

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").

New rail user group for Sudbury?

Railfuture member Graham Larkbey and others are aiming to establish a User Group for Chiltern's two London suburban 'Cinderella stations': Sudbury & Harrow Road and Sudbury Hill Harrow.

Graham says "Sudbury & Harrow Road has the worst service in London, with just four trains a day to London (Mon-Fri morning peak) and four back again in the evening. Sudbury Hill Harrow at least got its all-day service back in December 2004 after sustained pressure from London TravelWatch, but it has no trains after mid-evening. Both stations are closed all weekend."

Chiltern's focus is very much on their mid/long-distance market, but campaigners argue that it should be possible to offer a decent basic service to all the inner stations within existing line capacity without compromising longer-distance services. Anyone interested in joining the campaign or being kept informed, please email graham.larkbey@gmail.com.

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

St Andrews Rail Link (STARLINK) – the best coffee in town

The group's programme of fund-raising coffee mornings for 2015 begins on Sat 28 Feb at the Supper Room, St Andrews Town Hall, Queen's Gardens, St Andrews from 10:00 to 11:30. The £1 entry fee includes tea/coffee and biscuits. We're assured it will be the best coffee served in St Andrews that day ... also home-baking, raffle, books and bric-a-brac stalls, plus opportunity to buy unique Starlink fridge magnets and key-rings. After paying for the hire of the venue, all money goes to campaigning for the restoration of a St Andrews railway.

Beattock Station Action Group – ministerial visit boosts campaign

The Campaign to re-open Beattock Station, which was closed in 1972, was boosted in December 2014 by a visit from the Scottish Transport Minister, accompanied by representatives from SWestrans and Transport Scotland, to hear from the Action Group why they believe re-opening the station is essential for the local community and the surrounding area.

Martin Brown, Group Chair, said "Moffat and Beattock are the hub of activity for travel, tourism and economic activity in south west Scotland. The only thing we don't have is a train that stops here. Re-opening Beattock Station would greatly enhance rural regeneration, tourism, commerce and accessibility to the UK's rail network. We presented our business case to the Minister and outlined what we've done so far. He was very keen to hear why this means so much to the community and was interested in exploring four potential routes, including Liverpool to Glasgow or Liverpool to Edinburgh".

Earlier, the Group had met senior management from First Transpennine Express as part of its campaign strategy. This was an extremely positive meeting, resulting in a number of constructive ideas to help the campaign. The Lead Officer for SWestrans, the region's transport partnership, said "The re-opening of Beattock Station remains an aspiration within the Regional Transport Strategy for the county. SWestrans and Dumfries and Galloway Council have included Beattock Station as one of the potential projects for bid development for grant funding under the Scottish Stations Fund".

Lakes Line Rail Users' Group – new timetables fail to show the complete service

New timetables leaflets were published in December. LLRUG is pleased that map on the front of the leaflet for TransPennine's Scottish services now shows their branch line from Oxenholme to Windermere correctly. However, the leaflet for the branch line sadly still only uses footnotes to show the destinations of services that run on beyond Oxenholme (with no footnotes at all for services that originate from beyond Oxenholme) – the group would prefer to see the whole journey set out, with times of arrival at (and departure from) the remote stations.

The Dept. for Transport's delay in issuing Invitations to Tender for the replacement Northern and TransPennine franchises is seen as a hopeful sign that their cry for Lakes Line services to remain part of TransPennine has been heeded. From the same page in their newsletter comes this sentence which I thought conjured up an appropriate image: "It appears that the outcry against the prospect of Pacer trains *wobbling their way into the next decade* has made the Government rethink."

There were hopes of persuading Virgin Trains to introduce reduced-rate parking at Oxenholme for those arriving late in the day but now that the validity of car park tickets has been extended to 24h, a lower rate for later parking is thought less likely.

LLRUG members attended a number of meetings in the North West, and it's reported that their secretary (and Railfuture stalwart) Malcolm Conway has been elected as Director of TravelWatch NorthWest. The group intends to contribute to the cost of extra signage from Windermere Station to the nearby Tourist Information Centre, which is to be taken over by a local tour operator. In November, the group's stall at the Ambleside Lights Switch On resulted in sales of £65 plus one new member.

Ribble Valley Rail – more capacity and faster journey times needed

The Ribble Valley line was very busy with Christmas shoppers during December and RVR was pleased that Northern had strengthened weekend trains to 3-car units providing more capacity. The group says that the need for new rolling stock, replacement of the Class 142 units and greater capacity for the line's constantly growing passenger numbers are paramount in the new Northern franchise. They also say that a faster journey time from Clitheroe to Manchester must be a priority; improved signalling and infrastructure on the line would enable the speed limit of 45mph to be raised.

Photographs show the progress of refurbishment work at Blackburn station, but RVR points out that the impressive repaint job on the canopy has not addressed the underlying problems of rotting beams and leaking gutters.

From India in the 1940s comes a novel solution to ticketless travel which might improve fare collection on Ribble Valley services. Railway officials would halt a train using detonators and, once the passengers had got over the shock of possibly being ambushed by bandits, invite all on board to produce their tickets. The officials would then round up those who could not produce a ticket and subject them to instant justice via a makeshift lineside magistrate's court!

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group – operator persuaded to reinstate local station calls

As a result of passenger growth, Arriva Trains Wales will be re-introducing a loco-hauled train on the 07.38 service from Chester to Manchester. However, NCRUG were dismayed when they discovered that, the train might not be calling at their local stations on its mid-morning return run. Fortunately, ATW reinstated the stops following their objections.

The group was delighted when Pauline Jenkinson, one of the Helsby Station volunteers, won first prize in the Outstanding Volunteer category in ACoRP's 2014 Community Rail Awards. Pauline has since met up with the runner-up in the competition, who comes from Scotland and who looked in at Helsby en route to Birkenhead. In October, volunteers from Runcorn East (including NCRUG members) were delighted to be told they had won an award for their WW1 Commemorative Garden at a Royal Horticultural Society awards evening in Southport.

The local Council has once again supplied winter bedding plants for Helsby and Frodsham Stations - 1000 pansies have been planted at Frodsham while planting is still in progress at Helsby. Elsewhere, we read that NCRUG's 25th anniversary falls in March 2015.

Although funding for re-instatement of the Halton Curve was included in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, NCRUG is taking nothing for granted and will keep up the pressure in the coming year. A new rail-served waste incinerator in the area is potentially another source for traffic over the curve.

Marches Rail Users' Alliance – new group seeks big changes to the Hereford-Shrewsbury Line

WITH over 3.5 million journeys now taken on the rail link between Hereford and Shrewsbury, a users group is long overdue. Now, such a group has arrived in the guise of the Marches Rail Users' Alliance (MRUA).

MRUA has wasted little time in signalling its intentions. Ahead of a review of Arriva Trains Wales as the operating franchise, MRUA has identified four key issues with the line that it is "keen to discuss" with Arriva, the Department for Transport and the Welsh Assembly.

They are:

1. Provision of an hourly stopping train between Hereford and Shrewsbury
2. Additional capacity to meet the heavier passenger flows.
3. Better connections at Hereford (for the Worcester line), Shrewsbury (for Wolverhampton and Birmingham) and Newport (for London and the West).
4. Integration for onward travel (scope for improvement to pedestrian approaches at Hereford and Ludlow, car parking at Leominster and bus service information generally).

MRUA represents an alliance of the rail user groups along the high capacity rail link between Hereford and Shrewsbury, which has a population of 200,000 living within easy distance of six stations. Current rail use is high with over 3.5 million trips made into or out of Hereford, Leominster, Ludlow, Craven Arms, Church Stretton and Shrewsbury and passenger numbers have increased because of early improvements by Arriva Trains Wales. But MRUA says the service provided has not kept up with this growth.

– from a story in the Hereford Times

Don Valley Railway – steady progress in campaign to reinstate passenger services

In their Annual Report for 2014, the DVR says that the past twelve months have seen some significant moves forward for the project as we strive to get the underused freight line from Sheffield to Stocksbridge reconnected to the passenger network.

"Developments such as the re-letting of the Northern Rail franchise have provided an opportunity to contribute our views into the consultation as well as having dialogue with the shortlisted bidders. We have also had dialogue with Parry People Movers who developed the innovative flywheel technology vehicles used on the London Midland's Stourbridge Junction-Stourbridge Town service.

"We have continued dialogue and partnerships with organisations including Sheffield City Council, Stocksbridge Town Council and the Solar Futures Project at Sheffield University. We are also working to develop a Business Plan to demonstrate the viability of our proposals."

The Report also mentions that a DVR representative was one of the key-note speakers at the Railfuture National Annual Conference held in Sheffield on 10th May: "The Railfuture Conference provided an opportunity to present our ideas in front of some high profile national figures in the rail industry."

The focus of the coming year will be on fundraising to get the money in place for a formal study. This will ascertain if a service is viable and consider what type of rail vehicle is used; it will also look at the stopping pattern of the service and how the service on the Don Valley Line may extend onto the wider rail network or the Supertram network.

Friends of the Brigg and Lincoln Lines – *footbridges fit for purpose!*

In a brief update, we're told that brand new footbridges are to be built at Brigg and Gainsborough Central stations this summer instead of refurbishment of the very old and dilapidated footbridges, as previously planned. This very good news is the result of persistent campaigning by FoBLL and others.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group – *defending the Liverpool-Norwich service*

PENRUG is putting together its comments on Network Rail's Draft Anglia Route Study. They welcome NR's ambitious plans to grow freight capacity but are concerned that some of the infrastructure upgrades needed for freight on the Birmingham-Ely corridor have not been addressed. On inter-regional passenger services, the group particularly welcomes the study's assertion that "the service specification would normally maintain a direct service where one exists" and hope this implies the continuation of through trains between Liverpool and Norwich. There's also general support for NR's plans for growing the local passenger network; PENRUG says many routes which now have an hourly service justify a half-hourly frequency.

The consultation on the next Anglia franchise gives the group another opportunity to list reasons why the direct Liverpool-Norwich service should be retained. Other suggestions they're making in the consultation include: converting first class seating to standard class on rural services to help solve overcrowding, stricter targets for the maintenance of station facilities, and steps to improve train reliability.

Members regularly write in about their journey experiences. One report raises concerns about the lack of ticket checks on trains. Another rail user was unable to get out at his destination due to a faulty carriage door. In a third report, we read that a simple journey turned into a circuitous tour of East Anglia due to a suicide on the line; trying to make the best of a bad situation, a parent on the final train was overheard promising to get the map out when they got home to show her little girl just where they had been!

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group – *longer waits ... but new shelters on the way*

Recent train cancellations attributed to lack of driver availability have been queried by the group - the lack of forewarning means that passengers can be forced to wait outside in winter weather. Great Northern have offered to come and talk about the problem at the next local Community Rail Partnership meeting on 29 January.

The Rail User Group has been pressing the train operator for improved waiting areas at Foxton and Meldreth Stations. At the group's December meeting, they were pleased to hear that Great Northern plans to bring brand new covered waiting areas to Meldreth and Foxton Cambridge-bound platforms.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association – *new online facility for recording journey experience*

ESTA has just launched its Bus & Train Feedback facility, which anyone can access via the group's [website](#) (with paper alternative for those without internet access). In the survey, they invite comments or observations about a specific local train or bus journey. The group will use the information to help check whether the current bus and train services meet the requirements of passengers, and any issues arising will be discussed at the committee's regular meetings with operators.

In October 2014, ESTA's Secretary wrote to the Dept. for Transport setting out nine expectations which their members have from the new rail franchise, due to start in October 2016. Attention has

now turned to commenting on Network Rail's draft Anglia Route Study. The group plans to send summaries of their submissions to the local candidates in the May 7th General Election.

There was a full house at the Leiston URC Hall on October 11th for ESTA's first ever public meeting in the town. The guest speaker from EDF Energy gave an update on the project to extend the branch line, which runs to the nearby nuclear energy site, in readiness for construction of the Sizewell C plant.

ESTA has suggested to the train operator that certain trains could usefully make additional stops at Westerfield station. They also say that, in the medium to long term, serious consideration must be given to stopping all trains at Westerfield, particularly in view of the large-scale housing development planned for the area close to the station.

It's reported that 25 members enjoyed ESTA's annual Christmas Lunch on December 13th. The committee is busy planning meetings and events for 2015, the main item on the agenda being ESTA's 50th anniversary celebrations in November. Meanwhile, fund-raising is under way for memorial seats at two stations on the line in honour of two original members of the group, both now deceased. On the last page of ESTA's newsletter is a list of ten things that members might like to do to assist the committee – only a couple of them involve writing a cheque!

Association of Public Transport Users (Herts) – *no magic wand to solve performance problems*

After sampling a journey on one of the new Class 387 units, APTU's chairman was favourably impressed but found the seats a little hard: "the 387s will be with us until the Class 700s from Siemens start to be introduced ... so let's enjoy them while we can."

Govia Thameslink Railway has apologised for its poor performance in the weeks leading up to Christmas, although some of the causes are beyond the Company's control. APTU cannot see any magic wand that will lead to a significant improvement, but there are some initiatives in hand that could make a difference, for example: the completion of driver training programmes and the roll-out of the more reliable Class 387 units. The group adds that Network Rail's performance will also need to improve.

Subsequent news: Two local MPs had a meeting with GTR and Network Rail on 6 Jan about the poor standard of service on the Thameslink route and the level of compensation that travellers are entitled to receive. They asked the companies to provide weekly performance reports, and they've scheduled a further meeting to monitor progress.

Abbey Flyer Users' Group (ABFLY) – *mobilising public support for the line after a troublesome year*

The group says that 2014 was not a good year for the Abbey Line (Watford Junction to St Albans), the branch having experienced a 2-week blockade in August, partial 'bustitution' every weekend between Sept and Nov, topped off by complete closure from 29 Nov to 29 Dec, primarily for remodelling at Watford Junction. One very positive outcome of the Watford Junction works is the mechanisation of the junction between the Abbey Line and the West Coast Main Line, which used to be a hand-operated. ABFLY lost no time in lobbying for through services to be introduced, initially perhaps at peak times only, as part of the West Midlands Direct Award franchise from April 2016.

Just before Christmas a notice came out inviting responses to the Direct Award consultation. The original, somewhat unreasonable deadline of 9 Jan was extended by 1 week, thanks to pressure from the Community Rail Partnership (CRP). Using the power of social media and a template response letter, ABFLY was able to mobilise an impressive number of individual responses from users and supporters: 104 to date. Improvements called for include: refurbishment of the 25-year old Class 321 units, extension of opening hours to midnight, improved fare collection and implementation of Oyster readers. The group also thought it was important to maintain financial support for the CRP.

The group's main aspiration to improve service frequency would require the building of a passing loop (unlikely before 2019): "The politics of this is complicated, especially given the history of previous attempts to build a business case and the death in 2013 of the Light Rail scheme."

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group – a need for evidence about staffing levels

Following the publication of Transport for London's Ticket Office closure programme, CDTUG resolved to gather some independent statistics on the customer usage of staff time so that the group can form an opinion about future staffing levels.

Meanwhile, the group is concerned that the planning application for the Waitrose Click and Collect facility at Chalfont & Latimer station shows that it would result in the loss of 4 parking spaces. They note that an application by Tesco Stores for a Click and Collect facility at Chesham station has now been abandoned.

Other concerns for the group include the recent deterioration in services, mostly involving signal failures. Also, during times of service interruptions, all trains from London were terminating at Amersham with nothing running to Chesham - passengers were mostly left to their own devices to get back to Chesham!

Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group – need for a "Plan B" as Plan A slips again

The timetable change in December resulted in some very welcome additional peak-hour trains on the line. However, BGORUG would still like to see a 10-min frequency during the peak hours (when there is chronic overcrowding), more trains after 22:00h and an earlier start to services on Sundays.

Transport for London's solution to overcrowding on the 2-car diesel units is the eventual introduction of 4-car electric units. However, the date for completion of electrification has slipped to mid 2018 and BGORUG thinks there should be a "Plan B" to alleviate the appalling conditions that passengers are now suffering. During the recent bus drivers' strike, the group took steps to warn bus users not to transfer to the Barking-Gospel Oak train service at busy times because they simply wouldn't be able to get on.

There are times when service disruption on the line is caused by the failure of the relatively new Driver-Only-Operation equipment, and regular users are asked to report incidences to BGORUG so that the group can keep an eye on the situation.

Cambridge Heath and London Fields User Group – much to be done prior to takeover

CHLFUG's Sunday train service should improve following the takeover of Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations by London Overground from 31 May; full integration with the Overground will not be complete until November 2016. Meanwhile there is much to be done to smarten up the stations, upgrade the information systems and bring the existing trains up to standard.

The group's list of improvements needed has been slightly amended based on input from passengers, and CHLFUG will be asking Transport for London to give their suggestions careful consideration before the takeover date. Copies are also being sent to local politicians who have shown an interest in train services.

The group suggests that the two stations are designated as "art stations" to reflect the large artistic community in the area, and artists should be encouraged to use the stations to display their work. They also want to see the reinstatement of six peak-hour trains at Cambridge Heath (passenger numbers fell noticeably when these services were cut in Dec 2011). The group continues to argue that official passenger-use figures underestimate usage of the two stations by a very large margin.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group – disruptions continue ... and worse to come!

As trackwork continues at Reading, the group has warned its members to expect more disruption to services from now to Easter and beyond: “things will get worse before they can get better.”

The group had a constructive meeting with First Great Western’s Performance Manager about the service disruptions. They complained that terminating trains short at Newbury was very frustrating for passengers, and argued that there should be a plan for holding connections at Newbury when the need arises. They also raised the problem with the CIS screens and information being particularly poor, especially at times of disruption when, paradoxically, it is most needed.

Windsor Lines Passengers’ Association – promised improvements unlikely to be enough

Whilst the WLPA applauds the extra capacity promised in Network Rail’s Wessex Route Study, they feel that a number of points have not been addressed. Firstly, trains are often full before they arrive at stations in the central section of the Windsor lines, and peak-hour stopping patterns should be re-examined to make better use of the available capacity. Secondly, the slowness of the Reading and Aldershot services is not acceptable; history shows that much shorter timings are possible. Overall, the group thinks that the capacity analysis in the Study underestimates the problem and, unless even more is done, the innovations proposed up to 2030 will not suffice.

Fares are going up right across the UK rail network, but London is particularly badly affected due to a whopping 35% rise in the cost of an Off-Peak Zones 1-6 Travelcard. In an article highlighting this change, the author notes that there are three Waterloo stations in Europe, and then proceeds to give a comparison of fares for weekday, peak-hour returns to and from each: London Waterloo to Hounslow (21.6km) is £10.80; Waterloo (Merseyside) to Southport (21.1km) is £5.50; and the “real” Waterloo to Zellik via Brussels (20.26km) is €9.40 ie about £7.45. ... “no further comment is needed!”

The whole issue of fares is one topic the WLPA will be raising at their next meeting with South West Trains. Other items are: overcrowding on certain trains, problems with collecting tickets in advance and a start date for the long-promised improvements at Whitton station.

TransWilt Rail Partnership – can the meteoric rise in passengers be maintained?

The Partnership’s coordinator, Graham Ellis, sends a big “Thank You” to all those who have helped make the new service between Swindon and Westbury via Melksham a great success. Many of the new passengers attracted to the service have also expressed thanks to the Partnership team.

Graham says that growth in 2014 has been meteoric and there's no reason why it cannot continue in 2015, albeit at a lesser rate. However, the line is going to face various challenges:

- Electrification engineering works for on the main line will result in diversions via the TransWilts resulting in significant timetable amendments in the summer.
- Freight diversions via the TransWilts are suggested in Network Rail’s Western Route Study, and this may also impact adversely on the passenger service.
- In the more immediate future, train capacity issues will need to be resolved before there are routinely too many passengers for a Class 153 unit to carry.

The group is now affiliated to ACoRP, and they’re looking to become a Community Interest Company.

Bexhill Rail Action Group – a year of opportunities, but more work for the committee

In his review of 2014, BRAG’s Chairman says it’s been a year of exciting opportunities for rail, but there has been an ever-increasing workload for the committee. The most visible new opportunity is the project to upgrade the Marshlink Line, but there are also opportunities to campaign for faster

services to London. Expansion at Gatwick Airport is constantly in the news, and BRAG will advocate strongly for the airport management to fund a Network Rail feasibility study into building the Willingdon Chord (bypassing Eastbourne) if the second runway is recommended.

Southern has launched a consultation for its planned timetable recast in December 2015, and BRAG will be responding formally to the consultation by the cut-off date at the end of January. They feel that the proposals fail to address the issue of overcrowding on trains to Hastings, while the plan for an 8th off-peak train each hour to Brighton shows a somewhat skewed sense of priorities.

The committee has also been looking at Network Rail's draft Route Study for Sussex: "Whilst welcoming capital expenditure on rail infrastructure, our opinion is that the study focuses excessively on the provision of future rail capacity into and out of London, eclipsing improvements and interventions that should be considered elsewhere in the area, including East Sussex." Developments along the East and West Coastway routes hardly merit a mention in the draft.

With the reopening of the café at Bexhill station, it's reported that the station concourse is now coming alive again, with rail travellers and local residents enjoying the facilities on offer.

South Hants Rail Users' Group – suggestions following publication of Wessex Route Study

The group is currently preparing its response to Network Rail's draft Wessex Route Study. Their current thoughts include the following points:

- Much-needed improvements to E-W connectivity across the Solent region seem to have been overlooked.
- One additional CrossCountry set would allow the two-hourly Southampton-Newcastle service to be increased to hourly (alternate trains already run as far south as Reading).
- Long-distance timetable development needs to take better account of demographic changes.
- Potential for better links to Southampton Airport Parkway, especially from Heathrow and from Brighton.
- Concern that the proposal for double-deck stock would increase dwell times at stations.
- More platform capacity at Clapham Junction to allow main-line trains to call at peak times.
- Remodelling of Southampton station to allow a metro-style service for the City.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE LONDON & SE – Rail Rally on the Uckfield Line

On the last day of the consultation period for the Network Rail Sussex Route Study, Railfuture members from the London & SE Branch joined with local politicians and rail campaigners in a Rail Rally at Crowborough station to press for better services and more investment for the Uckfield line.

Commuters on the line started the year with continued poor service and chaos at London Bridge, a poor reward for the New Year price hike. With services continuing to fall below standard, campaigners joined forces for a Rail Rally, to continue the pressure on Network Rail and Southern Rail for better services across the Uckfield line. Those present at the Rail Rally included prospective parliamentary candidates, local councillors, and representatives from the Wealden Line Campaign and the Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Association.

Railfuture support proposals in the Sussex Route Study for the Brighton Main Line, but consider that more investment is also required in the Uckfield line so that it can provide a fast, reliable service for local residents and, by extension to Lewes, improve connectivity with the Sussex coast which will increase the resilience of the network and deliver economic and social benefits.

RAILFUTURE PASSENGER GROUP

The Passenger Group had responded to the Office of Rail Regulation consultation on the way tickets are sold, and it was noted that the ORR do not want people to be excluded from the railway because they are unable to buy tickets on line. It was also noted that train operators are anxious to be freed from their obligation to provide staffed ticket offices at stations due to their high running costs!

The Group's work on compiling standards for station design and the criteria for seat reservations is ongoing, and a meeting with Passenger Focus about the interior design of the Class 700 Thameslink units is planned. Also the Disruption Survey continues (you can submit your experiences [here](#)) and the Managing Director of Govia Thameslink Railway is now working with Railfuture on this project.

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

NEW GUIDANCE ON PROTECTING INTERESTS OF DISABLED PASSENGERS

The Office of Rail Regulation has issued new guidance for train operators to help ensure they meet disabled people's protection policy (DPPP) requirements.

Train operators are required to have an approved DPPP as part of their licence to operate. DPPPs must provide details of how train companies will protect the interests of disabled users of their trains and stations such as explaining how disabled people will be assisted when train service disruptions occur with little or no notice.

Operators must agree DPPPs with ORR by 23 January 2015, with plans taking effect by 31 March 2015. To read the letter in full, click [here](#).

NEW PLAN TO SECURE RAIL SERVICES FOR THE NORTH – from a DfT press release

Existing rail services will be maintained and more seats will be offered in the north of England as part of a Government plan to secure rolling stock. The plan means that existing rail services will be maintained from May 2015 (this follows a decision by rolling stock leasing company Porterbrook to move trains running on the TransPennine Express route to the Chiltern franchise). In addition, the Dept. for Transport has agreed a plan with the operators of the Northern and TransPennine Express routes to offer more carriages and seats, as summarised below:

More carriages between Manchester and Blackpool. Capacity on selected services between Blackpool North and Manchester Airport / Manchester Oxford Road will be increased.

Additional capacity on Cumbrian Coast services. Longer trains will provide extra capacity to Carlisle, Maryport, Workington, Whitehaven, Sellafield and Barrow-in-Furness, with potential to create additional jobs. There will also be an enhanced early-morning service from Carlisle to Sellafield, arriving in time for the morning shift at the power station.

Electric trains on Manchester Victoria to Liverpool and Liverpool to Preston routes. Refreshed electric trains will be rolled out on busy commuter routes between Liverpool and Manchester Victoria from May at a faster rate than previously planned, and on the Liverpool to Preston route in the autumn. This will free up existing diesel trains to create additional capacity elsewhere on the north's network.

Revised services for South Cumbria and Windermere and on the South TransPennine route.

All services between **Manchester, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Yorkshire Coast, Humberside and the Northeast** will be operated with a minimum of 3 carriages or 181 seats, whereas at present some services on the route are operated by 2 carriage trains with 116 seats.

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST CONFERENCE IN LANCASTER

The next conference of TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) to be held on Thursday 12th February 2015 in the Lecture Theatre, The Storey, Meeting House Lane, Lancaster starting at 10.30. Guest speakers include: Tony Moreton from Lancashire County Council, Kathryn O'Brien, the Customer Service Director for First TransPennine Express and Hugh Chaplain from Rail North. In the "Just a Minute" session, there will be an opportunity for delegates to make a short statement on any public transport issue of concern.

You are asked to register via admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk. Agendas will be e-mailed or posted to those who have intimated they will attend 7 days in advance of the conference.

TRAVELWATCH SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE IN TAUNTON

The next TravelWatch SouthWest conference is on Sat 7 March 2015 at the Somerset College of Art & Technology in Wellington Road, Taunton TA1 5AX from 11:00. Guest speakers include: Transport Minister Claire Perry MP, Stephen Joseph from the Campaign for Better Transport and managers from CrossCountry and South West Trains. Also on the agenda is the popular "Just a Minute" session. Refreshments are served, and free transport will be provided from across the region. Details and registration from secretary@travelwatchsouthwest.org.

UK AIR-RAIL CONFERENCE IN LONDON – *discount for Railfuture members and affiliates*

After a successful inaugural event, the UK Air-Rail Update returns to London for 2015 to showcase and discuss all the latest developments in air-rail policy in the UK, with representatives from across industry and government.

In partnership with the International Air Rail Organisation, the UK Air-Rail event will discuss all the latest developments in air-rail policy in the UK, covering everything from HS2, Thameslink and Crossrail connectivity, to integrated ticketing systems and an overview of air-rail projects across the world. Take a look at the [UK Air-Rail Update 2015 programme](#). Railfuture members receive a **15% discount** when booking the Air Rail event by quoting **253RFM**.

Join Crossrail, Govia, Network Rail, HS2, and the AOA to discuss all the latest developments in air-rail policy in the UK, with representatives from across industry and government. Take a look at the confirmed speakers [here](#). Get key insights into how air-rail links are being delivered in the UK and across the world, find out more about how air-rail links are likely to feature in the Airport Commission's final report and learn from international experiences of air-rail link projects

You can register: [online](#), by [email](#) or by calling 0207 067 1597. Don't forget to quote 253RFM to receive your 15% discount. Follow [@WFrail](#) to stay updated on the latest programme news and speaker updates.

FUTURE RAIL SERVICES IN EAST ANGLIA – *DfT consultation and Innovation Roadshow*

The contract to run rail services in East Anglia is due to end in October 2016. The Dept. for Transport is preparing to launch a competition to find an operator to run services from that date. In preparation the DfT is holding a series of public events on the future of rail services in East Anglia. Those who attend will hear from the DfT, Network Rail and Passenger Focus, and there is also the opportunity for people to ask questions and share their views.

There is also a public consultation which runs until 16 March 2015 and this will help to decide what the DfT will ask to be delivered by the new contract.

In addition there will be a series of workshops to explore innovative and inspiring ideas to help shape the new franchise. These will be hosted by Transport Systems Catapult, an organisation that

promotes future innovation in transport, and supported by Passenger Focus. There will be four lunchtime workshops held across the region during the last week in February.

For further details contact Gill.butcher@ts.catapult.org.uk or telephone Gill on 07506 137680. Details of how to register will also be included shortly on their website. – *Passenger Focus bulletin*

UPDATED PLANS FOR THE HOPE VALLEY RAIL LINE – *have your say*

Members of the public are invited to comment on plans to construct two new sections of railway track near Dore & Totley station and between Bamford and Hathersage. Network Rail intends to deliver this package of work to allow more trains to run on the Hope Valley railway line between Sheffield and Manchester. The work is a key part of over £1 billion of investment to deliver faster, more frequent services across the north of England.

Consultations were held on the original plans in November 2013. These proposals included the construction of a new 1km passing loop near Grindleford station as well as improvements around Dore & Totley station. Since then, the project has developed a new option to the East of Bamford station as a replacement for the previous proposal at Grindleford

Feedback can be submitted as part of the public consultation until 28 February 2015. More information can be found at www.networkrail.co.uk/hopevalley - *Network Rail news release*

CAMPAIGN FOR NEW ELLAND RAILWAY STATION GETS MAJOR BOOST

A 30-year campaign for a new £10 million railway station in Elland took a major step forward after transport bosses carried out a detailed study into proposals for new stations across West and North Yorkshire. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority's transport committee looked at plans for more than 50 new or expanded stations but have decided to progress with just four. Two of those are in West Yorkshire, one is Elland and the other East Leeds Parkway.

The Halifax & District Rail Action Group (HADRAG) is in its 30th year of campaigning for an Elland station and Calderdale Council has already given £50,000 towards a feasibility study. More than 2,000 people also signed a petition organised by action group Give Elland a Railway Station (GEARS). Elland Station closed in 1962 and Stephen Waring, chairman of HADRAG, said Elland's link should have been restored in 2000 when Brighouse Station was opened.

He added: "There is really no sensible reason why we should have to wait years and years for a station at Elland. We know it is feasible for trains on the existing Bradford-Huddersfield and Manchester-Brighouse-Leeds routes to stop at an Elland station and it is up to Network Rail and the train operating franchisee to make sure future timetables are planned to enable that to happen. It is perfectly reasonable to demand the new station significantly before the end of the decade."

- Huddersfield Daily Examiner

CALLS FOR ABERYSTWYTH-CARMARTHEN LINE TO REOPEN

A public meeting in Aberystwyth has heard a proposal to reopen a line from the town which lost its passenger trains almost 50 years ago.

The meeting was arranged by the campaigning group Traws Link Cymru, which believes a 90 minute service could be provided. Until closure trains took slightly more than two hours to complete the 90km journey. The group envisages direct services between Aberystwyth and Cardiff via Lampeter and Carmarthen. The first step is to obtain funding for a feasibility study, although it is thought that full reinstatement could cost £650 million. A small proportion of the line has been built on, and new alignments would be needed in places.

Traws Link Cymru is pushing for two railways to be reinstated in West Wales. The other would reconnect the Cambrian Coast line with the Holyhead route at Bangor. –*Railnews.co.uk*

PLANS FOR TRAM LINES AND LIGHT RAIL IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

The West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority is considering reviving the long-stalled plans for a second Midland Metro line to connect the Merry Hill Centre with Wednesbury along the old Stourbridge freight line. The move follows revived interest in a line linking Wolverhampton railway station with New Cross Hospital. Options include 'very light rail', similar to the £20 million plan for 'tram trains' to link Dudley Port station, Tipton, to the site of Dudley's former station at the bottom of Castle Hill, close to Dudley Zoo, the Black Country Living Museum and Dudley Canal Trust.

A report to council leaders says the transport authority is re-visiting plans with 'the first stated priority being the Walsall to Stourbridge corridor to provide high-quality access to Merry Hill and Brierley Hill'. The report says that legal powers remain in place to allow the line to be built, 'although to date it has not proved possible to secure funding'. It adds: "In recognition of the difficulties in securing funding, the potential for very light rail using innovative methods of track construction and motive power are being investigated, in tandem with proposals for a Light Rail Innovation Centre alongside the route."

It follows a request from Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton councils who are keen to see a rapid transit network linking town centres for employment, education and leisure. If given the go-ahead, the review is likely to determine which routes and types of vehicle can offer the best options in terms of benefit and value for money. – *Wolverhampton Express & Star*

WHO OWNS TRAINLINE?

Investment firm KKR announced its acquisition of online ticket retailer Trainline from Exponent Private Equity on January 22. Financial details are not being disclosed.

Trainline is licensed to sell rail tickets on behalf of all UK Train Operating Companies, Deutsche Bahn and Trenitalia. KKR said Trainline had the most downloaded travel app in the UK, with its website ranking fifth by gross transaction value in the country's e-commerce sector. The company has 4.7 million active customers, with 20.8 million visits/month on consumers and business platforms.

'Our vision is to transform Trainline into a leading international e-commerce platform and an indispensable partner of the smartphone-enabled digital mobility landscape', said Trainline Chairman Doug McCallum. 'We are excited to be able to accelerate this journey with an experienced and global investment partner like KKR.' – *Railway Gazette*

THE NEWS GOT IT WRONG... *self service ticket machines won't tell you cheapest price.*

News reports in December told us that, from March, train ticket machines will tell you the cheapest fare. NOT TRUE...

- 1) They just have to warn you they may not be cheapest.
- 2) They ignore split ticketing, which on some routes halves costs. Use our [Tickety Split tool](#) to check.

– *moneysavingexpert.com*

MORE ABOUT THOSE GOLD CARD CHANGES

In the December edition of Rail User Express, I wrote about changes to the National Rail Gold Card from 2 Jan 2015, one of which was: "Gold Card First Class weekend supplements abolished".

Barry Doe got in touch to point out that the abolished Gold Card supplement (£5) was never weekend only but daily. He also said that the really big news is the greatly expanded area.

AND FINALLY: EVERY TIDDLE COUNTS

Spending a penny adds up! Toilet charges at Manchester Piccadilly rake in more than £400,000 in one year. – *item in STORM's weekly bulletin*

EVENTS

Events for 2015, lifted from newsletters and emails received in recent weeks, are listed below.
Further events for the year are shown in the [Events listing on Railfuture's website](#)

Coloured blobs differentiate between types of events...

- National & regional rail events.
- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are welcome to attend).
- Local Rail User Group events.

- 30 January 2015. Friday. Annual General Meeting of the TransWilts Rail Partnership. www.twcrp.org.uk
- 2 February 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
- 4 February 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
- 9 February 2015. Monday. Friends of the Lymington to Brockenhurst Line will hold their Annual General Meeting at the Community Centre, Cannon Street, Lymington from 19:30, followed by a talk about the Railways of the Isle of Man. <http://www.lymington-brockenhurstcrp.co.uk/friends.asp>
- 9 February 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill from 19:00. www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk
- 12 February 2015. Thursday. TravelWatch NorthWest conference in The Storey lecture theatre, Meeting House Lane, Lancaster LA1 1TH from 10:30 to 15:00. Guest speakers from the County Council, First TransPennine Express and Rail North. Details & registration: admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk
- 17 February 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
- 21 February 2015. Saturday. East Suffolk Travellers' Association spring meeting, open to the public and with guest speakers, at the Friends Meeting House, Smallgate, Beccles from 14:00. www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk
- 28 February 2015. Saturday. Starlink (St Andrews Rail Link) will hold a fund-raising coffee morning at St Andrews Town Hall, Queen's Gardens, St Andrews from 10 to 11:30. The best coffee in town! <http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/>
- 2 Mar 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
- 7 March 2015. Saturday. TravelWatch SouthWest meeting at the Somerset College of Art & Technology in Wellington Road, Taunton TA1 5AX from 11:00. Impressive line-up of guest speakers, plus the popular "Just-a-Minute" session. Lunch provided. <http://travelwatchesouthwest.org/>
- 11 March 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting with speaker from Sustrans, at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
- 11 March 2015. Wednesday. Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group's AGM at the Melbourn Hub from 19:30. <http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/>
- 14 March 2015. Saturday. Railfuture North East AGM in Newcastle from 14:00. Guest speaker from ACoRP.
- 16 /17 March 2015. Mon/Tues. ACoRP's Designated Lines Seminar at the Jury's Inn Nottingham <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 21 March 2015. Saturday. Railfuture Wessex Branch AGM in Fareham. wessex@railfuture.org.uk
- 21 March 2015. Saturday. TransWilts Link meeting – details to be advised. www.twcrp.org.uk

- 7 April 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
- 13 April 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill from 19:00. www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk
- 13 April 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk
- 15 April 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting with speaker from RAGES, at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
- 18 April 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line at Victoria Hall, Kirkgate, Settle, from 12 noon.
- 9 May 2015. Saturday. AGM of the Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group in Thetford from 10:30. www.penrug.org.uk
- 11 May 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill from 19:00. www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk
- 11 May 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk
- 13 May 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
- 16 May 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of the Railway Development Society Ltd (Railfuture) in Blackpool. Details [here](#).
- 16 May 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group at the WI Hall in Moreton-in-Marsh from 1030 – *to be confirmed* www.clpg.org.uk
- 16 May 2015. Saturday. Annual General Meeting of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association in St Mary's Church Hall, Woodbridge from 14:00. Guest speaker from Abellio Greater Anglia. www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk
- 19 May 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
- 20 May 2015. Wednesday. ACoRP Community Rail in the City conference. Arrangements still being finalised. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 1 June 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk
- 3 June 2015. Wednesday. ACoRP Station Adoption Seminar in Manchester; further details in due course. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 8 June 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill from 19:00. www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk
- 10 June 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
- 23 June 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
- 20 June 2015. Saturday. Railfuture's Summer Conference in the Town Hall, Newark, from 10:45 with speakers representing train operators and local authorities in the area. Details [here](#).
- 6 July 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk
- 13 July 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meet at the offices of Hastings Direct, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill from 19:00. www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk

- 15 July 2015. Wednesday. LevenMouth Rail Campaign open meeting at Unit 5, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks from 18:30. <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>
- 3 August 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
- 4 August 2015. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30. <http://www.cdtug.org/>
- 1 October 2015. Thursday. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2015 in Torquay. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 10 October 2015. Saturday. East Suffolk Travellers' Association autumn meeting, in the parish church hall, Aldeburgh from 14:00. www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk
- 7 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture's Rail User Conference at The Mercure Hotel, Bristol, just a short walk from Temple Mills station. Details [here](#).
- 10 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar North in Manchester. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 17 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar South at the Dept. for Transport offices, Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 4DR. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>

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

This bulletin has been sent by...

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