



June 2026

Welcome to the Rail User Express

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With the hot weather in May, LNER has revealed some of the UK's best beaches to visit by train. 56 coastal locations across England and Scotland, ranking the top three beaches in each region were [examined](#) by factors including sunshine hours, sunset times, sea temperature, positive ice cream reviews, nearby fish and chip shops, Blue Flag or Seaside Award status, and distance from the nearest train station. Sunset times favours the north east (LNER territory) over southern England. Surely, Weymouth deserves a mention?

Roger Smith

We start with news from groups around Great Britain. All contributions are gratefully received.

Friends of the Far North Line

Following the Holyrood election, FoFNL sent a [pamphlet](#) to every MSP extolling the benefits of the line that has been starved of investment, and encouraging them to keep Highlands' railways at the forefront of their minds.

On 22 April, FoFNL attended a Community Consultation Event to develop a sustainable tourism strategy for the Flow Country. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is the most extensive blanket bog system in the world, with seven discrete areas stretching across Caithness and Sutherland. Many people and businesses saw the tourist potential of the FNL, and some came up with ideas from their local station.

Poulton & Wyre Railway Society

PWRS was formed in 2006 to seek to re-open the line between Poulton-le-Fylde and Fleetwood, either as heavy rail including freight, or a light rail/tram solution. It is also working to establish a Heritage Railway Centre adjacent to the line, which it has already substantially cleared along with Thornton and Burn Naze Stations. The local MP, Lorraine Beavers, is very supportive, and has raised it in Parliament several times. She is also engaging with key stakeholders and other interested parties including the Rail Minister, DfT, Lancashire CC and Northern Rail.

Fen Line Users Association

Last December's timetable brought several benefits for the Fen Line. On Monday to Friday and on Sunday there's an extra service in each direction, and three on Saturday, but there were two casualties.

Great Northern's 1619 departure to King's Lynn (a relief service for which FLUA campaigned when previous 4-car services were overwhelmed) no longer runs; GN said that now it has a departure for King's Lynn at 1615 it isn't practical to run the 1619 as well. Greater Anglia (GA) also withdrew its 1721 to Ely, resulting in serious overcrowding issues on some services and on the platforms too. But on 16 March it quietly reappeared - although GA failed to give any advance notice. Letters from FLUA, Rf and Charlotte Cane MP may have helped achieve this victory for common sense.

At FLUA's 40th Anniversary AGM, Alan White, NR's Infrastructure Maintenance Manager gave a presentation on the unique problems affecting the Fen Line when the track bed dries out. Tree cutting and vegetation removal helped to reduce moisture loss through plant roots, and 28,900 tonnes of ballast were dropped over the last two years to stabilise the track. Level crossings and bridges are built on deep foundations, so become high points as the track bed dips in between. Regular inspection trains identify any track defects, and NR had to introduce speed limits twice in 2025 for safe running.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership is proposing that when Waterbeach New Town station opens in 2028, the existing one should close as it is too close. But they will be about as far apart as Foxton and Shepreth, and no-one is suggesting either of those should close. Even if 73% of journeys transferred to the new station, the current one would see more journeys than Foxton. Footfall in the Cambridge – Ely corridor is increasing by about 12% a year, and is expected to grow even more when Cambridge South opens. Additional services will be needed by the time the new Waterbeach station opens, and could call at both of them.

British Regional Transport Association

BRTA has objected to a planning application for 93 homes on land between Bromham and Oakley north-west of Bedford as it would block any restoration of the rail link to Northampton. Studies have shown that this has a good case, and the land is crucial to enable access into Bedford and thus to the Universal theme park via Thameslink or East West Rail.

Bedford Commuters Association

NR has updated BCA regarding Access For All at Flitwick: "The initial cost estimate is higher than the budget currently available, [so] we are now exploring additional third party funding opportunities, and to review its scope to ensure we are working to the minimal viable specification. When we have completed the future design, we would set out a programme for delivery." BCA has asked Blake Stephenson MP to help get the project completed.

There are now four EMR Aurora Class 810s in regular service on the MML, with more to come. The first refurbished Class 360 should enter service shortly.

To combat fraud, the National Rail Conditions of Travel now require refund requests for Anytime, Off-Peak, Day Travelcard, Rover and Ranger tickets to be made before the date of travel. Compensation and refund options if your train is delayed or cancelled, and refund conditions for Advance and Season tickets are unchanged.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

On 13 December, GWR will become part of DfT Operator (DFTO), under the Government's reform of the rail industry. Throughout this process, BTPG's priority remains maintaining a punctual, reliable service for customers while continuing to support regional growth and connectivity across its network; maintaining a relationship with GWR's senior management is imperative. In the days of British Rail, RUGs found it harder to effect change via direct contact with rail industry management. BTPG is determined to retain the accountability that came with privatisation.

On 28 April, BTPG met with Andy Pope regarding the feasibility of a CRP for the stations between Reading and Westbury. It is happy to give this its support, and was able to put Andy in touch with various other groups (including councils) who could also support the project. However, this would not change how BTPG operates.

Recently, GWR went through a spate of missing holds at Newbury. BTPG has a pre-agreed set of holds that can be implemented within limits if an inbound train to Newbury is delayed, but the mechanism to do so is archaic and prone to human error. Steve Smith of BTPG has developed software that uses real time data to identify situations where a hold is required. He now wants to WhatsApp GWR in real time to request a hold, as this can be an effective way to get one, but the interface to WhatsApp is proving difficult. So if you do have one from a C#.Net desktop application, he would love to hear from you!

RAILFUTURE

Rf welcomes new members and groups to add weight to its campaigns. Join [here](#) by selecting the appropriate category from the "Membership Types" menu. Read the latest from Rf on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Consultation responses](#).

A recent instance of copyright infringement by a photo on its website cost Rf a substantial settlement fee. Any photos used on the website or social media, or in presentations or printed material must conform to its [Media Guidelines and Policy](#), so should always be attributed.

NEWS

In its [response](#) to the EWR consultation, Rf broadly supports the new plans as aligning with its long-term vision, and is pleased to see a number of improvements from the 2024 plans, including several of which it raised at the previous consultation. However, there are still some significant points it wishes to raise:

- Full conventional electrification of the entire route
- An additional station to the east of St Neots
- Extension to Newmarket
- Acceleration of the project while avoiding 'value engineering'
- Provision for an east-to-north connection at Bletchley
- Provision for a future connection to Aylesbury.

Following a trial across various operators, new Wi-Fi technology using satellites will be rolled out on over 1,400 trains across the UK, with fibre-optic cables laid in tunnels and deep cuttings. The aim is to boost availability from 50-60% over the 4G and 5G signal network to at least 90%.

Rf spokesman Bruce Williamson told the BBC it was "absolutely right that reliability and capacity increase", Wi-Fi was "not just an add-on or a luxury. Anything we can do to attract people onto the railways has got to be a good thing". But it was not the top priority for passengers: "the key issues remain the cost of travel, overcrowding and reliability". And travel writer Simon Calder told GB News that: "There are reports that it could take five years. I think we need it quite a lot quicker. The other problem is that it's all going to be pretty patchy because on some trains it will work great and on some it won't."

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

A new unified team of NR Anglia, GA and c2c now operates as an 'integrated business unit'. At the RfEA AGM in February, Martin Beable, GA's MD, [explained](#) how this offers the chance to work more efficiently in coordinating the operational and infrastructure sides of the railway.

New housing northeast of Norwich has led to an investigation into the feasibility of a station at Dussindale on the Sheringham line. Meanwhile, nearby Salhouse now enjoys an hourly service instead of every two hours. GA has also created two cross-Norwich services from Lowestoft by combining them with Norwich - Cambridge - Stansted services, as well as a late service from Norwich to Beccles via Lowestoft. Both the Norwich and Ipswich lines from Cambridge urgently need a half-hourly service, but this can't happen until Ely Area and Haughley Junction works are funded and delivered.

March station is managed by GA, but most of its trains are run by CrossCountry, while East Midlands Railway — whose trains rarely stop — sets the fare, so customers pay more and get less. Thus the 15-mile journey to Ely costs £13.50 return or £8.95 with a Railcard, whereas the next 15 miles from Ely to Cambridge costs less than half that: £6.00 return or £3.95 return with a Railcard. So many residents now drive to Huntingdon for simplicity and cost, adding to road congestion and vehicle emissions in the area.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

CBT urges everyone to email their MP calling for the Government to prioritise the most energy efficient modes of transport. That means making public transport, accessible and affordable, with safe, pleasant routes to walk and cycle, and making shared transport available to all. We should also call for a national mode shift target - the percentage of journeys to be made by efficient, sustainable transport - by a set date. Wales, Scotland, London and Manchester already have one. The Government promised to set one in its pre-election plan for the railways.

Better Transport Week 2026 from 15-21 June and the Better Transport Conference on 19 June at London South Bank University will celebrate how it helps connect people and places. Check out the [events page](#) to find out what's happening near you, or sign up to an online event.

COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK

CRN is pleased to see community rail's role in shaping rail use and behaviour recognised in a DfT review [Understanding the factors that influence people's use of rail infrastructure](#). It reinforces what members see every day: that barriers to rail use are often about confidence, familiarity, accessibility and the complexity of end-to-end journeys.

The end of May saw a strong reminder of its growing influence in shaping the future of the railway. A UK Rail Conference panel shared insights on what it will take to ensure the railway works for everyone. The message was clear: engaging communities is not a "nice-to-have", but a critical part of delivering better connectivity, climate-safe mobility, and fair access to opportunity.

CRN's Community Rail Week from 1 June led its grassroots movement across Britain in celebrating the theme of 'Journeys For All', and the essential role community rail plays in fostering inclusion, strengthening local connections and breaking down barriers, and thus helping to ensure that everyone can access and enjoy rail travel.

...and now the rest of the news

ORR works closely with Government and industry to develop frameworks that will help ensure the future rail system and its transition to GBR is coherent and works well for everyone. GBR's access and use policy, ORR's new appeals mechanism for access decisions, and a new retail code of practice, will be important for open access passenger operators and those in Scotland and Wales, freight operators and third party retailers.

Following ORR's access decision, the first direct train service between Oxford and Bristol for over twenty years started on 18 May. NR must produce timely evidence for the route so a longer-term decision can be taken for the service to continue beyond December 2027.

Many of the almost 350 private level crossings across Scotland are on routes with public access, so to provide the clear and consistent guidance needed to ensure safety and reduce confusion, a sub-group of the National Access Forum - NR, Ramblers Scotland, ScotWays and representatives of local authorities, national park authorities and local access forums - has developed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#).

The £16m Hairmyres station saw over 614,000 passengers in the year since it opened in its new location after a 16-week closure for electrification of the East Kilbride line from Glasgow. It has quickly established itself as a vital hub for commuters, as well as health staff, hospital patients and visitors to the surrounding area. Passengers have benefitted from modern facilities, improved accessibility and better connections, helping to support a modal shift from car to rail.

After a £7.2m upgrade, Horton-in-Ribblesdale station on the Settle - Carlisle line now has step-free access, with two new lifts and a new footbridge. It lies between Pen-y-Ghent and Ingleborough that feature in the Yorkshire Three Peaks walk. In 2025, the line was reconnected to the local Horton Quarry, from where aggregate is now transported across the rail network, taking lorries off the road and cutting CO₂ emissions.

Along with NR property division Platform4, a design team led by architect Hawkins Brown is developing a strategic regeneration framework (SRF) for the area around Liverpool Central Station. The aim is to integrate it with Lime Street to connect Merseyrail with national rail services, just as King's Cross and St Pancras form a London transport hub. In March, LCR Mayor Steve Rotheram secured £95m from Government to develop the business case for such major regeneration projects. The LCR CA and LCC aim to submit a full business case this summer.

Bradford Council, the Government and consultancy firm Arup have developed plans to double the size of Bradford city centre, with 5,000 new homes, a new railway station and over a mile of "green corridors". In January, the Government committed to making a decision by this summer on the business case for a new through rail station as part of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Level crossings on the East Suffolk line will be upgraded as part of the Sizewell C Rail Programme, which aims to deliver 60% of its construction materials by rail and sea.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have celebrated a 20-year partnership with NR, helping wildflowers and wildlife to flourish on the Great Stukeley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), an 86 acre railway cutting alongside the ECML north of Huntingdon.

A year since lineside signals were removed from the Northern City Line between Finsbury Park and Moorgate, almost 70,000 Great Northern trains to Welwyn Garden City and Hertford North have relied on digital in-cab signalling, a vital step towards its introduction later this year on the ECML.

Britain's largest TOC, newly nationalised Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), continues to grow, with 75 Thameslink and Great Northern drivers due to complete their training, along with 40 more for Gatwick Express and Southern. From December, both the off-peak Hertford North service and the non-stop Gatwick Express service to London Victoria will get four tph. However, GTR is bidding farewell to its CEO, Angie Doll, who is joining the Go Ahead Group in Australia and New Zealand. RUX wishes her all the best in her new role.

In partnership with heliguY™, NR has secured approval from the UK Civil Aviation Authority to operate drones beyond the visual line of sight, marking a significant step forward in the use of remote aerial technology across the rail network. It enables NR's Western and Anglia routes to deploy remotely operated drones at sites in Gloucester and Romford respectively, supporting infrastructure monitoring, improving situational awareness, and strengthening the response to incidents and security risks.

The new hourly Newquay - Par service is the most frequent for over 60 years. The Mid Cornwall Metro service from Newquay to Falmouth via Par, St Austell and Truro is due to begin next year.

Rail Europe has partnered with Leo Express, the Czech private train operator to open up direct booking from a single platform for journeys through the heart of Europe: routes linking Prague, Krakow, Warsaw, Ostrava and Olomouc, perfect for a multi-city adventure through Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. It is Rail Europe's third network addition in just three months, following deals with BritRail and European Sleeper.

...and finally

When Steve McCulloch retired after commuting for 52 years from Windsor and Eton to his printing job in Maidenhead, GWR presented him with a plaque bearing his name, like those on the side of trains, and a gift bag.

On Platform 5A of Sheffield station, a new light well has been opened up where the River Sheaf, after which the city is named, meets the Porter Brook. Organisers said that uncovering as much as possible of the mile-long Victorian culvert will help wildlife in the waterway.

CONSULTATIONS

- Lancashire Combined County Authority: [Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan 2026-30](#), closes 30 June
- Mid-Devon District Council: [Local Plan 2026-46](#), closes 10 July.
- Transport for London: [DLR extension to Thamesmead via Beckton Riverside](#), closes 16 July
- North Devon / Torridge Councils: [A Plan for Northern Devon](#), closes 11 August.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultations.

EVENTS

Please keep your events coming, and update websites as soon as any changes are made. Also copy [Roger Blake](#), who maintains lists of [Events](#) and [Rail Dates](#) on the Rf website.

Blob colour indicates the type of event:

- Rf events (RUGs are cordially invited)
- National & regional events
- Local Group events.

June

■ Saturday 13. Rf Severnside AGM. Rotary Hall, 16 Station Road, **Chippenham**, Wilts, SN15 1EG, 1330.

■ Tuesday 16. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, Parsonage Lane, **Chesham**, Bucks, HP5 1EP, 1930 (Also 4 August and 15 September).

■ Friday 19. Friends of the Far North Line AGM, Lovat Arms Hotel, **Beaulieu**, 1045.

■ Saturday 20. Rf London & South East, Herts & Beds, Bricket Wood, 1100 (Also 29 July and 27 August Online at 1730, and 26 September in St Albans, 1100).

July

■ Saturday 4. Rf AGM, Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, **Birmingham**, B4 6AF.

■ Wednesday 4. Rf West Midlands, Platform 3, **Birmingham** Moor Street station. 1745 (Also 9 September)

■ Monday 13. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, Lancs, BB7 2JN, 1900 (Also 14 September).

■ Thursday 23. Rf London & South East, Metro & Eastern division, Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross St, **London**, EC1M 6EL, 1900 (Also 17 September)

Further Ahead

- 11 August. STORM - Oldham Rochdale Manchester RUG, The Blue Pits Inn, 842 Manchester Road, Castleton, **Rochdale**, OL11 2SP, 1400.
- 15 August. Rf London & South East, Kent division, 1400.

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