



December 2017

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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On page 18 of [Rail East 176](#), Jerry Alderson alerts Rail User Groups (RUGs) to the General Data Protection Regulation, which takes effect from 25 May 2018. Before contacting anyone by any means, an organisation must have proof of explicit consent by that person to be contacted in that way - and that's not all. Do read the whole article, for all the ramifications, and to discover how Railfuture will comply with the new law.

Roger Smith

We continue with the usual roundup of news items from groups around the UK. Please keep your contributions coming: they are all gratefully received.

St Andrews Rail Link Campaign (StARLink)

StARLink seeks to reconnect the Home of Golf to the rail network from which Beeching sundered it in 1969. Fife Council has asked the Tay Cities' Deal to fund a feasibility study. Meanwhile, StARLink has added to Tata Steel's high-level alignment study with a single-modality study - the effect of St Andrews being accessible only by road - whilst a Transport Study Policy Review, the initial part of the STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) evaluation, has confirmed that all relevant policies, mission statements and strategies support the reconnection. The Campaign has engaged a consultancy to produce the Business Case as the next stage of STAG. Further positive developments include the creation of "Students4StARLink" at the University of St Andrews, and the election of its first ever rector to include a pledge to reinstate the rail link in his election manifesto.

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

RAGES explained its aims for Dunbar, East Linton and Reston to Alex Hynes, Managing Director, ScotRail Alliance, and Jonathan Pugh, Strategy and Planning Director (Scotland). It would utilise a ScotRail service from Edinburgh to Berwick, building on its success in securing additional services in areas where there are shortfalls arising from the scale of housing development. Discussion centred around the need for more passing loops for the local service at East Linton and Reston, the plans for quadrupling around Prestonpans, and lengthening of the Grantshouse loops. A Line Capacity Study on how a viable all-day timetable could be accommodated with all of the other users of the East Coast Main Line (ECML), including freight, will conclude sometime around April/May.

Copeland Rail Users' Group

NR wants to install flood protection to the viaduct over the River Derwent in Workington, the only bridge left standing when the river effectively cut the town in two. Recent bridge closures due to torrential rain have brought predictable calls for road improvements, but the money would be better spent on increasing capacity on the rail line.

From December, there are a few changes on the Furness line, particularly on Sundays, and the Lakes line is now in the same leaflet. CRUG spotted a number of errors, and hopes a reprint will incorporate its corrections. There will be two additional Sunday services each way between Newcastle, Hexham and Carlisle; Dumfries - Carlisle will have five more ScotRail trains - roughly hourly - and another return Glasgow journey. TransPennine Express (TPE) has additional early and late services to and from Scotland, and will introduce a Liverpool-Glasgow service next May.

The of the old lights-only level crossing at Green Road has been replaced by an automatic barrier with pedestrian lights on both sides. On 18 October the foundations for the new passenger footbridge at Sellafield were in place, but there was no sign of any activity. Nor was there the following morning - but the new bridge was in position and bolted to its foundations!

Barrow and Furness MP John Woodcock spoke in a [House of Commons debate](#) on "Transport in the North", but ironically the MP for Copeland, Trudy Harrison, couldn't attend because of transport problems. The world-class nuclear facilities in the area urgently need road and rail improvements. Both the Cumbrian coastal and Furness lines are in dire straits; almost daily, children are left unable to get home. Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) said that Transport for the North's glossy publication devotes just three and a half lines to the tourist economy of Cumbria. Its low priority is a betrayal of the community, with electrification of the Lakes line cancelled, and Heath Robinson bimode trains. Both the Furness and Lakes lines have poor quality rolling stock, and many delays and cancellations.

South East Northumberland Rail User Group

SENUG hails the massive boost to rail services in its area. Morpeth will see two more CrossCountry services per day, up from 42 to 70 per week, and extra Virgin Trains on Saturday, whilst Northern is introducing a Sunday service from Morpeth and Cramlington to Newcastle and Metrocentre. SENUG Chair Dennis Fancett said: "Many people don't believe campaigning to improve things works. Whilst it has taken us some time, Sunday 10 December will surely prove it does."

Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line

2017 was a bad year for "leaf-fall": Railhead Treatment Trains (RHTT) were deployed too late, freight trains slipped to a stand on greasy rails, and it took ages to organise breakdown trains and single line working. When the gypsum train from Hull stalled yet again on the Long Drag north of Settle Junction at 0949, two passenger trains were cancelled, and a third diverted to Lancaster. Fortunately, an RHTT returning to Carlisle appeared and was attached to the rear as a banking train. The unlikely pairing eventually passed Blea Moor at 1155. Then, when a Mountsorrel to Carlisle stone train was moved to the loop at Kirkby Thore as its wagons had developed wheel flats, a Leeds service was terminated at Ribbleshead, and passengers taken forward by bus. Together with strike days, the level of unreliability has led to a fall in passenger numbers - extremely disheartening, given the effort FoSCL volunteers have put in to promoting the line.

The Committee is always looking for new blood. After seven years, David Singleton is standing down as the Guided Walks Coordinator. He also produced a Walks Leaflet every six months, and maintained the Walks web page. None of the other leaders wants to take over. Following criticism of its Health and Safety and insurance procedures, the Committee opted to suspend the programme pending a satisfactory resolution. It hopes to re-launch it with a broader scope, to attract more people to use the line for a day's walking in the Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria.

Following Jericho, an ITV programme about the Ribbleshead shanty towns, Jericho Tours were launched, that start at the station. In the Visitor Centre, Nancy Edmondson recounts her life as a child growing up next to the line. Then at the viaduct, British Rail Resident Engineer Tony Freschini, who presided over its restoration, describes the work involved. People can then take the train to Garsdale to see the bronze statue of Ruswarp, the dog that put his paw on the petition against the closure of the line. The five Jericho Tours in 2017 attracted 375 people, of whom half arrived by train, and 340 went on to Garsdale. Feedback forms gave glowing reports. For details of the 2018 Tours, please email [Ruth Evans](#).

Skipton - East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

Peter Bryson from SELRAP chaired a meeting hosted by MPs Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) and John Grogan (Keighley) to explore fast tracking the reopening of the Colne-Skipton line. Also present were the MPs for Hyndburn, and Skipton and Ripon, the PPS of the MP for Burnley, and representatives from Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils, West Yorkshire Combined authority, Transport for the North and NR. Drax Power, Peel Ports, Arup and Skipton Building Society also attended. There was broad support from all involved, and excellent coverage by ITV, Channel 4, and the press on each side of the Pennines. Hopefully, a further feasibility study can be funded that will inform Transport for the North's 2018 transport strategy.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester Lines (STORM)

Regrettably, some opponents of the new ticket gates at Rochdale station have used somewhat intemperate language, but its excellent staff are not there to be abused. Passengers should be given a chance to adapt to the gates. Downsides are inevitable, but inhibiting fare dodging must be a plus.

The new Ordsall Chord links Manchester's Victoria and Piccadilly stations, but the "Castlefield Corridor" through Deansgate and Oxford Road Stations is now at full capacity. Two more through platforms at Piccadilly next to Platforms 13 and 14, with four tracks extending towards Oxford Road, would solve the problem, but DfT believes that addressing capacity issues by building more lines and platforms is outdated: "New forms of digital train control that do away with physical signals and block controls, and rely on lineside electronic equipment and computers, will do a better job, and do it more cheaply." However, [other than in the Thameslink Core – Ed.] such signalling is probably years away, would uplift capacity by no more than 10 or 20%, and is likely to be installed elsewhere first.

Friends of the Brigg Line

During the weekend 18/19 November, closure of the ECML between Newark and Grantham/Peterborough led to a number of trains being diverted via Gainsborough Trent Junction where the Brigg and Lincoln lines diverge. The Brigg line continues to be plagued by mechanical problems and poor traction due to leaf fall. On 9 December, many of the railbuses normally allocated to the Brigg Line were doubled up for the Lincoln Christmas Market traffic, so the Brigg Line enjoyed Class 158 trains, with their heavier wheel traction. Apart from a points failure at Barnetby on the first service, all trains ran to time. At long last, North Lincolnshire Council has cleaned up the notice board on Hewson House, and timetables are now clearly visible.

East Norfolk Transport Users' Association

In August, Richard Delahay of ENTUA visited the Bombardier factory in Derby to see a mock-up of the rolling stock being built for the Greater Anglia franchise. He felt that the new trains were designed to get as many passengers in and out of London Liverpool Street as possible. Coupling two 5-car sets will allow up to 1100 people on the train, but with too few toilets. Also, the proximity of the pan to the sink in the disabled toilet made it hard to sit down. Nor were the seats particularly comfortable, with limited legroom, and the 3x2 facing seats could cause problems when alighting. Space for wheelchairs was limited but well designed, and the bicycle storage was much improved, with cycles hanging [swinging?] from secure belts.

In November, ENTUA met Alan Trett, Greater Anglia's Assistant Area Customer Manager. The nine-day blockade at Great Yarmouth was to remove Platform 1 and the siding next to Platform 4, and remodel the approach to the station. ENTUA asked if the station interior could be made more welcoming, for example by painting the brickwork a light colour and maybe tiling the floor. Alan agreed to put the ideas to future planning meetings, but couldn't make any promises. ENTUA fears that the loss of Platform 1 could hinder its aim of a half-hourly Norwich service and more elsewhere, that would justify an all-day bus link into town; with only one train an hour, it would mostly stand idle. Alan replied that the single line to Acle could be more of a problem; trains had to slow quite significantly around the Brundall/Acle junction.

Work was also done at Brundall, Haddiscoe and Somerleyton stations during this period, but re-signalling over the next two years will require further blockades. Extra trains were planned for the Great Yarmouth Air Show on 16/17 June 2018, but Alan had no details. And it was still unclear whether the old carriage sidings would be cleared to store either the new rolling stock, or old rolling stock coming out of service.

Foxton Rail User Group

The new 8-coach Class 700 commuter style trains are badly needed, as peak time congestion has reached a dangerous level. NR wants to close the pedestrian level crossing south of Station Road in Meldreth, near Royston. At the public enquiry, the County Council argued strongly against the closure, but it was sad to see public money spent in this way, when NR couldn't afford to extend the platforms at the nearby station.

Bedford Commuters Association

The Thameslink Core between St Pancras and Blackfriars will close from 23 Dec to 1 Jan. Services to and from St Pancras will be limited to 6 trains per hour (tph) for track renewal: 4 tph Bedford - all stations to St Albans, then fast to West Hampstead + 2 tph St Albans – all stops to St Pancras. Project Director Mark Somers said: "With the completion of the track on the western approaches to London Bridge, the final track layout is now in place and awaiting final signalling commissioning over the Christmas period. This is a huge milestone for the Thameslink Programme, which will result in more frequent, more reliable services to more destinations, and a fully rebuilt, entirely accessible London Bridge station fit for the 21st century."

Of the Thameslink North stations, Bedford Midland has the 2nd highest footfall with 3.8m passengers a year, and Flitwick is 11th with 1.48m. Responding to customer feedback, GTR plans to extend the disabled toilet facility on Platform 1 at Bedford, and as part of its Station Travel Plan Committed Obligation, will create a waiting facility for taxi users within the forecourt. Both schemes are due for completion by March 2018. At Flitwick, BCA is seeking an enclosed, heated waiting shelter on Platform 1. DfT approval is awaited, with delivery expected by Summer 2018. BCA is also liaising with Central Bedfordshire Council on proposals for a bus interchange, and retail and residential development adjacent to the station, with future provision for step-free access.

Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users' Association

BBRUA believes that the Marston Vale Line should inherit an epithet originally coined for the Oxford, Wolverhampton and Worcester Railway: "The Old Worse and Worse". Services reached a very low ebb in October, the main cause being adhesion problems from "leaves on the line" that resulted in wheel flats. Unlike most modern trains, MVL stock does not have wheel slide protection. The group is working with Abellio on the specification for the Vivarail Class 230 trains that will replace the existing stock in 2018.

Association of Passenger Transport Users (Thameslink North)

From next May, East Midlands Trains plans to end its peak Bedford and Luton services into St Pancras in the morning and from St Pancras in the evening. Calls at other times, and those to Luton Airport Parkway would be unchanged. EMT claims that there is insufficient capacity for its trains due to the expanded Thameslink service, but APTU and the BCA, are unconvinced. EMT's franchise agreement is being varied to allow them to hire 3 more 6-coach HSTs, so with only around one extra Thameslink tph on the fast lines, why is the impact is so great?

Abbey Flyer Users' Group

The crowdfunding appeal for a feasibility study into a passing loop that would allow a second train to operate on the line and so double the current service has met its target. It will quantify the benefits from increased revenue, faster and more reliable journeys, reduced car use, and less overcrowding on the Thameslink route, and then the cost of the various [options](#), and of running a second train. Armed with this information, Herts CC can then consider how best to realise the vision; it will not be a guided busway.

Windsor Lines Passengers Association

In the proposed December 2018, Reading and Windsor would have 4 tph all day; peak Shepperton trains no longer wait in Twickenham and are semi fast; connections at Ash Vale and at Weybridge are better; two Hounslow loop services go to Twickenham, and two continue to Waterloo. However, through Aldershot services are lost, reducing peak capacity at several stations; there is no service from Weybridge to the Hounslow loop; Martins Heron has only 2 tph all day, as does Twickenham to Teddington, even though Strawberry Hill serves St Mary's University; no Reading services call at Vauxhall; Queens Town Road has a reduced service, and Windsor to Waterloo trains that stop at Wraysbury and Sunnymeads go via Hounslow, so those residents have no connections at Twickenham and Richmond. The reduced journey times promised in SWR's franchise bid can be achieved only by omitting some less-used intermediate stops.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

December will see significant changes to weekend and Christmas trains during for engineering works; the new timetable has been put back to 2 January. Plans for a through Paddington service to continue post electrification appear to be 'on track': the new hybrid trains will run on electric as far as Newbury, then on diesel down to Bedwyn. This will require the extension of our turn back siding during 2018.

From January, the standard departure time for Paddington - Bedwyn services will come forward from H+18 to H+06, (H+07 in the evening peak), with Paddington to Plymouth/Penzance trains moving from H+06 to H+03. The return departures from Bedwyn are largely unchanged, so the extra turn-round time should improve punctuality. However, there is more variation in off-peak departure times from H+33 to H+41. On Saturdays, all trains beyond Bedwyn will run fast between Newbury and Pewsey. This will be an issue with the Greater Western franchise, which is due for renewal in early 2020. The Group has already put forward some general aspirations for the franchise to the DfT team. It would like to hear from users at any station who have specific points for inclusion in its formal response to the consultation.

Tonbridge Line Commuters

TLC regrets the number of short-formed trains: on 18 October there were no fewer than 82 across the network! It trumpets the acquisition of 68 new carriages - but not for the Tonbridge line. Ross Balcombe, Head of Engineering Compliance, frankly assessed the situation. Over a long period, the fleet has been operating at maximum capacity. Passenger demand has grown significantly, but the fleet has not kept pace. The most common faults are with doors; the air powered opening systems are now over 25 years old, but whereas mechanical problems can be fixed, it is becoming increasingly difficult to replace certain electronic components. Electronic systems were expected to last the life of the train, but simply don't.

TLC fears that little will change until the franchise due to start in December 2018 is delivered. There are three bidders: Govia, Abellio and Stagecoach. TLC has met DfT and each of the bidders, but does not have a preference. Its key issues include:

- Increasing the length of all main line peak services to 12 coaches, with 2 by 2 seating
- Speeding up journey times by reducing the 'padding' that has crept into timetables
- Increasing the Sunday service at Hildenborough to 2 tph, and building a ramp on the down platform for disabled access
- A fairer deal for part-time commuters, who do not receive any discount on their travel
- Formally requiring the operator to consult with RUGs such as itself.

RAILFUTURE

Railfuture welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join Railfuture [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Railfuture and its Campaign updates by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture submissions](#).

PASSENGER GROUP

The December meeting looked at possible changes to the way fares are set, and the advantages and drawbacks of smart and paperless ticketing. DfT hopes that by the end of 2018 passengers will be offered a smart ticket valid across most of the network that can be held in a digital 'wallet' on their mobile phone. Railfuture should campaign for a single card that works across the whole network, and every operating company, but paper tickets cannot be totally abolished.

Work is also ongoing to develop services on the existing network once HS2 opens; they could either improve by using the capacity released on the existing network by HS2, or be downgraded. A draft paper has also been produced on what station facilities passengers should be able to expect, together with template for surveys to guide branches and user groups wishing to audit their local stations.

The shortage of rolling stock on Scotrail should ease over the next few months as the new Hitachi trains and the refurbished 125's enter service. The company made a loss last year, and required a £14m subsidy from its parent company in Holland, but the Scottish Government still intends to create a publicly owned operating company to compete in the next franchise renewal.

TPE continues to suffer from overcrowding, in particular from Leeds and Sheffield to Manchester. New trains due next year cannot come soon enough. In the proposed May 2018 timetable, commuters lose out to Inter-city travellers. The level of service at four local stations on the Huddersfield route with a footfall approaching two million is suffering to allow six trains an hour between Manchester and Leeds. The Stalybridge and Huddersfield RUG is campaigning vigorously to ameliorate these changes.

The UK Government has not fully devolved powers to the Welsh Government: the DfT is to oversee part of the operation, with Welsh Government providing services on an agency basis. Railfuture suggests that the whole of the Swansea area be electrified to reduce noise and fumes. It witnessed the launch of IEP trains at Swansea in October, which ran to time. However, their formation of two 5-car units is causing confusion, which has increased boarding times. Also the trains now require at least four catering assistants, not two.

Chiltern Railways will again be running Boxing Day services, but cannot operate beyond Oxford Parkway as this is as far as the Marylebone signalling centre control extends, and the GWR Oxford box will not be open. It had planned to end paper timetables from May 2017, but after representations agreed to produce 25% of the print run. Although not on general display, they were readily available on request, and are being continued. In the Transport Focus NR Passenger Survey, Chiltern was the UK's joint top DfT franchise operator with an overall customer satisfaction score of 92%.

The early curtailment of the Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) franchise was also discussed. It was attributed to the unrealistic financial targets that DfT sets, including hefty premium payments: a tax on rail travel that passengers pay for. The successor franchise was also discussed; giving the franchisee greater control of the infrastructure was considered particularly contentious on a route used by 15 different operators.

Finally, Roddy McDougall gave a presentation on his analysis of the travel to work statistics in the 2011 National Census. This laborious and painstaking work yields valuable information to inform campaigns either to improve services at existing stations, or for new or reopened stations. This would be particularly useful in the case of reopenings, where official studies have often grossly under estimated potential usage.

RAILFUTURE NORTH EAST

Like Railfuture, Northern favours the Ferryhill – Stockton route for its proposed fast 'Connect' service from Carlisle - Middlesbrough via Newcastle, but NR has yet to bring the Stillington line up to passenger standard but, given Sunderland's population, a City councillor wants the service to go that way. The Branch's other selected infrastructure projects are reinstatement of Leamside, new stations at Ferryhill and Team Valley, and upgrading the Blyth and Tyne line to support a passenger service from Ashington (and beyond). With £4.4 million from the New Stations Fund allocated to the proposed new station at Horden, Durham County Council (DCC) and NR will sign a Development Services Agreement, to take the project beyond GRIP Stage 4, once a few outstanding land assembly and habitat/ecology regulation issues were resolved. DCC hope to be in a position to submit a planning application in the middle of 2018.

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

In October, Rachael Maskell, MP for York and shadow Rail Minister, explained how Labour would develop rail to re-energise the economy: issues included poor air quality, congestion, the efficient movement of freight and people, and who should have a say in running it. She foresaw the railways as a single body, including interchanges with buses and cycling, and to be as self-funding as possible. As their franchises ended, train operating companies would be taken into public ownership.

Branch Chair Nina Smith has asked Northern to make its train conductors aware of alternative travel arrangements during rail disruption; RUGs could provide details for stations in their area, including bus information and taxi numbers. Northern should ask bus operators to ensure that connecting services reflect any timetable changes. Clive Barton was concerned when maps of the East Leeds extension and its Orbital Road in Cross Gates did not show the dismantled railway from Cross Gates to Wetherby. Large amounts of taxpayers' money could be wasted if the line were to be re-opened and it had not been protected.

Nina is also concerned that Railfuture is failing to reach young people, who communicate on social media. Passengers vent their dissatisfaction with short-term issues: overcrowded, late or cancelled trains. Railfuture too is concerned with immediate performance, but also thinks strategically. So does not that point the way? It needs to reach out to the public to explain that today's lack of performance is often the result of decisions made long ago, maybe even before the current franchise was awarded.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

The latest edition of [Rail East 176](#) spotlights its stations. A new Waterbeach station, one mile north of the existing station, will serve both the existing village and a major development on the former MOD base and land owned by a trust. Meanwhile, NR is extending the existing platform to take 8-coach trains. Jerry Alderson cites Cambridge North as an example of a good station that would have been even better had Railfuture's response to the consultation in 2012 been delivered in full. Across town, a transformed Cambridge Station won the "Large Station of the Year" award for 2017. Further south, Railfuture members have audited Shelford station and provided a [report](#) to Greater Anglia and local stakeholders, including local authorities and the Shelford and Whittlesford RUG, which Railfuture helped to form.

Resignalling the Wherry lines in 2019 would allow three tph from Norwich to both Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. The iconic swing bridges at Reedham and Somerleyton will still be controlled locally, but the protecting signals will be controlled from Colchester. Removing some speed restrictions will enable minor speed improvements. The re-signalling will coincide with the introduction of the new Stadler trains, whose improved acceleration will add further timing benefits. Politicians at every level support reopening the March-Wisbech branch, but funding is still an issue. There is also a growing demand to reinstate the line to Hunstanton from King's Lynn.

RAILFUTURE HERTS & BEDS

Railfuture Herts & Beds welcomed the aim of opening East West Rail (EWR) from Oxford to Bedford and Milton Keynes to Princes Risborough by 2023, and the Central section from Bedford to Cambridge by the mid-2020s. The DfT has opted to de-risk the introduction of the expanded Thameslink network from next May by phasing it in over 18 months rather than six: 24 tph through the Core from St Pancras to Blackfriars would not now be reached until Dec 2019. And to minimize the chance of disruption during the week, services through the Core on Sunday mornings would not start until 0930. Govia has asked TfL if the Tube map could include the Finsbury Park to Moorgate and West Hampstead to Elephant & Castle lines.

The trial bus link between St Albans Abbey and City Stations has run for a year. Usage has been variable but is increasing. It is advertised on West Midland trains to Watford Junction, but Thameslink prefers Hatfield – St Albans. However, that is a contingency plan for when Thameslink and thus City station are unavailable. In normal circumstances, the information that "We are now approaching St Albans. Change here for a bus link to the Abbey Line for Watford Junction" would be very helpful.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

[Communicating Community Rail](#): a research report that examines how rail partnerships and groups can engage communities as widely as possible, promote rail as a key part of sustainable and healthy travel, and give communities a voice in the ongoing development of their railway.

[Marketing & communications / tourism guidance](#): guidance sheets produced in partnership with Northern Rail to help community rail partnerships' planning.

[What's been achieved though community rail?](#): an informative report into the successes and influence of the community rail movement.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

CBT lobbied hard for the Budget to support sustainable transport, and invited suggestions. It wasn't disappointed! Amongst the top ones were:

- Freeze all regulated rail fares in 2018, and link future rises to CPI, not the discredited RPI
- Introduce flexible season tickets for part-time rail commuters
- Establish a Network Development Fund for new and reopened rail lines and stations
- Set up a Connectivity Fund to support vital bus services that are not commercially viable.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

Train companies are denying rail passengers the chance to buy cheap tickets for the Christmas break, and routinely misleading them. Advanced fares are normally offered 12 weeks before travel, but Transport Focus found that six companies failed to offer a full range of discounted tickets 11 weeks from Christmas: Greater Anglia, Great Western, London Midland, South Western, Southern and Virgin Trains.

GWR tickets were on sale in early October for London Paddington to Cardiff services on 27 December, when Paddington will be shut, whilst National Rail Enquiries was still selling tickets for an Arriva Trains Wales service via Crewe in late October, failing to mention that it would be a replacement bus service.

TRAVELWATCH SOUTHWEST

On 15 January, TravelWatch SouthWest is holding a consultation event to discuss and inform a consolidated TWSW response to the DfT's consultation on the future of the Great Western Franchise - see Events for details. Attendance will be restricted to those who have had their participation confirmed: contact [Bryony Chetwode](#) by 21 December.

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

An NIC report: "[Partnering for Prosperity](#): a new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc" stated: "The EWR and Expressway schemes must be built as quickly as possible." It recommended: allocating £1bn to deliver the infrastructure necessary for a high quality and resilient rail commuter service between Bicester and Bedford (upgrading the Marston Vale section between Bletchley and Bedford is currently not in NR plans); accelerating delivery of the whole Western section to 2023, and committing to open the Central section between Bedford and Cambridge by 2030.

The budget announcement was even more upbeat. The Western section would be funded, and the Central section accelerated to open by the mid-2020s, with a new Cambridge South station serving Addenbrooke's hospital and the biomedical campus. Naturally, the EWR Consortium was delighted: "The Chancellor's announcement is a real cause for celebration for all those who have been campaigning for EWR over more than 20 years, and, of course, all of our residents and businesses who will greatly benefit from the improved connectivity and economic opportunities the line will bring." And so say all of us in Railfuture!

On 14 December, almost 50 years to the day since the Varsity line closed, EWR took another step closer at the historic Bletchley Park, when Transport Secretary Chris Grayling officially launched the East West Railway Company, which will oversee the line's restoration. He visited nearby Bletchley Station, and also Bletchley Viaduct, which will form part of the new route.

The DfT has also published two vision papers: one for the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor, that invited stakeholders from across the region to translate it into a viable strategy through an integrated programme of infrastructure investments, housing and business growth; and then "[Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail](#)", which is critically reviewed in a Railfuture article "[Fixing our creaking railways](#)".

The DfT has issued the [Invitation to Tender](#) (ITT) for the new Southeastern Franchise from April 2019. Three companies have been shortlisted:

- South Eastern Holdings Ltd, a joint venture between Abellio and the consortium of East Japan Railway Company (JRE) and Mitsui & Co Ltd. (Mitsui).
- London and South East Passenger Rail Services Ltd, a joint venture between Go-Ahead and Keolis.
- Stagecoach South Eastern Trains Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Stagecoach Group plc.

Over 10,000 passengers, businesses and other stakeholders responded to the [consultation](#), highlighting the importance of getting the 'basics' right: high quality, frequent and reliable services; longer trains with more space and improved facilities, and a stronger focus on customer service. A single London terminal was mooted, but opposed by a significant majority, so that won't happen. However, with fewer paths crossing in the Lewisham area, the following changes will deliver a more reliable, resilient and faster service:

- Bexleyheath Line services will run to London Bridge, Charing Cross and Cannon Street, with longer 10-12 car trains
- Hayes Line services will run to London Bridge, Charing Cross and Victoria
- North Kent Line services to Charing Cross via Lewisham will run to Cannon Street, to accommodate new Thameslink services on this route
- Sidcup Line services will continue to run to Charing Cross, with Cannon Street services only at peak times, to reflect the principal demand.
- Services between Lewisham and Victoria will double in frequency to 4 tph, increasing capacity into London and accessibility to the hospitals at Denmark Hill.

The new station at Abbey Wood is almost complete. It will connect to the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) when that opens next year. Strood also has a new station building; its official opening will be in January/February.

The DfT has opened a consultation of the Great Western franchise (details below), that provides a mix of local, regional and InterCity services. A fundamental question is whether the franchise should stay in its current form or be split into one or more smaller parts, each focussing on the needs of passengers in its own area of operation. The franchisee will also be required to trial an Okehampton - Exeter service, and to engage with local groups such as the Peninsula Rail and North Cotswold Line Task Forces. To allow time to consider responses and design the future franchise(s), DfT will seek to agree terms for Great Western Railway to continue operating the current franchise until March 2022.

[Barry Doe](#) has updated his rail franchise map to reflect the change from London Midland to West Midland Trains, and the reopening of Kenilworth station. Copies may be downloaded free of charge from the section 'Rail Operators in the British Isles'.

For readers with a statistical bent, DfT has published a [Factsheet](#) for heavy surface rail, whilst the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has an article "[Ride on Time?](#)" explaining the new train performance measurement. Punctuality replaces the Public Performance Measure (PPM). It records the percentage of arrivals that are either early or within 1 minute of the scheduled time not just at the terminal station, but at every station with a timing point. Not every station has one, but some 80% of passenger journeys are captured. There are also two measures of Reliability: cancellations and the number of severely disrupted days.

[Back-on-Track](#), which supports cross-border rail, has organised a conference in the European Parliament on the morning of 30 January on night trains as an environmentally friendly alternative to road and air travel. It will examine positive developments, and what political and industry decision-makers can do to promote overnight services as part of a Europe-wide network of international trains. Invitations will go out shortly, and it is necessary to register in advance for the conference, which is free of charge. More information is available from [Trevor Garrod](#). The monthly [European Rail Timetable](#), published by John Potter and his colleagues, has succeeded the Thomas Cook European Rail Timetable.

A new suicide prevention campaign on the railways urges the public to intervene if they spot a vulnerable person: simply talking to them could interrupt their suicidal thoughts. The Samaritans, British Transport Police (BTP) and the rail industry, including NR and the train operating companies, have launched [Small Talk Saves Lives](#) to give travellers the confidence to act if they believe someone may be at risk.

[Telegraph Travel](#) wonders why rail firms treat passengers as guilty even when they are innocent. Peter Brooks booked a return ticket from Euston to Birkdale. On the return journey, he presented it to staff at Birkdale, but thinks he left it in the barrier at Liverpool Central, as he no longer had it when he got to Lime Street – but he did have his seat reservation, booking confirmation, and the credit card he used. However, the train manager still demanded the fare of £159. When Peter declined to pay, he was told that he would be treated as a fare dodger. At Euston he was duly met by three Virgin security guards, and not allowed to leave the station without signing an unpaid fare notice. Virgin Trains rejected an appeal: "Proof of purchase is not enough, as the actual ticket may be sold on or refunded". It says fare dodgers can be hard to spot, so it must treat everyone without the correct ticket in a similar way.

However, the approach of train managers to mislaid tickets varies. Some give the passenger the benefit of the doubt; others insist on charging for a new ticket. Mobile ticketing – m-tickets that are held on a smartphone – is slowly being rolled out across Britain. NR say that 230 stations accept them, but not every operating company using a station may sell them.

CONSULTATIONS

- Govia Thameslink Railway: [Thameslink Timetable Consultation, Phase 3](#), closes **12pm 20 December**.
- South Western Trains: [December 2018 Timetable Consultation](#), closes **22 December**.
- Hertfordshire County Council: [Local Transport Plan](#), closes 23 January 2018
- DfT: [Future of Community Rail Strategy](#), closes 28 January.
- DfT: [Great Western rail franchise](#), closes 21 February.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a County Council or Unitary Authority.

...and finally

I was prompted to watch Julie Walter's 4-part programme on Channel 4 "[Britain's Coastal Railways](#)" by her cover picture in the October issue of *railwatch*, and what a joy it is! The first programme featured the Kyle line; the second the line from Newcastle to Edinburgh, across the Royal Border Bridge and the third Devon and Cornwall. Meanwhile, Nina Smith recommends the TransPennine Express book about Felix, the Huddersfield station cat, which Penguin has now issued in paperback (the book, not the cat!)

May I wish all of my readers a happy Christmas and a transforming New Year! Keep up the good work!

EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming in, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains the [List of Events](#) on the Railfuture website. A Calendar of Events embedded in a pdf document can get discarded, and this is a problem if the venue changes from month to month. A copy of your Calendar as a separate document in Word format would therefore be much appreciated.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

- National & regional rail events.
- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are cordially invited).
- Local Group events.

January 2018

- Tuesday 2. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, **Clitheroe**, 1430.
- Tuesday 9. Chesham and District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (also 20 February, 3 April, 22 May, 19 June, 7 August, 18 September (followed by the AGM), 23 October, 11 December.)
- Saturday 13. Copeland Rail Users' Group, Methodist Church hall, **Seascale**, 1350 (also 10 February, 10 March).
- Monday 15. April. TravelWatch SouthWest consultation event, County Hall, Topsham Road, **Exeter**, 1400.
- Saturday 20. Railfuture Yorkshire AGM, The Carlton Centre, Harrison Road, **Halifax**, HK1 2AD, 1300.
- Tuesday 30. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also 27 February, 27 March, 24 April, 29 May, 26 June.)

Further Ahead

- 10 March. Railfuture Wessex AGM, above Bar Church Centre, **Southampton**.
- 17 March. Railfuture North East AGM, Newcastle Arts Centre, Westgate Road, **Newcastle**, 1400.
- 17 March. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045 (Also 13 June, 20 October).
- 28 April. English Regional Transport Association (ERTA) Public Transport Users Conference, Castle Hill United Reformed Church, Doddridge Street, **Northampton**, NN1 2RN, 1100-1600.

This bulletin has been sent by Roger Smith, e-mail: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk, phone: 01462 815992

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