forward to Flirt units replacing the disliked Pacers. In the second article, the Chairman gives an account of his visit to Long Marston for Vivarail's demonstration of the D-Train. Although concluding that the train would be a viable replacement for Pacers, he remains sceptical about whether the 60mph D-Train could match the Pacer's end-to-end journey time over the Penistone route – he points out that, south of Barnsley, the limit is 90mph and the route is shared with main line services.

A conference for stakeholders in Northern Rail was held in Leeds on 25 Sept and HPSRUA was there. Delegates were pleased to hear that, far from scaling down as the franchise end date of April 2016 approaches, it's more a case of "full speed ahead" with rolling stock refurbishment, customer information screens at 100 more stations and new ticket machines for on-board staff.

At a presentation given by the new Director of Rail North, HPSRUA representatives heard encouraging news about future plans for the railway. Commenting on Rail North's plans to take over responsibility for stations, HPSRUA wonders if the perks enjoyed by station adopters on Northern train services will be a thing of the past. Elsewhere, we read that there's scepticism over whether the new Sheffield City Region Combined Authority is big enough for the task ahead - we're told that South Yorkshire suffers from an anti-rail disease, and the remedy must include a change of culture.

Northern's autumn "leaf-fall" timetable seems to have introduced variations in journey time between two of the station on the Penistone line. HPSRUA queried this with the operator and was told that it will be put right when times return to normal in December.

The Transpennine and Midland Mainline electrification schemes may have been "unpaused" but HPSRUA was concerned that, in headlong rush to electrify these routes, the need for improvements to track layout and additional capacity would be overlooked. The group hopes that the promised redesign means trackwork will now take place "before the knitting is erected" otherwise masts would have to be ripped up to make way for new rails.

### **Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line (STORM) – *shortage of stock set to continue***

Northern Rail services in the Manchester area are plagued by short formations and cancellations at the moment due to shortage of rolling stock – STORM fears the problem will persist well into the next franchise. The installation of Customer Information Screens at Smithy Bridge has been widely welcomed, although a slight disappointment is that it's the only station on the route not to be fitted with a scrolling screen, so intermediate stops are not shown.

STORM members are pleased to see contractors working around the clock to complete a new bay platform at Rochdale Station by May 2016. The idea is to run some of the trains that currently terminate at Manchester Victoria through to Rochdale, giving direct links to places such as Liverpool and Blackpool. The group wonders if Rochdale will also benefit by having through trains to Manchester Airport once the Victoria-Piccadilly link is completed. Elsewhere, we read that construction workers have been seen on the site of the new Ordsal Chord, carrying out "major enabling works".

A worrying incident occurred recently at Sowerby Bridge: a group of about 30 primary school children were awaiting their train and, just after it was announced, they surged forwards to the platform edge ... moments later, a non-stopping train dashed through, barely missing them. The STORM member reporting this incident says he has written to Northern in the past about the matter, citing the fact that freight traffic and fast trains on diversion often pass through the station. He wants the Company to introduce "Stand clear - fast train approaching" announcements as elsewhere on the rail network. Others have suggested that drivers should sound their horns, and that children should be educated about standing behind the yellow line.

### **Friends of the Barton Line – *attracting passengers while scaring off the birds!***

Northern Rail is no longer supplying timetables to libraries and travel information offices, so FoBL members are trying to keep the various outlets supplied out of their limited stocks. They've also been giving out timetable leaflets at local events – if you were at Cleethorpes Carnival in the summer, you would have seen one member handing out timetables while dressed as a scarecrow!

It's reported that there are fewer instances of train cancellations due to shortage of staff, and that more effort is being made to bring in replacement stock when breakdowns occur. However, ASLEF industrial action during October did result in a number of cancellations due to lack of a driver, and FoBL is keeping a detailed record of such occurrences.

In September, several members of the group enjoyed an outing to Saltaire. The committee meets alternate months in either Barton-upon-Humber or Cleethorpes, at times to suit train arrivals.

### **Friends of Chirk Station – efforts praised in Commons speech**

It's not often that a station adoption group gets a mention during a debate in Parliament, but Clwyd South MP, Susan Elan Jones, stood up and praised the efforts of FoCS in campaigning for a new disabled-friendly footbridge for Chirk station. She said that the Welsh Government had awarded a grant for the project so that, by the end of November, the footbridge will be open. Susan went on to explain that "The friends of Chirk Station are an outstanding group of people who have done so much to beautify Chirk station through art work, lovely floral displays and keeping the station neat and tidy."  
*- from an article in the Wrexham Leader spotted by George Jones*

George tells us that the footbridge is already open. He also says: "A further local development due to reach completion late in November will be the opening of the re-doubled line section between Saltney and Rossett which should attract a lot of attention. 90 mph running and improved line capacity is something we all look forward to, coupled with 90 mph running south of Gobowen."

### **New Rail User Group for Coventry? – anyone interested is invited to get in touch**

Railfuture member, Michael Tombs, is planning to set up a rail user group centred on Coventry station and is looking for support from other rail users in and around the City.

If you would like to get in touch and find out what's involved, please ring Michael on his mobile: 07761 937788. Alternatively, email [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk) and I will pass on your message.

### **East Norfolk Transport Users' Association – celebrating a successful summer**

ENTUA tells us that Improvements made by Abellio Greater Anglia to their Norwich to Great Yarmouth services in Summer 2015 have helped drive a 5% increase in passenger numbers on the line in the peak summer months of July and August. More than 105,000 passengers journeys were made in this period in 2015, compared to 100,000 in 2014.

Greater Anglia added two extra return services (four services in total) on Summer Saturdays and four extra return services (eight services in total) on Mondays and Fridays over the school holidays between mid-July and early September, compared to previous years. It should also be noted that the the two Class 37 locomotives and carriages hired from Direct Rail Services helped performance and reliability as well offering more seating and luggage space.

These extra services helped meet increased demand for visitors travelling to Great Yarmouth, with more holidaymakers taking popular mini breaks and weekends away, all of which is believed to have helped boost the holiday trade and local economy.

James Reeve, Greater Anglia's Area Customer Service Manager, told ENTUA: "Over recent years we have seen an increase in holidaymakers visiting Great Yarmouth by train for short breaks and weekends away, in addition to those taking the more traditional week and fortnight holiday. By running these extra trains we definitely saw a rise in people travelling to Great Yarmouth and we improved not just service frequency, but also reliability and seating capacity, thereby encouraging more travellers"

ENTUA echoes those sentiments, saying: “It shows that with the increase of services to and from Norwich at the correct time passenger numbers can grow. We will continue to press for more services to operate from Great Yarmouth beyond Norwich.”

### **Association of Public Transport Users (Hertfordshire) – *reliability needs to improve***

Despite the Company having 33 additional qualified drivers, Thameslink services continue to suffer reliability problems, much of it due to staff shortages. APTU’s feedback on the situation in July was (i) that it was better to publicise high cancellation levels in advance, as travellers can then re-plan their journeys and (ii) that very long gaps in the service are not acceptable. The group hopes that the worst is over and the situation will improve in the New Year.

Another cause of unreliability has been capacity problems at London Bridge during the station rebuild. APTU thinks the Dec 2015 timetable changes will go some way to solve this problem, although they’ve had some reservations about the detail of the new timetable which they expressed during the consultation stage.

On top of this, there have been the usual incidents such as train failures. APTU’s records of such occurrences were used as the basis for the group to discuss performance and incident recovery with Thameslink management.

APTU is continuing with its efforts to obtain improved compensation arrangements – ie one that recognises many small delays, which are not covered by DelayRepay: “Via the Thameslink Stakeholder Reference Group, we have got the attention of the Dept for Transport and they are presenting options to transport ministers for their consideration.” The Government’s current consultation on the applicability of the new Consumer Rights Act to the rail industry provides another opportunity for APTU to put forward its views.

Representatives from APTU were invited to the opening of the new Three Bridges Depot in October, and had a chance to inspect a ‘real’ class 700 as part of the visit. They report that the units are impressive, very solidly built and with a good vista from end to end. Seat spacing was better than expected as spacers had been added since the mock-ups went on show. However, there are still no tables in standard class, and the provision of WiFi remains uncertain.

After the launch of “The Key” smart card on Thameslink services, APTU’s Chairman has made use of it and reports that it’s pain free. He’s taken a close look at the instruction for using the card on the Company’s website, and has queried a number of areas – the detailed responses received are given in APTU’s newsletter.

➤ Read about the Thameslink December 15 timetable changes [here](#).

### **Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group – *welcome news of a later train from London***

BTPG welcomes a change to the timetable from December: the last train back from Paddington will now run to Newbury instead of terminating at Reading. From the information provided, it appears this will provide a convenient connection into the 2343 from Newbury to Bedwyn but it’s possible this is one and the same train, so there won’t be a need to change. On the topic of connections at Reading/Newbury, the group’s committee asks members to let them know if a Bedwyn service is not held when it’s pretty obvious it could have been, so that they can take the issue to the train operator.

The group tell us they’ve updated and changed the layout of their [website](#) to be mobile phone and tablet friendly, adding “we’d welcome any feedback.”

### **Tarka Rail Association – 2015 could be another record-breaking year**

Looking at passenger figures so far this year, the TRA thinks the Exeter-Barnstaple line is heading for yet another significant increase in patronage. Improvements to the service are heralded for May 2017 with further changes from Dec 2018 following the Direct Award of a franchise extension to First Great Western.

Central to the changes will be a dedicated fleet of Class 158 units, though the Chairman predicts longer dwell times at stations due to the door positions on these trains. He's disappointed that there are currently no plans to run the additional early and late trains that the TRA has called for, and says the group is still working hard to achieve this: "...the ground work, politics and commercial game of chess is already well underway for the next franchise, in whatever form it may take, and we need to be heard."

A feature article looks at the fares structure between stations in the South West and finds it to be "a total mess". Some ludicrously cheap fares between principal stations mean that it's tempting to drive to, say, Taunton rather than beginning one's journey on the Tarka Line. Furthermore, a first class single from Taunton to Bristol could be obtained for less than the price of the standard ticket. However, by digging deeper into the advance ticketing system, it was possible to uncover a fare for Barnstaple to Cambridge which was cheaper than starting the journey in Exeter or Tiverton! The writer concludes "a little advance investigation can pay dividends".

Volunteers at Crediton station entered this year's "It's Your Neighbourhood" scheme for smaller community groups, which is part of the Royal Horticultural Society's wider Britain in Bloom initiative. The official assessment from the RHS judge was "Thriving", which is only one category short of the top award of "Outstanding".

In the TRA's own annual competition for best station garden, Chapelton was declared the winner amongst the "immensely impressive" entries. On a less happy note, a volunteer at Umberleigh station reports another incidence of minor vandalism in the form of broken glass in the waiting shelter, saying: "...it does highlight the need for CCTV coverage."

At Portsmouth Arms, a line of "ugly, conspicuous and visually jarring" raised drain covers with garish blue lids has been installed between the used and disused platforms by the "Unnecessary Projects Division" of Network Rail. "The previous drainage grates had been working successfully for over 150 years, so they must have been in need of replacement!"

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

### **RAILFUTURE DEVON AND CORNWALL BRANCH – open meeting on 28 Nov**

The Branch is holding an open meeting at the Boniface Centre, Crediton, EX17 2AH on Saturday 28th November 2015 to look at rail services through the town, but with a special emphasis on the Exeter to Okehampton line. Guest speakers are:

- Bruce Thompson, Rail Strategy Lead Officer for Devon County Council
- John Burch, Vice Chairman of Tarka Rail Association
- Chris Austin, Chairman of Avocet Line Rail Users' Group and Railfuture's Community Rail officer

To help with numbers, you are asked to email [gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk) to book a place. There is no charge for attending, but donations are welcome on the day.

## RAIL USER GROUP AWARDS

This year's Rail User Group awards were presented by Christian Wolmar, Railfuture President, to the winners at a ceremony during the Railfuture conference on 7 Nov in Bristol. The judging panel consisted of Railfuture Vice Presidents Ian Brown, Roger Ford, Stewart Palmer and Lorna Slade.

The full list of winners is given below. More details and photo on the Railfuture website [here](#).

### **Best campaign**

**Gold Award:** Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Campaigning to increase the frequency of direct services between London and Harrogate, and to improve the service on the Leeds-Harrogate-York line with electrification and double-tracking. There have been significant developments towards achieving these aims.

**Silver Award:** TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

Aiming for an adequate service between Chippenham and Trowbridge via Melksham. The judges commented that the transformation to date was "an impressive achievement."

### **Best campaigner**

Clara Zihali Award for best campaigner, in memory of the stalwart Railfuture campaigner who died in 2013.

**Gold Award:** Brian Dunsby, Harrogate Line Supporters Group

**Commendation:** Dave Horton, Abbey Flyer Users Group

**Commendation:** Bob Morrison, Great Western Coffee Shop Forum

### **Best New Group**

The Oliver Lovell Award in memory of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group founder who died in 2013

**Winner:** Salford Station Campaign

Judges said: "Campaign shows sound knowledge of rail industry and grasp of technical detail, good engagement with stakeholders, cross-party support, strong environment message & good chance of success."

### **Best Newsletter**

**Gold Award:** Friends of the Settle and Carlisle Line quarterly newsletter

The judges said "Very informative, packed with news, and the campaigning message stands out."

**Commendation:** Ribble Valley Rail

**Commendation:** Lakes Line Rail User Group

### **Best Website**

**Gold Award:** Abbey Flyer Users Group

Judges described this as "Clear about its aims and activities, well-designed and user-friendly."

**Silver Award:** TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

### **Best Social Media Promotion**

**Winner:** TransWilts Community Rail Partnership for *The Weymouth Wizard*.

The judges said it was "Effective with impressive results, and reflecting increasingly wide use of social media across the rail industry."

### **Judges' Special Award**

**Winner:** Railfuture Scotland - for all who campaigned to reopen the Borders Railway.

Judges' comments "Our national branch in Scotland must receive this year's Special Award on behalf of all in Scotland, and beyond, who have achieved this historic campaign milestone."



## HEAD OF RAILFUTURE PASSENGER GROUP - *erratum*

In the October edition of Rail User Express, I referred to the Head of Railfuture's Passenger Group as "the illustrious Chris Fribbens". Chris Fribbins took issue with this on two counts. Ok, I got his surname wrong but, at the risk of offending his modesty, I'm sticking with "illustrious"! Sorry Chris.

## RAILFUTURE NORTH EAST BRANCH

Members of the Branch play key roles in four of the most active rail user groups in the North East: Coastliners, the Saltburn Line Users' Group, the SE Northumberland Rail Users' Group and the Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group. The newsletter editor makes the point that Railfuture, at both national and local level, should continue to give these groups as much support as possible in view of their achievements over the years. Campaigners arguing for station and line re-openings in the region have been taking a keen interest in the newly-opened Borders Railway – a success story right on their doorstep!

Elsewhere we read that Chairman, Trevor Watson, represented the Branch at the important Northern Stakeholder Conference in Leeds, where plans and aspirations for the railways of northern England were set out and considered.

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

## COMPENSATION FOR TRAIN OPERATORS AFFECTED BY DISRUPTION – *have your say!*

The Office of Rail and Road is reviewing Schedules 8 and 4 of the track access contract (the performance and possessions regimes, respectively) for the 2018 periodic review of Network Rail.

The Schedule 8 ("performance") regime compensates train operators for unplanned service disruption caused by Network Rail and other train operators. The Schedule 4 ("possessions") regime compensates train operators for the financial impact of planned possessions – where operators cannot access the network because Network Rail is carrying out engineering work.

The ORR is looking for views (together with any evidence that you are able to provide) of the effectiveness of the current regimes, including aspects that are working well, the scale of any potential problem, and what the priority areas for improvement should be.

*– ORR announcement*

➤ This consultation closes on 15 January 2016. For further information, see [here](#).

## TRAIN PUNCTUALITY: THE PASSENGER PERSPECTIVE

Transport Focus has worked with the Office of Rail and Road, to produce a new report: Train punctuality: the passenger perspective.

The research found:

- passengers expect 'on time' to mean a train arriving within one minute of the scheduled time, not the current industry standard of five minutes (or 10 minutes for long-distance trains)
- there is low awareness of the current performance measures and a lack of trust in how the rail industry measures train punctuality
- for every minute of lateness, that is, after scheduled arrival time, overall passenger satisfaction declines by one and a half percentage points. Among commuters the decline in overall satisfaction is steeper at three percentage points per minute of lateness.

More details [here](#).

*- Transport Focus announcement*

## **INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION CONSULTS ON THREE CHALLENGES – *Call for Evidence***

Andrew Adonis, interim Chair of the new National Infrastructure Commission, has launched a Call for Evidence, focusing on three of the UK's most critical infrastructure challenges. The Call for Evidence invites all interested parties, including industry, local and regional government, NGOs and the wider public, to make submissions on its initial three areas of focus:

1. Northern Connectivity: particularly identifying priorities for future investment in the north's strategic transport infrastructure to improve connectivity between cities, especially east-west across the Pennines.
2. London's Transport System: particularly reviewing strategic options for future investment in large scale transport improvements – on road, rail and underground – including Crossrail 2.
3. Energy: reviewing how the UK can better balance supply and demand.

The Call for Evidence will allow the National Infrastructure Commission's work on these studies to draw upon a wide evidence base and spectrum of options. The Commission has been asked to publish its report on these three areas before next year's Budget.

*– from CILT News, spotted by Andy Long*

- The Call for Evidence closes on 8th January 2016. More details [here](#).

## **LONDON AND SOUTH COAST RAIL CORRIDOR STUDY – *your suggestions invited***

The Dept. for Transport has commissioned WSP/Parsons Brinckerhoff to evaluate the strategic case for investment in existing and new rail capacity between London and the south coast. This is in fulfilment of the Chancellor's announcement in the 2015 summer budget. The terms of reference for the Study are available on the DfT website [here](#).

As part of this study, the consultants are having a round of meetings with selected stakeholders to confirm their understanding of the proposed schemes and to listen to stakeholders' views on the demand and feasibility issues. They want to speak to local rail user groups and other groups that responded to the Network Rail Sussex Route Study consultation, and they will also consider written submissions. For details, contact Oliver Stanyon via [Oliver.Stanyon@pbworld.com](mailto:Oliver.Stanyon@pbworld.com).

*– from correspondence forwarded to Railfuture by Charles King of E Surrey Transport Committee*

- Railfuture representatives have already had a productive meeting with the consultants.

## **RAIL PASSENGER REFUNDS IF WI-FI GOES OFFLINE**

Train passengers are to be refunded if there is no seat or wi-fi connection under plans to improve standards on Britain's railways. Travellers will be able to get their money back if train operators fail to provide passengers with the full service promised when a ticket was sold.

The move, to be introduced next year, could lead to passengers being given a full or partial reimbursement for substandard conditions.

The Dept for Transport outlined the proposals as part of "a better deal" for travellers. The new rules could give passengers the right to money back if they paid for a first-class ticket but no seats were available in premium carriages. It may also give passengers the right to their money back if they bought a ticket in the belief that wi-fi would be offered — only to find that the service was unavailable.

The DfT report said that passengers "would be able to make a claim under the act for a price reduction which, in appropriate circumstances, could be up to a full refund". The legislation — which would apply to the transport system from April 2016 — would force train companies to provide a refund within 14 days.

*– from an article in The Times spotted by Andy Long*

*Following on from the news about compensation if there's no seat or WiFi connection, the Telegraph has this story...*

## **RAIL COMPANIES TO BE FINED FOR LATE-RUNNING SERVICES**

Rail companies will be targeted directly with fines for the first time in a bid to stop them that cancelling trains and to punish them for late-running services under new government plans. Ministers are introducing a penalty scheme to hold rail operators directly responsible and tackle companies who pass the blame - and fines - for late running trains on to Network Rail.

South West Trains will test the scheme as part of a trial in 2017, the Telegraph can reveal, and it will be rolled out to other operators if successful. Companies will pay a fine when their services are between five and ten minutes late but will be rewarded if they beat targets for running on time under the plans. Cancelled trains or those which run later than 30 minutes will also trigger penalties, which Ministers hope will prompt rail companies to improve services for passengers instead of passing the blame to Network Rail which operates the lines and maintains the track.

Fines are yet to be set, but the Department for Transport pointed to a recent example where London Midland was ordered to offer passengers a £7m package of compensation after a driver shortage caused cancellations and delays on their services. Rail operators are understood to routinely escape fines under the current scheme by blaming delays on taxpayer-funded Network Rail. The organisation was hit with a £52m fine in 2014 for late running services, more than double the amount paid by operators.

A compensation scheme set up to try and incentivise companies to do more about late or cancelled trains forced them to hand over just £22m in 2013/14 and £25m in 2014/15 according to government figures. Companies like South West Trains and Virgin East Coast paid around 30 per cent of fines levied in 2014/15, with the rest paid by Network Rail.

Fines will be based on monthly targets and will increase if performance doesn't improve in a bid to incentivise train companies to work more closely with Network Rail to improve overall service. Under plans currently being finalised by Ministers, train companies would be ordered to either pay a fine to the government or invest the penalty in running better services or offering compensation to passengers.

Ministers are consulting on whether the operators should be allowed to appeal to get some of the fine back if Network Rail is likely to be responsible for the delays, but it is understood operators will be expected to pay something regardless of fault.

Rail Minister Claire Perry said: "We'll look at any option that could improve the experience passengers get from the railway. At the moment delays can be really disruptive for customers: both Government and industry need to step up to deal with the problem. Our plan for passengers is putting everyday customer experience back at the heart of the railway."

Operators have in the past been criticised for not running effective timetables, leading to driver shortages and late running or cancelled services - particularly on commuter routes. The new scheme is part of a package of measures proposed by the government to improve the rail network, including compensation when wifi services do not work on board trains and cash rather than railway vouchers when things go wrong. Ministers are also prompting operators to advertise schemes that help people claim back money when services are delayed.

- *Daily Telegraph, 21 Nov 2015*

## **SOUTH WESTERN FRANCHISE RENEWAL – consultation begins**

Passengers, businesses and local councils are being asked for their views on how the next South Western franchise can deliver the rail services that people want. Major improvements to tackle overcrowding, boost punctuality and deliver better journeys are planned during the next franchise, which is due to start in 2017 when the current South West Trains contract comes to an end. Around 14% of all passenger journeys in the UK are made on the South Western network.

The consultation sets out the expected improvements for the next franchise, including the completion of planned major work at London Waterloo to lengthen platforms 1 to 4 and bring the former international platforms back into use, allowing for longer trains and more space. From 2017, a new fleet of 30 five-car trains is also planned to tackle overcrowding, in addition to the 108 extra carriages being introduced during the current franchise as part of a £65 million government scheme.

The next operator will be required to work with the council, community and stakeholders to develop plans to turn the Island Line, which serves the Isle of Wight, into a separate and self-sustaining business during the life of the next franchise. This will help deliver the services that local people need, while putting the line on a more sustainable footing for the future and reducing costs. [See *below for IoW viewpoint*].

The work of the Peninsula Rail Task Force, which is looking at improving the long-term resilience of the rail network in Devon and Cornwall, will also be taken into account as the government develops its plans for the franchise.

– from a DfT announcement

- The 12-week consultation closes on 9 February 2016. More details [here](#).
- The latest edition of the Govt’s Rail Franchising schedule (giving key dates) is shown [here](#).

### View from the Isle of Wight

Many Isle of Wight residents – including service users – emphatically do not support the Government’s intention that Island Line should be turned into a separate self-sustaining business. “We would like to see the consultation seeking views as to the merits of this policy, and in doing so be seen to be open-minded to the alternative of Island Line remaining as a full and integral part of the wider franchise throughout the next franchise period, as is being proposed for all other parts of the franchise area.

“The consultation does not appear to allow for the latter to be properly considered as an alternative, and gives rise to concern that this limits the opportunity for views on this to be genuinely taken into account.” – *statement from the Keep Island Line in Franchise group spotted by Stuart George*

## **FIRST TRAM-TRAIN HEADS FOR SHEFFIELD**

The first of seven Citylink vehicles for the Sheffield – Rotherham tram-train pilot project left Vossloh España’s factory near Valencia on November 18. Expected to leave the port of Santander on November 23, it is due to arrive in Southampton on November 28 before making the final leg of its journey by road, to arrive in Sheffield on December 1.

Ordered in 2013, the 37 m long vehicles will be designated Class 399. They are to be stabled at Stagecoach Supertram’s Nunnery Square depot, which has undergone modifications to accommodate them. Following testing, the first vehicle is due to enter service on the existing Supertram network by May 2016.

In 2017 a two-year pilot scheme will begin, during which time the vehicles will run on the national rail network between Sheffield and Rotherham. The £58m pilot is being led by South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive in partnership with the Department for Transport, Network Rail, tram operator Stagecoach Supertram and franchised train operator Northern Rail. – *Railway Gazette*

## **EDINBURGH EXTENSION AGREED**

On 19 Nov, the City of Edinburgh Council agreed in principle that the City's tramway will be extended from York Place down Leith Walk, through the docks area to Ocean Terminal and on to Newhaven. Cost and funding is to be considered further with a view to discovering when the work can proceed.

- *edinburghtrams.info*

## **MIDLAND METRO EXPANSION PLANS UNVEILED**

Extensions of Midland Metro to provide good connections with HS2 in Birmingham have been announced as part of an £8 billion investment in the West Midlands. Transport schemes worth almost £2 billion are included in the investment, which has accompanied a major devolution deal signed between the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Government.

A new 'HS2 connectivity package' will include new tram lines from the HS2 station at Birmingham Curzon Street to Birmingham Airport via Bordesley Green and Chelmsley Wood, and between Wednesbury and Brierley Hill -- a destination which was an aspiration of local Metro planners even before the first section opened in 1999 between Snow Hill and Wolverhampton St George's.

Other aspects of the package include potential improvements along the existing West Coast Main Line through the West Midlands and also a 'Sprint' rapid transit network. It is also hoped to improve other rail links, particularly with the East Midlands, as part of the Midland Connect partnership of local authorities and businesses in the region.

Councillor Roger Lawrence, chair of the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority, said: "This is the biggest devolution deal done to date. It gives the West Midlands the powers and the funding to provide a real step change in our transport infrastructure and supports our wider ambitions to grow the economy, provide new jobs, improved skills and quality housing."

The agreement will see Whitehall make an annual contribution of £40 million for 30 years to support investment worth £8 billion, which it claimed will support the creation of more than half a million jobs.

- *Railnews*

## **TRANSPORT BODY PLANS GO BEFORE MPs**

Proposals to grant England's regions new transport powers have been published in parliament. The plans set out legal powers and duties offered as part of the government's commitment to devolution which would put groups such as Transport for the North on a statutory footing and allow them to advise transport ministers on investment priorities and strategic transport schemes. Statutory status is also expected to give the groups the permanence they need to plan for the long term.

In his summer 2015 Budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne said that TfN should become a statutory body with legal powers and duties. The government is now legislating for this and TfN will be the first of these sub-national transport bodies. Other areas, such as the Midlands, may also request to become a sub-national transport body once Royal Assent has been achieved.

The detailed proposals have been published as part of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, which is currently being considered by the House of Commons. The second of two committee days is scheduled for Tuesday 17 November ahead of the third reading of the bill in the Commons. An update on the northern transport strategy is due to be published by spring 2016.

-*Transport Briefing*

## PROGRESS TOWARDS CORWEN CENTRAL

One year has gone by since the temporary station at Corwen East was opened on the westward extension of the Llangollen Railway. The clock is now ticking towards its closure and the opening of Corwen Central. Embankment work, track laying are continuing apace, and the volunteers have succeeded in getting official approval of a main drain ... also they've picked up an environmental award from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales.

The Corwen Central Railway Development project has its own management team and bank account, but is able to draw on the legal powers and expertise of the Llangollen Railway Trust. Contributions towards the project are always welcome!  
- *Corwen Central newsletter*

## ACCESS TO LIVERPOOL JOHN LENNON AIRPORT

*In October's edition of Rail User Express, the North Cheshire Rail Users' Group was quoted as saying that there needs to be better connections between Liverpool South Parkway and the airport – rail passengers currently have to rely on local service buses.*

*At the October conference organised by North West Travel Watch, the Head of PR and Communications for the airport including this in his presentation...*

*"Improvements to ground transport are being achieved by an Overview and Delivery Plan which updates the Access Strategy. Road improvements with bus priority and revised drop-off/pick up facilities as well as improvements to bus stops and shelters are all being introduced adjacent to the terminal and the closeness of the car park means passengers can access terminals quickly and conveniently. Liaison and dialogue with train operators is ongoing and the completion of Halton curve will open access to and from North Wales. It is acknowledged that further improvements are required to connecting transport from Liverpool South Parkway and Warrington Bank Quay and this is under consideration in line with financial implications." - from NWTW's Conference Report*

*Well, it's not quite the "Heathrow Pod" system that NCRUG advocated, but at least it's recognition that something needs to be done.*

## EVENTS

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

Further events 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.

■ 28 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture Devon & Cornwall open meeting at the Boniface Centre, **Crediton**, EX17 2AH email [gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk) to book a place.

■ 28 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture London & SE, Herts & Beds Division meet at St Paul's Church, corner of Hatfield Road/Blandford Road, **St Albans** AL1 4JP from 10:30 for 10:45 start.

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Herts+and+Beds>

■ 2 December 2015. Wednesday. Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton group meet at the Elin Way Community Room, **Meldreth** at 19:00 for 19:30. Tea and biscuits provided! <http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/>

■ 3 December 2015. Thursday. Railfuture London & SE, Sussex & Coastway Division meet at 18:00.

■ 5 December 2015. Saturday. Railfuture East Anglia branch meeting in **Cambridge** from 14.00.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia)

- 7 December 2015. Monday. Watford Rail Users' Group open meeting at Watford Town Hall, Rickmansworth Road, **Watford** from 18:45. Representatives from train operators in attendance. [wrug2@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wrug2@hotmail.co.uk)
- 12 December 2015. Saturday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at the Cambrian Hotel, **Aberystwyth** from 11:45. [sarpa@sarpa.info](mailto:sarpa@sarpa.info)
- 12 December 2015. Saturday. Open day at **Settle** station. 10 to 16:00. <http://www.foscl.org.uk/>

■ 13 December 2015. Sunday. National rail timetable change.

- 14 December 2015. Monday. Lichfield Rail Promotion Group meet at the Kings Head, Bird Street, **Lichfield** from 20:00. [secretary@lichfieldrailusers.org.uk](mailto:secretary@lichfieldrailusers.org.uk). Representatives of train operators usually attend.
- 14 December 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meeting at Hastings Direct, **Collington**, East Sussex from 19.00. <http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk/>

## 2016

- 13 January 2016. Wednesday. Harrow Public Transport Users Association rail meeting at Harrow Baptist Church Hall, College Road, **Harrow** from 14:00.
- 23 January 2016. Saturday. Railfuture Yorkshire Branch joint meeting (with Harrogate Line Supporters) at the Cedar Court Hotel, **Harrogate** from 13:00. Guest speaker: Transport Minister and local MP, Andrew Jones. Booking essential. [nina.smith@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:nina.smith@railfuture.org.uk)
- 11 February 2016. Thursday. NorthWest TravelWatch Conference in the Offices of Transport for Greater Manchester. Details: [admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](mailto:admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)
- 15 February 2016. Monday. Friends of the Lymington-Brockenhurst Line hold their AGM from 19:30 at the Community Centre, Cannon Street, **Lymington**. The AGM will be followed by two films on Swiss railways. <http://www.lymington-brockenhurstcrp.co.uk/friends.asp>
- 16 April 2016. Saturday. AGM of the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line in the Hallmark Hotel, **Carlisle** at 11:15 for 11:45 start. Guest speakers in the afternoon from Northern Rail and the Campaign for Borders Rail. <http://www.foscl.org.uk/>
- 21 May 2016. Saturday. Railfuture AGM at **Milton Keynes** from 10:00 for 10:45. Guest speaker to talk about East West Rail. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>
- 18 June 2016. Saturday. Railfuture Reopenings Conference at the Scottish Mining Museum, **Newtongrange** from 10:00 for 10:45. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>
- 12 November 2016. Saturday. Railfuture Rail User Conference at the Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, **Birmingham** from 10:00 for 10:45. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>

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

*This bulletin has been sent by...*

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