

Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

As always, feel free to forward RUG 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").

Guest Rail User Group of the Month**Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line**

We're pleased that one of Britain's largest rail user group, the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line, is amongst the latest batch of groups to affiliate to Railfuture. Most of you will know that it's 25 years since the line was saved from closure, and FoSCL continues to campaign for a better passenger service between Leeds and Carlisle. The group is also building a business case for through trains from Manchester to Carlisle via Clitheroe and Hellifield - there's a short online survey on their [website](#) where the public can express an interest in using such a service.

Around 160 members of FoSCL give their time on a regular or ad-hoc basis, fulfilling roles such as: on-train travel guides, walks organisers, station gardeners, leaflet distributors and assistants in one of the two FoSCL shops (one at Settle and the other at Appleby). Many of the items for sale in their shops can also be bought via the group's new Online Shop (see website).

FoSCL was formed in 1981 and nowadays they work very much in partnership with the Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company and the Settle-Carlisle Railway Heritage Trust. Since the line was saved, eight stations have been reopened, station buildings have been refurbished, platforms raised, Victorian-style lamps installed and two disused signal boxes have been restored – most of this is down to the tireless efforts of FoSCL members.

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

Friends of the West Highland Lines – new CRPs and more frequent services

Three community rail partnerships are in the process of being set up for the West Highland Lines (Crianlarich-Oban, Crianlarich-Mallaig and Crianlarich-Helensburgh) and FoWHL members are actively supporting the initiative. As part of the group's project to open up iconic views along the line by selective tree clearance, two further sites have been opened up in Glen Falloch – this brings the total of recovered views in the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park to approximately four miles.

The improved ScotRail timetable introduced in May sees double the number of weekday services between Glasgow and Oban. The more frequent services are much welcomed by FoWHL, and in their Summer 2014 magazine they encourage readers to get out and about by providing a guide to transport places of interest in Scotland. In other news, we read that members of the group's committee have now met with all the bidders for the future ScotRail franchise.

A member of FoWHL's committee has been analysing the effect of fare revisions introduced in January. Although the increases were modest, West Highland Line travellers will be adversely affected by the introduction of different tariffs for peak and off-peak travel (previously the two were the same meaning that, in effect, there was no peak period for fares). Although the difference is currently fairly small, it can be assumed that the gap will widen over the coming years. Off peak returns are valid after 0915, but because of the infrequent service on some lines, the first available service for off-peak travel will be around mid-day! Also journey times are long, often longer than the entire rush hour. The article concludes with the startling fact that, despite last year's promise by the Scottish Transport Minister to tackle "split-ticketing" problems, significant savings can still be had by buying separate tickets for each leg of a journey.

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland – local councils pledge funding for new stations

RAGES very much welcomes a joint press release from their local councils which begins thus: “Scottish Borders and East Lothian councils, along with SEStran, have submitted a joint bid to the Scottish Government’s Rail Station Fund as part of plans to provide two new stations at East Linton and Reston. The submission of the bid is the culmination of years of endeavour by a local working group which includes both local authorities, the regional transport partnership SEStran, local rail campaign group RAGES and local MSPs.”

Following the release of this statement, RAGES commented: “The contribution from East Lothian Council is £1,560,000 and from Scottish Borders Council is £1,280,000, adding up to approximately 40% of the estimated project costs. Both councils recognise that competition for resources from the Scottish Stations Fund is likely to be intense. A 40% contribution is very significant, particularly as resources in both organisations are severely constrained both by the availability of finance and by a range of other important infrastructure projects.”

Harrogate Line Supporters’ Group – convenor shakes hands with VIPs at London rail event

The group’s convenor, Brian Dunsby, attended the Dept. for Transport’s Rail Industry Day in London on 9th April and took the opportunity to speak with senior officials from the DfT’s new Rail Executive, including: Secretary of State Patrick McLoughlin, the Director of Rail Strategy & Funding (Nick Bisson), and the Project Directors of both the Northern and TransPennine franchises. In each case Brian pressed the need for more Harrogate Trains both locally and to/from London. He says: “They all were aware of the issues surrounding Harrogate and I gave each of them a copy of our comprehensive reports and recommendations.”

Brian followed up these discussions with reminder emails and electronic copies of the HLSG’s reports - he received some encouraging responses. In his reply, Nick Bisson said was pleased that Brian’s group had met with bidders for the East Coast franchise, adding: “we strongly encourage bidders to meet with local stakeholders on the route to better understand their needs.”

The HLSG is heartened that their line remains on the list of routes to be assessed for electrification. They’ve heard that members of the DfT’s Northern Electrification Task Force have been appointed and they will be holding their first meeting this month.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line Users’ Group (STORM) – Moston service halved

Rail users in Moston have woken up to the fact that their service was reduced from 2/hour to hourly from the May timetable change and one regular traveller is starting a petition to get this reversed. There’s a worry that Northern is trying to run down the service to justify closure of the station. STORM argues that the poor state of the station is depressing demand, adding that “with the large number of houses within easy walking distance of the station, there is probably more traffic potential than Northern appreciates.”

The group has been monitoring closely the repercussions of the May timetable changes and is particularly concerned about poor performance, with cancellations increasingly being blamed on lack of a crew member. Overcrowding is again on the increase, in some cases due to 3-car sets being replaced by 2-car formations.

There a small piece of good news from Northern Rail: they’re predicting that at least two ex-Thameslink Class 319 units will be available for the start of the Liverpool-Manchester electric service in December, and they will be retaining all the displaced diesel units for use on their network.

Ormskirk, Preston & Southport Travellers' Association – MP chairs rail summit

Earlier this month, the MP for Southport chaired a meeting involving local authority representatives and other stakeholders, focussing on the Southport-Manchester line and looking at how the region gets a fair say on local rail services. There will be a need to assess both losses and gains as the rail network in the North West develops post electrification. It's hoped this meeting will be the first of many looking at transport issues. OPSTA is now focussing its attention on the consultation exercise leading up to the Northern and TransPennine franchise renewals.

OPSTA members carried out passenger counts on trains between Preston and Ormskirk in the months leading up to the timetable change in May, and will be repeating the exercise to determine the effects of the changes. Loading per service was found to average 30.5, with highest loadings between Croston and Preston or between Burscough Junction and Ormskirk. Members have also been keeping an eye on ticket checking on the Southport-Wigan line and report that the situation seems to be improving – although checks on evening services remain sparse.

With many housing developments proposed in the vicinity, OPSTA feel the time is right to relaunch their campaign for a new station at Midge Hall. Four other campaign goals were agreed at the group's AGM in May: electrification beyond Ormskirk, an hourly clockface timetable for Ormskirk-Preston, improvements to Southport-Manchester services, and continued work on the benefit case for the Burscough South West curve.

Some local events this summer provide an opportunity for OPSTA to deploy its information stall and engage with the wider public. Elsewhere it's reported that station adoption groups at Meols Cop, Westhoughton, Hindley and Walkden are working closely together with a view to possibly setting up a rail user group covering the Wigan area.

Friends of the Barton Line – better revenue protection ... but no new information screens

At a meeting with Northern Rail's Stakeholder Manager, members were pleased to hear that efforts to protect revenue were being increased, but disappointed that none of the 100 stations on the network due to be fitted with new customer information screens would be on the Barton Line. The group was encouraged to work more closely with their local community rail partnership and to agree who does what. FoBL notes that, in the latest edition of their rail timetable, the section listing rail user groups has been omitted.

In April, members gathered on Barton station for the naming of train unit 153316 as *John 'Longitude' Harrison; Inventor of the Marine Chronometer*. FoBL's Secretary has been in discussion with the John Harrison Foundation over the planning of events along the Barton line to mark the 300 year anniversary of the Longitude Act.

In May, FoBL committee members met by appointment Shadow Rail Minister Lilian Greenwood MP and her assistant on the 15:32 train from Thornton Abbey to Barton and back. A wide range of issues concerning the service was discussed and a photo was taken at Barton station for group archives.

Friends of the Brigg & Lincoln Lines – Master Plan launched at Gainsborough

A "Brigg Line Master Action Plan" was launched on Friday 9th May at Gainsborough Central Station by the local MEP in partnership with the FoBLL Rail Group, the Gainsborough Rail and Bus Group (GRaB) and the Lincolnshire Branch of Railfuture. The plan includes short-, medium- and long-term goals for the railway line and environs, and proposals for an improved rail service.

Since 1993, the Brigg line has had a Saturday service of just three trains each way between Sheffield and Cleethorpes. Rail travel elsewhere has boomed but the Brigg line has always been left behind, which is why the FoBLL Rail Group was formed. They are campaigning for a realistic train service from the start of the new Northern Rail franchise in 2016.

GRaB is producing a video to promote each area along the line and a petition has been set up which will be presented to the Dept. for Transport: "It is very important that we get as many people to sign this petition as possible, as the whole future of the passenger services on this line depends on us presenting a good case of support." You can sign up to show your support [here](#).

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group – *shrubs at Frodsham and buzzards at Runcorn!*

There's progress to report on NCRUG's main campaign aim: to see the restoration of passenger services over the Halton curve linking North Wales with Merseyside. The Demand Study commissioned by Merseytravel and the Welsh Govt. is nearing completion and the final report is due in July. The annual special train from Chester to Liverpool South Parkway via the Halton curve runs on 21st June and is sure to be well supported by NCRUG members.

In April, seven members of NCRUG attended the Arriva Trains Wales northern-area station adoption conference in Chester. The group was pleased to receive a grant of £100 from the local council which will be used to replace some of the shrubs at Frodsham station that were damaged during fence renewal.

The Railway Heritage Trust has approached NCRUG with the suggestion that the small buildings on the island platform at Helsby could be restored and handed over to the group for community use. Meanwhile, a "Harrington Hump" had been promised by Network Rail for the main platform at Helsby, but once work had started it was clear that a whole section of platform would be raised in height: "we have no idea why NR had a change of heart, but we're delighted they did!"

Runcorn East is benefitting from bird and bat boxes constructed by members of a community group near the station as part of a wildlife project being overseen by NCRUG. An account of a guided walk around the station environs in the spring contains an impressive list of the flowers, birds and insects to be found in the area – even a buzzard was seen flying overhead!

Mid-Cheshire Rail Users' Association – *current patronage on the line justifies improved frequency*

Train performance on the Mid Cheshire Line has declined in recent weeks and the May timetable change may be making matters worse because some trains will have their turn-round time at Chester reduced by 5 minutes.

The official study of the Mid Cheshire Line has still not been published; in the meantime MCRUA has produced its own draft proposal for a 2-trains-per-hour service throughout the day. They point out that Transport for Greater Manchester's own Rail Strategy document says that stations with a footfall of >50,000/year justify at least 2/hour, and all the stations on the line fall into that category! Indeed, Knutsford's footfall justifies 4/hour but (like other stations) it has only 1/hour. The group hopes that Knutsford will be high on the list of 100 stations to benefit from new Customer Information Screens under the terms of the Northern Rail franchise extension.

MCRUA members are pressing for additional car parking at Winsford, Hartford and Acton Bridge stations, and are trying to persuade the bus company to provide a link to Winsford station. They're also looking at how the train stopping pattern at the three stations could be improved to the benefit of rail travellers.

After their successful charter train to Ayr, MCRUA is planning another excursion (in conjunction with Compass Tours), this time to Alnwick and Berwick-on-Tweed in September. The 2014 programme of monthly Music Trains on the Mid Cheshire Line got off to a cracking start in April, and will run through to October. Additional trains can be organised for groups of 30 or more.

Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association – at last: promise of an hourly service

Some good news at last for SARPA: there will be an enhanced train service on the line starting from next May. This is likely to result in the long-promised hourly service, something the group has tirelessly campaigned for. There is also talk of purpose-built tourist trains for the line, but SARPA wonders if travellers would be prepared to pay even normal fares (let alone premium fares) for what could be a slower journey unless, of course, steam haulage were on offer – perhaps new-build steam locos with ERTMS signalling capability could be considered?

There's also welcome news that Machynlleth will be one of five stations in Wales to benefit from a £12m scheme for improving access through new footbridges, lifts and ramps. However, improvement work at Shrewsbury has still not been finished and SARPA hopes that the scruffy appearance of the station environs will be sorted out eventually.

In a feature article in SARPA's newsletter, the writer casts doubt on the business case for restoring the railway between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth via Lampeter, as being promoted by Traws Cymru Link. So much of the formation has been lost and there are reopening schemes in Wales that would have a much better benefit:cost ratio, the line to Mold (a town three times the size of Lampeter) being one example.

In his regular column, The Brigadier tells us about his trip to Oxford involving a change at Birmingham New Street. With all the millions being spent on the rebuilding of New Street, he was expecting great things but found it to be the "same bloody station" with its dingy narrow platforms and staircases ... at least the "Memsahib" was impressed by the promise of all those nice shops and restaurants! His overall opinion is that too much is now being spent across the network on station infrastructure at the expense of providing enough carriages for the record numbers now using the railway.

Stourbridge Line User Group – lively public meeting precedes AGM

The public meeting which preceded SLUG's AGM in May was a lively affair, with guest speakers from train operators and the "Centro" transport authority giving presentations and fielding some challenging questions. The greatest hostility came from Kidderminster residents who felt that not enough was being done to address the daily gridlock on the station forecourt, due mainly to conflicts between private hire cars and buses. The Centro speaker reported that CCTV and remotely-locked waiting rooms were being introduced for Smethwick Galton Bridge but in the meeting notes, SLUG says that the group does not endorse these changes as a substitute for platform staff being present. Following Chiltern Railways' presentation, the SLUG committee took the opportunity to once again press for a return Saturday evening train from London Marylebone to Stourbridge.

In a review of rolling stock in the area, the author acknowledges that rail users are fortunate to have the good-quality Class 172 diesel units, but there are not enough to run the full service and there are threats on the horizon that will result from the national shortage of diesel multiple units.

SLUG continues to campaign vigorously for restoration of the Stourbridge/Dudley/Walsall line. In connection with this, SLUG's Chairman contacted Centro managers inquiring about the Midland Metro Proposal and the heavy rail alternative. He was informed the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership has chosen not to prioritise the Metro Scheme for 2014-9 and the heavy rail proposal looks even more gloomy.

The group has heard that stops for Hagley are to be restored on London Midland's Worcester-bound trains from the Dec 2014 timetable change – something for which SLUG and the neighbouring Cotswold Line Promotion Group had both argued.

Windsor Lines Passengers' Association – refurbished trains late ... but perhaps worth the wait

The introduction of refurbished Class 458 units on the Windsor Lines is now running a year behind schedule, and the WLPA has raised concerns about the impact of the delay on passengers. However, the group is impressed by many aspects of the new trains, commenting that there's a spacious feel and plenty of bay seating, always popular with passengers. The increased capacity is achieved by allocating more room for standees: "Many of us have thought that the money spent on increased standing capacity (longer trains and longer platforms) would have been better spent on new signalling to allow more frequent eight-coach trains."

The group's campaign to get something done about the poor state of Whitton Station seems to be paying off. The Transport Minister attended a public meeting to discuss the issue and has promised action. Grants from the *Access for All* and *Station Improvements* funds will be used to supplement cash promised by local councils, the train operator and the Rugby Football Union (in recognition of proximity to Twickenham Stadium) – the WLPA wants to see all these sources of funding being pulled together at one time.

The WLPA is also trying to get something done about: last-minute platform changes at Clapham Junction, the lack of ticket checks on some trains, and the fact that short trains now stop a long way from platform canopies where platforms have been extended. The group is pleased that the "minutes until the next train" type of information displays on platforms are being phased out after they had been critical of the innovation.

The South West Trains Stakeholder Manager has been visiting local authorities to establish their aspirations for a new (direct award) franchise period, taking the franchise to March 2019 – the WLPA has been able to press for some of its top priorities during these discussions.

TransWilts Community Rail Partnership – improved service should be the base-line for the future

TWCRP responded to the Great Western franchise consultations making a number of points. Firstly, they said that the current operating service level on the Swindon-Melksham-Westbury line should be set as a minimum for the forthcoming franchise period - ie it should be the base case for the franchise, not a costed option! Furthermore, the operator should look towards extending the service to Salisbury. They also said that interchanges at Westbury should be improved, and that the work of the Partnership should be recognised. TWCRP was pleased to see that various points they had made during an earlier draft of the franchise specification had been addressed.

In July, TWCRP supporters will be taking part in the Melksham Carnival parade to publicise the town's new rail service. Elsewhere, we read that the CRP has submitted two entries for this year's ACoRP Community Rail Awards: for outstanding individual volunteer and for an innovative transport project (the Melksham Rail-Link bus). They're hoping both will prove to be winners!

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group – no wires, so can we have a direct diesel service to London?

The disappointing message for BTPG from the Great Western franchise document is that there is clearly no money to wire further than Newbury - the group was under the impression that the economic case for electrifying to Bedwyn had already been established. However, since the consultation document now assumes diesel only beyond Newbury, the group's response focusses on ways of ensuring that Bedwyn retains its direct service to Paddington using diesel trains. They are adamant that changing trains at Newbury is not an acceptable option and, in their formal response, BTPG back up this assertion by quoting statistics from a passenger survey carried out in 2013 in which over 80% of respondents said they would revert to using a car if a change of train at Newbury were necessary. The group is urging its supporters to respond to the GW franchise consultation by the due date: 26 June.

The outcome of a meeting involving local MPs, First Great Western and the Dept. for Transport a few days ago was more hopeful. There was the promise of an hourly diesel service between Paddington

and Westbury (or Exeter) calling at Reading, Newbury, Kintbury, Hungerford, Bedwyn and Pewsey, with peak services also calling at Thatcham and Theale. Added to this would be some turbo services between Bedwyn and Newbury to provide a half-hourly peak service.

Transition Marlborough – *petition to reopen rail link*

Marlborough's "Transition Town" environmental movement has its own Transport Group to address the poor and unreliable public transport in the town. Many of the town's commuters are forced to travel to the nearest railway stations in Bedwyn or Pewsey by car because the bus service is not properly integrated and non-existent before 8am. The group is backing BTPG's campaign to retain direct trains to London Paddington, but meanwhile is running its own campaign to get the line between Marlborough and Savernake (between Bedwyn and Pewsey) reopened. They've started an online petition [here](#) and say that over 200 people have signed up already.

Tonbridge Line Commuters – *planned and unforeseen disruptions cause problems for commuters*

As part of SouthEastern's stakeholder consultations about service disruption during the reconstruction of London Bridge station, TLC were able to express their reservations, particularly concerning morning peak-hour services and late evening trains. The group also asked that their tickets should be valid on Underground services between South London termini.

While the many service disruptions resulting from winter storms were understandable, the TLC says that what was not acceptable was the poor quality of information for those wishing to travel: "it seems that SouthEastern struggled to provide a reliable service or indeed to know what services were running!" The TLC is encouraging its members to claim full compensation.

The group's AGM was held on 23 May at Tonbridge, and the special guest was local MP, Sir John Stanley: "Sir John has been extremely supportive to our Association since he was first elected over 40 years ago."

In the May edition of RUEx, I mentioned Railfuture's new leaflet promoting rail for travel abroad. The Tonbridge Line Commuter group's Vice-Chairman replied with this viewpoint:

"I read with interest the item on International Rail Travel and feel very strongly that Ashford International should be promoted as it can be easily accessed from much of Kent and Sussex by rail. This station attracts much custom for those trains that actually stop there and local anecdotal evidence suggests that the footfall there compares very favourably with Ebbsfleet International which can only be reached by expensive 'High Speed' rail or by car. At the Kent County Council Rail Summit a few weeks ago, when Mr Pierre Delelande of Eurostar was speaking, there was a clear indication from representatives of RUGs, councils, etc. that the Ashford service should be increased."

Wealden Line Campaign – *new website and email addresses*

After a revision of their website, the Wealden Line Campaign web address has changed to www.wealdenline.org.uk (instead of www.wealdenline.co.uk) and similarly the email addresses of committee members have become "@wealdenline.org.uk" (instead of @wealdenline.co.uk).

Friends of the Lymington to Brockenhurst Line – *wartime commemoration on the line*

On 21 June, FoLBL members were busy helping to support a major D-Day commemoration event organised by the Lymington-Brockenhurst Community Rail Partnership - a fundraising day for the Royal British Legion with entertainment and stalls at Brockenhurst village, Brockenhurst station, Lymington Town station and around Lymington Quay. The CRP received funding from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships and a grant from the New Forest National Park Authority to support the event. FoLBL's next social event is a trip to the Kennet & Avon Canal at Bradford-on-Avon in September.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE AGM: ELECTION RESULTS

At Railfuture's AGM held on 10 May in Sheffield, Ian Brown CBE (formerly Managing Director of Transport for London) was elected to the Board of Directors of Railfuture and has accepted the challenging portfolio of **Director of Policy**.

Four new **Vice-Presidents** were appointed: Martin Vickers, the Conservative MP for Cleethorpes, Tom Harris, the Labour MP for Glasgow South, Stewart Stevenson, the Scottish National Party MSP for Banffshire and Buchan Coast and Simon Thomas, Plaid Cymru AM for Mid and West Wales.

Railfuture already has a distinguished slate of vice presidents including former Secretary of State for Transport Lord Adonis, Lord Berkeley, Lord Deben, Dr Caroline Lucas MP, former railway managing directors Chris Green and Adrian Shooter, and rail-industry experts Roger Ford and Barry Doe. Railfuture's President is transport writer and broadcaster, Christian Wolmar.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Railfuture is running a photo competition to find some stunning photographs illustrating the future of rail, so get shooting and enter your pics! Entries should depict an aspect of rail development or rail reopening that is needed, is in progress or has recently occurred. The competition will be judged by a panel of Railfuture vice-presidents, and the first prize will be a framed fine art print of a railway scene, personally signed by the artist. Details of how to enter the competition are on Railfuture's website [here](#). The closing date is **30th September 2014**.

RUG AWARDS 2014

Railfuture's third Rail User Group Awards competition is now open for receiving your entries. The competition aims to recognise and reward the various achievements of rail user groups over the past year. Prizes will be presented at Railfuture's Rail User Conference in London on **1st November 2014**. There are no application forms – please email roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk for details of how to enter (the rules will shortly be posted on Railfuture's website). The closing date for your entries is 23:59 on **Tuesday 30th September**.

The categories for this year's competition are: **Best Campaign; Best Individual Campaigner; Best Website; Best Newsletter; Best New Group** ... and, of course, the **Judges' Special Award**.

Date for your diary:

Railfuture's **Rail Users' Conference** and **RUG Awards Ceremony** is at the University of Westminster in central London on 1st November 2014. Details and booking form [here](#).

RAILFUTURE REPRESENTED AT TICKETING WORKSHOP

Chris Fribbins of Railfuture's Passenger Group attended a retail review workshop organised by the Office of Rail Regulation on 8 May. Chris reports that train operators and some third-party ticket vendors are keen on relaxing the rules governing ticket office hours and closures as they see this as a considerable cost of sales. Third-party vendors are also keen on being able to access all ticketing options - some are currently not available via the central ticket database (eg operators' special deals). However, third parties are already permitted to discount fares as they wish, but they have to settle the full amount, less agreed commission, via the fares system.

Notes and presentation slides from the meeting are available on the ORR's website [here](#). Industry feedback, including that from Railfuture, can also be seen via this web link.

RAILFUTURE EUROSTAR SURVEY

Once again, Railfuture's International Group will be asking Eurostar travellers to complete a survey, either online or by post. This time, the survey period will last for a full year, and will cover journeys made between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015: "By having a 12-month survey, we intend to obtain a balanced picture of the experiences of business and leisure users. We also want to see how effective the service is as part of a longer journey chain – such as Manchester to Lyon or Norwich to Antwerp."

A link to the questionnaire will be posted on Railfuture's website shortly. It's hoped that rail user groups will let their members know about the survey by mentioning it in newsletters etc. – thanks!

RAILFUTURE LONDON & SE LOOKS AT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFLUENCE

The Branch has been looking at ways in which their group currently influences decision making. Responding to rail industry and local authority consultations has become routine, but they also stress the importance of responding to draft plans from local enterprise partnerships and organisations such as the South Downs National Park Authority. "In July 2014, central government will announce funding for the LEPs in the period beginning April 2015, much of which will be for transport infrastructure. We need to build new relationships to support our LEPs' advocacy of rail as a means to their end of stimulating economic activity. We now have a voice to influence the allocation of resources!"

The Branch has also been busy strengthening its links with neighbouring branches, rail user groups, reopening campaign groups and the heritage rail sector.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

The Branch comments that the decision to award the Thameslink, Southern & Gt Northern management contract to Govia seems sensible. The committee has enjoyed a "friendly and purposeful" relationship with First Capital Connect and will work hard to nurture a similar relationship with the new operator. They've already sought clarification on the precise allocation of rolling stock on lines north of the Thames under the new regime.

Reopening campaigns feature prominently in the Branch workload. They're urging local authorities to make the right decision about extending East West Rail through to Cambridge. Meanwhile, they're keeping up the momentum of the Wisbech reopening campaign, saying it's now recognised that the link has "strategic importance with a strong business case". Another campaign gaining ground is the project to reopen the rail link between Cambridge and Haverhill. A recent public meeting in Haverhill called by the Cambridge to Sudbury Rail Renewal Association attracted strong support. Railfuture representatives at the meeting explained how the project fits in with other rail developments in the area, and they gave examples of the time savings for users of the proposed rail link compared to current bus journeys.

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

RAIL PASSENGER JOURNEYS JUMP BY 5.7%

New statistics published earlier this month by the Office of Rail Regulation reveal that the total number of rail passenger journeys across Britain was 1.59bn in 2013-14 – an increase of 5.7% on the 1.50bn recorded in 2012-13. The 'Rail Usage Statistics' highlight data such as the number of passenger journeys and distance travelled by passengers on the rail network, providing an indication of the levels of demand for rail travel in Great Britain.

The data shows that the growth in journeys on regional and long distance sectors has slowed in recent years, while journeys in London and South East sector have increased by 31.5% between 2009-10 and 2013-14. London and South East sector now account for 69.8% of the total franchised passenger journeys.

Of the 1.59bn passenger journeys made on franchised operators, 56.5% of the journeys were made on ordinary tickets, and the remaining 43.5% attributed to season tickets. – *ORR announcement*

To access the complete data and report visit: <http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/>

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS AND NORTHERN FRANCHISES

The Department for Transport has published a [consultation document](#) on the future of the Trans-Pennine Express and Northern rail franchises. The public consultation invites views from the public and from stakeholders on the improvements to service levels and facilities that passengers may wish to see, in order to provide a railway that supports a growth in passenger numbers and delivers the wider economic benefits. This consultation is being carried out jointly with Rail North and aims to capture the views of the wide range of stakeholders in the region. The consultation closes on **18 August 2014** and the new franchises begin in **February 2016**.

The DfT has also published the prospectuses for both franchises to accompany the pre-qualification documents published a few days earlier, plus a notice for the Official Journal of the European Union. These steps mark the start of the formal competitions to find new operators to run passenger rail services in these two key rail franchises in the north of England. – *DfT press release*

The DfT is running a series of **consultation events** which include (i) a presentation about the Northern and TPE train-service specifications and the consultation processes (ii) a presentation from Passenger Focus and (iii) an opportunity to ask questions. The dates and locations are as follows:

25 June: Midlothian Room, **City of Edinburgh Council** at 10.30am.

3 July: Committee Room A, County Hall, **Lancashire County Council**, Preston at 10.30am.

9 July: George Hudson Room, West Offices, **City of York Council** at 10.30am.

If you would like to attend, please respond to NorthernTPEconsultation2014@dft.gsi.gov.uk, setting out your name, organisation and which event you will be attending.

Some of the comments I've seen so far about the consultation document suggest that it leaves much to be desired (talk of higher fares, service reductions and unpalatable trade-offs). Rail users are rolling up their sleeves for the fight ahead! - Ed

Note: The consultation on the specification for the next **Great Western** franchise ends on **26 June**.

RAILWAY RETURNING TO STATE CONTROL?

What has become increasingly apparent is that Britain's rail franchises are nothing like normal commercial franchises – such as Burger King or M&S Simply Food outlets that we see at mainline stations – but are actually complex management contracts awarded by the government, which retains overall control. ... It seems to me that when coupled with the decision to make Network Rail a government-owned company from September, with the company then borrowing directly from government funds, the arguments about renationalising Britain's railway are largely defunct. By the end of this year all of the railway infrastructure will be publicly owned – and passenger operations will be state-controlled, even if they are managed on a day-to-day basis by private contractors on behalf of the government. – *from Alan Marshall's blog on railnews.co.uk*

NATIONAL RAIL ENQUIRIES DATA AVAILABLE FOR FREE

From June 2014, public sector organisations and small commercial or private users will be able to access the National Rail Enquiries Darwin system for free. Darwin is the NRE information service paid for by train operators which analyses raw data from rail industry sources to predict the arrival times of trains.

Until now, a number of organisations and developers that use the service have been charged and required a licence. In future only the biggest commercial or private users whose services are used more than five million times in a four week period will have to pay. Free access will be granted to public bodies, including Transport for London, passenger transport executives and local authorities, regardless of how many requests for information their customers make. For all users, a licence will no longer be required. Instead, they will need to agree to terms and conditions on a website, making it quicker and easier to set up new services.

Other changes to NRE services include giving developers greater availability of information about service disruptions; making it easier for passengers using NRE to find details about the routes on which their ticket is valid; and providing developers with more information about interchanges between national rail and other modes of transport, such as Docklands Light Railway or London Underground.

The intellectual property in Darwin is owned by Train Information Services (TIS) Ltd - the company owned by franchised TOCs that provides NRE services. *– Transport Briefing*

TWO NEW STATIONS ON LEEDS-BRADFORD LINE

At the end of May, Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin announced the go-ahead for two new stations on the rail line between Bradford and Leeds: Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge. The Dept. for Transport will fund up to £9.5 million of the £16 million cost. The Apperley Bridge Station will include a park and ride site to serve both Leeds and Bradford whilst the Kirkstall Forge Station will kick start over £400 million of mixed-use development at the Old Forge site. The main works are scheduled to start in July with completion of the scheme in August 2015. *– DfT press release*

PYE CORNER STATION CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

Construction of Pye Corner station in the area west of Newport began this month. The Welsh Government has appointed Alun Griffiths as principal contractor for the £3.5m project which will add a station to the Ebbw Valley line. The new station is expected to open with the December 2014 timetable change and is being funded with a £1.4m contribution from the Welsh Government with the remainder coming from the Department for Transport's new stations fund which is administered by Network Rail.

The new station will be served by the existing hourly Ebbw Vale to Cardiff service. It will have a single platform, CCTV, ticket purchasing facilities, a car park for 60 cars and customer information screens. The project will also deliver a new road layout on the Western Valley road and High Cross lane with a new mini roundabout to ease traffic. *– Transport Briefing*

RAIL INVESTMENT PLANS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Following a public consultation, the NI Transport Minister Danny Kennedy has published a [Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy](#), which allows for a significant enhancement of existing rail capacity, preparation for the future electrification of the network and major extensions to the rail network. Three priority themes will be pursued in bidding for future railways investment funding up to 2035:

- Maintaining and improving passenger capacity of the existing network: priority will be given to a number of projects including the completion of the Coleraine to Londonderry track relay; track relays between Coleraine and Antrim and at Lurgan station; refurbishment of the Enterprise rolling stock; refurbishing stations and halts including Adelaide, Ballymena, Londonderry and Lurgan; purchase of up to 60 extra carriages; and a programme of new Park and Ride facilities.
- TEN-T Network: Removing bottlenecks (The railway line from Belfast to Cork, through Dublin has been designated as a “Core Network Corridor” of the European TEN-T Network).
- Enhancing the TEN-T comprehensive network: possible network extensions that will be considered include first the enhancement of the Northern Line between Bleach Green and Antrim; extensions along the A6 corridor between Antrim and Castledawson; along the M1/A4 and the A3/A29 corridors towards Dungannon/Armagh; and a route to serve Belfast International Airport.

Passenger numbers in Northern Ireland have almost doubled since 2002, from 6.7m to 13.2m in 2013. The speed of development will depend on funding from the NI Executive and European programmes. – *announcement from nothernireland.gov.uk*

GOOGLE MAPS ADD TIMETABLES FOR WHOLE OF BRITAIN

Google has added extensive transport timetable information to its suite of mapping services. A deal with Traveline Information Ltd - the partnership of transport operators and local authorities formed to provide comprehensive information about public transport across Great Britain - means Google Maps users can now check the best time and route for millions of train, tram, bus and ferry departures every day.

Google says its new offering features 17,000 different routes across Britain. Users are shown when the next service departs, how many stops there are and how far the walk is to and from each station. The interface makes it easy to compare journey times for travelling by train, bus, car, bike or even on foot. While national rail data and public transport information was already available in Google Maps for cities including London, Google now provides coverage across the whole of Great Britain.

– *Transport Briefing*

NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER OPERATORS' MAP

Barry Doe's franchise map has just been updated to reflect minor changes such as the renaming of Greater Anglia to Abellio Greater Anglia, their new service between Cambridge and Stansted Airport which starts in July, and the insertion of some new station names for clarity, such as Ebbsfleet International. As usual anyone may download copies for private or commercial use, including printing at any size, from the 'Rail Operators' section of www.barrydoe.co.uk.

WILL WE NEVER BE RID OF PACERS?

The Direct Award of a franchise extension to the current operator of Northern Rail includes provision for life-extension work on the class 142 Pacers and the Dept. for Transport is considering the retention of these trains beyond the 1st January 2020 deadline for disabled access by coupling them to trains which *do* comply with DDA legislation. – *from MCRUA's newsletter*

EVENTS

National & regional rail events are highlighted in **yellow**. Community & environmental events are in **purple**. Railfuture events are in **green**, and rail user group representatives are welcome to attend!

Special Notice

Passenger Focus **regional rail user workshops**, are highlighted **grey**. Registration is required. The workshop in Stirling has been **cancelled**. The Manchester workshop is now set for **24 June**.

Tue 24 Jun [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Tue 24 Jun [Passenger Focus](#) ~~Scotland workshop, Stirling, from 11am~~ **CANCELLED**

Tue 24 Jun [Passenger Focus](#) North West workshop, Manchester, from 11am.

Wed 25 Jun DfT Northern/TPE [Consultation Event](#) at City of Edinburgh Council from 10.30am.

Sat 28 Jun North Rail Line Action Group meet at the Pentland Hotel, Thurso from 12 noon.

Sat 28 Jun [MarshLink](#) "All-day Sunday Service" campaign event at Three Oaks station.

Tue 1 Jul [Saltburn Line User Group](#) meet at the Conservative Club, Saltburn from 19:15.

Thu 3 Jul DfT Northern/TPE [Consultation Event](#) at County Hall, Preston from 10.30am

Sat 5 Jul Conference: 'Local Transport - opportunities & challenges' at Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke

Sat 5 Jul Railfuture [Severnside](#)/Wessex joint meeting at Bridge House, Trowbridge from 14:00.

Mon 7 Jul [Railfuture Surrey](#) meet in Methodist Church hall, Redhill, from 18:45. Representative from Govia will present their plans for the new Thameslink, Southern & Gt Northern franchise.

Tue 8 Jul [Passenger Focus](#) Wales workshop, Plas Derwen Hotel, Abergavenny from 11am.

Wed 9 Jul Railfuture London & SE [Eastern Division](#) meeting at 18:30.

Wed 9 Jul DfT Northern/TPE [Consultation Event](#) at City of York Council offices from 10.30am

9 & 10 Jul [RailNewcastle](#) networking event at Newcastle University.

Fri 11 Jul Landor conference entitled [The Connected North](#) at the University of Huddersfield

Sat 12 Jul [SARPA](#) meet at Tywyn Wharf, Talylyn Rlwy, from 11:45.

Sat 12 Jul Join [TWCRP](#) members in Melksham's carnival parade – a fun day for all!

Sat 12 Jul Railfuture stall at Uckfield Festival's Big Day

Sat 14 Jul [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Wed 16 Jul [FoBL](#) AGM at the Sloop, Barton-on-Humber from 18:00 for 20:00 meeting start.

Thu 17 Jul [Passenger Focus](#) South West workshop, Queen's Court Hotel, Exeter, from 11am

Thu 17 Jul Railfuture London & SE, [Sussex & Coastway Division](#) meeting in Brighton from 18:00.

Sat 19 Jul [DRS Gresty Bridge](#) depot charity open day (Crewe). £5/adult; under 16s free.

Sat 26 Jul Railfuture London & SE, [Herts & Beds](#) meeting at St Albans from 10:30.

Tue 5 Aug [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Tue 5 Aug [SARPA](#) meet at The Sportsman, Newtown from 18:45.

Mon 11 Aug [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Sat 16 Aug Railfuture London & SE [Kent Division](#) meeting from 14:00.

Thu 4 Sep Railfuture London & SE, [Sussex & Coastway Division](#) meeting.

Wed 10 Sep Railfuture London & SE [Eastern Division](#) meeting at 18:30.

Tue 16 Sep [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Wed 17 Sep [FoBL](#) will be at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes for 19:00 meeting start.

Wed 17 Sep [Railfuture North East](#) meet at Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle from 19:00. Talk about French light rail systems in the 21st century.

Mon 22 Sep [European Car-Free Day](#). A chance to promote the alternatives!

Thu 2 Oct [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards ceremony in Scarborough.

Sat 4 Oct [TravelWatch SouthWest](#) general meeting, College of Arts & Tech, Taunton from 10:30.

Sat 11 Oct [ESTA](#) Autumn meeting in the URC Hall, Leiston.

Sat 18 Oct [TransWilts Link](#) get-together the Laverton in Westbury from about 10:00. Details tba.

Tue 28 Oct [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Sat 1 Nov [Railfuture autumn conference](#) and RUG Awards, Univ of Westminster, London

Wed 5 Nov [ACoRP](#) Station Adoption seminar, ScotRail offices, Waterloo Street, Glasgow

Tue 11 Nov [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the North of England, held in York

Tue 18 Nov [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the South of England, held in London.

Wed 19 Nov [FoBL](#) will be at the Sloop Inn, Barton-u-Humber; 18:00 for 20:00 meeting start.

Tue 9 Dec [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.

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 all the way from Wool in Dorset by

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