



August 2017

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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Pulling the plug on electrification north of Kettering, a key component of the Northern Powerhouse, brought accusations that the DfT favours London and the southeast, and Crossrail2 in particular. But the Central section of East West Rail (EWR) from Bedford to Cambridge, and infrastructure improvements such as Ely North Junction and the additional platform at Stevenage are equally vital, and more immediate concerns. Bi-mode trains have poor acceleration as diesels, but can switch modes at line speed, so electrifying just the stations where they call and their approaches – in particular the termini, where trains may stand for an extended period, and where the diesel exhaust would do most harm - would seem to be a sensible compromise.

Roger Smith

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

Copeland Rail Users' Group

At the July meeting in Millom, Trudy Harrison MP, spoke about the urgent need for improved rail services, particularly on Sundays. Improved signalling and more dual track would increase reliability. Sellafield workers in particular were concerned about the amount of disruption and the lack of replacement buses. Trudy believes that there needs to be a bus and driver on standby, as they are difficult to find at short notice, particularly in rural areas. Delay repay was taking far too long to process. Cllr Wilson was advised that generally when a train is cancelled, if there is another within about an hour then nothing is done; otherwise a replacement should be provided. Train companies have an obligation to get people to their destination (although that could involve a hotel on long journeys). Northern were struggling with a lack of rolling stock, and receive more complaints about the line than anywhere else on their network. Trudy will raise transport needs with the other Cumbrian MPs, and would welcome users' experiences. Some have given up complaining, but were urged to continue until things were put right.

Passengers with mobility difficulties were having difficulty getting on and off trains, particularly the loco hauled ones, and so risked missing stations. The timetable does specify which trains are loco hauled so that you can choose to avoid them. 'Harrington humps' are provided on the lowest platforms and conductors always have a ramp which passengers can request, so anyone who cannot open the door should attract their attention. Some trains could not accommodate larger wheelchairs, particularly folding powered ones, which had also been refused on a replacement coach with a luggage compartment. Users were told to take a taxi, but drivers are reluctant to accept Northern passengers because of the time it takes to be paid. Gates to access platforms (eg Seascale) need to be altered to accommodate wheelchair users. Assisted travel was said to work well with other operators but not with Northern, where staff were often unaware that it had been booked. Trudy would try booking assistance and see what her experience was.

Although, the Harrington hump on the Barrow platform at St Bees accommodates the doors on the current rolling stock, selective door operation will continue until NR sign the platform back into Northern's portfolio of stations. NR had planned make the ramp on the other platform stock appropriate, but Northern decided that this would be ineffective, as stock will go in 2019; meanwhile customers should ask the conductor for help. Work on a new footbridge at Sellafeld Station was due to start on 10 July and last for about three months; a temporary replacement footbridge is available. No doubt users will know of other footbridges in need of refurbishment, replacement or even installation.

Furness Line Action Group

On 5 July, the FLAG committee raised various concerns with Jordan Sargeant, Stakeholder Manager of Transport Focus. The 1009 Barrow to Lancaster service is often delayed by the number of passengers boarding or alighting, jeopardising the 5-minute connection at Carnforth and main line links at Lancaster. Once when the FLAG committee missed the Leeds connection, it had taken three months to receive compensation; e-mails weren't acknowledged nor phone calls returned. Transport Focus provides a mediation service for passengers to achieve a better result where delay repay complaints are not dealt with in a fair and efficient manner, but are passengers aware of their entitlement under the scheme?

The CAF Civity DMUs being built in Spain are 2.88m wide compared to 2.673m for the Class 185 in current use, 2.73m for Class 175 used up to 2006, and 2.70m for the Class 153/156 Sprinters. The widest unit occasionally used south of Barrow (but not allowed further north up the Cumbrian Coast due to limited clearances) are the original Class 150 Sprinters at 2.816m. The CAF Civity units will be used on the Furness and Lakes Lines Northern Connect services to Manchester Airport from December 2019. From May 2018 there will be both Class 156/158 Sprinters and Class 769 bi-mode electro-diesel trains converted from Class 319 EMUs on those services, with refurbished 4-car Class 156 Sprinters deployed North of Barrow.

Three Northern representatives attended the FLAG AGM in Carnforth on 22 April. A major timetable change in May 2018 will see 8 Manchester Airport to Barrow trains daily, 4 Windermere trains daily, and more Barrow/Carlisle services, including late evening and Sundays. May 2019 will see a further re-cast, and December 2019 the launch of the Northern Connect service.

On 21 July, Barrow and Furness MP, John Woodcock opened a new £1.7 million maintenance and emergency response unit next to Barrow station to create a single strategic base for 45 maintenance staff. Track, signal and construction teams can now operate more effectively, improving the reliability of services.

Lakes Line Rail User Group

NR plans major work on bank holidays, when fewer people want to travel – except in a holiday area! Oxenholme is often overcrowded, but it's not only Lakes Line trains. Disruption further south often leads to a reduced service. Some Virgin Trains (VT) services that call at Oxenholme leave London Euston 'full and standing', when other services are less crowded. Advance information for passengers is also unreliable: maps in VT leaflets and on line that showed a bus replacement for the Lakes line on a May Bank Holiday, were incorrectly reissued for the late spring Bank Holiday. On 27 May, when main line trains were turning round at Oxenholme as there was engineering work further north, early morning connections were missed: some passengers on the 1004 to Windermere, a through train from Manchester, had in fact arrived at Oxenholme an hour earlier, but that train had missed its connection. In the May timetable, TransPennine Express (TPE) have plugged the gap in departures from Manchester Airport between 1800 and 2000 with an 1858 service calling at Oxenholme at 2029 Sundays to Friday. The 1958 from Windermere (1948 on Sundays) makes this connection, but not the previous departure from Oxenholme at 2008. From December, TPE hopes to operate most of its Manchester to Scotland services via Bolton.

The Northern Weekly Salvo (Paul Salvesson)

Paul regrets the casual dismissal of electrification schemes that would have had a major positive impact on the North, Wales and Midlands. Bi-mode (diesel/electric) trains can be a useful stop-gap, and converting some of the Class 319s to bi-mode is a sensible idea. But bi-modes are unsuitable for mainline routes: in diesel mode, their acceleration compares unfavourably to HSTs of the 1970s.

Acquisition of the historic buildings at Gobowen Station by the Gobowen Area Improvement Group (GAIP) lays the foundation for an ambitious project to return it to its former glory, with a rail service to Oswestry via the Orthopaedic Hospital and several tourist venues. Three Parishes Big Local, a Big Lottery-funded programme, supported the Community Right to Bid process with a grant and a loan totalling £110,000.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester Lines

The long overdue cascade of DMUs involving Great Western, London Midland and Northern has started. The Class 165/166 Thames Turbos displaced by Class 387 electric units in the Thames Valley have moved to the Severn Beach line in Bristol, where they are reported to look very smart in their new GWR livery, and attract twice as many users as the Class 150/2s. These will move to Devon and Cornwall to replace five GWR Class 153s, which will move to LM. Three Class 150/1s used by LM on the Bletchley - Bedford line will move to Northern, along with Angel Trains 150/0s and 150/1s from GWR. Withdrawal of the Pacers will start no later than September 2018.

Concessionary fare passengers pay half-fare in West Yorkshire, so their journeys are counted, but not those in Greater Manchester, which are free. Passenger numbers at Greater Manchester stations could therefore be 25 to 33% higher than at West Yorkshire stations with comparable official figures, although this may apply only to the off-peak component. STORM believes that the discrepancy in station usage is mirrored on the Calder Valley TfGM stations, and also that passengers holding season tickets for travel from unstaffed stations are wrongly 'credited' to the staffed station where tickets were purchased.

Ashton-under-Lyne station between Stalybridge and Manchester Victoria was closed from 8-31 July for major engineering works as part of the Great North Rail Project. The scheme included rebuilding a bridge to straighten the line. The railway corridor in which Ashton sits is very narrow, leading to a high number of curves that limit the line speed, and thus the frequency at which trains can run. These improvements were therefore essential to meet the ever-increasing demand.

STORM contrasts the impact that cancellation of electrification would have on two trans-Pennine routes: the Stalybridge line through the Standedge tunnel, and the Stevenson alignment via Hebden Bridge. Electrification would make little difference to the former, as the line speed is constrained by its tortuous route, whereas the Calder Valley line would offer the optimum improvements in journey times between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds, York and beyond.

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

HLSG is urging support for a [petition](#) sponsored by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) North asking the Transport Secretary to: back the Northern Powerhouse with a 30-minute rail link between Leeds and Manchester (Crossrail North); inject £59 billion over 10 years to support policies being developed by Transport for the North, and give it the same powers as those enjoyed by Transport for London, so that it also has access to private finance.

HLSG welcomes a more positive response from Alan Chaplin, the Interim Managing Director of Northern Railway. Opportunities for through journeys across Harrogate have improved, and most services between Leeds and Knaresborough and between Leeds and York will call at all stations. The additional twice hourly services during the day between Leeds and Harrogate will now call at Hornbeam Park as well as at Horsforth, but not at any more stations because of pathing with services on other routes at the junctions approaching Leeds, and the platform capacity at both Harrogate and Leeds stations. The revised timetable was submitted to NR on 11 August. Once it has been confirmed, Northern Railway will communicate the final arrangements, and its Stakeholder team will continue to liaise with interested parties.

Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users Association

Paul Barnfield, Arriva Trains North Regional Director (East) confirmed to Committee members that rail user groups had an important role in improving services. In a newly created post, Richard Isaacs would liaise with community rail partnerships and user groups. The link through stakeholder managers would be only for major projects. Paul acknowledged that passengers could have a better understanding of the day-to-day issues. He said that stations along the route would see improvements. HPSRUA emphasised its aim of earlier and later services, and that the promised additional Sunday services were introduced.

HPSRUA joins the chorus of dismay regarding the cancellation of electrification projects in the north, possibly including the Transpennine route. It is disingenuous to claim that overhead wiring spoils the countryside when the pollutants spewed out by the diesel engines of the bi-mode trains will have a greater impact on people's lives than the sight of a few gantries and wires.

The DfT has confirmed the HS2 route in the north of England. Analysis showed that the market for HS2 travel to and from South Yorkshire, though important, was smaller than the market further north including Leeds, York and Newcastle. So HS2 will reach Sheffield via the already busy Midland Main Line (MML) from Chesterfield, before rejoining the main HS2 line to continue north to Leeds. But the tunnel between Sheffield Midland and Meadowhall is heavily congested; HPSRUA understands that there is currently a path for only one more train per hour.

Friends of the Barton Line

Promotional posters for the Barton Lions beer festival were displayed at Cleethorpes, Grimsby Town and Habrough stations, as well as those encouraging train travel to Barton Arts Week. TPE's newly refurbished Class 185 trains have operated into Cleethorpes from 24 July. There is a new waiting room and toilets at Hull Paragon station; the old ones have been demolished to make room for four new retail units. The North Notts & Lincs CRP wants a direct Nottingham-Retford- Gainsborough-Brigg-Cleethorpes service.

At the AGM in July, Chairman Tom Irvin said that, while still at an unacceptable level, cancellations were much reduced and punctuality was slowly improving. However, the previous disgraceful levels of performance had taken its toll at every station except Thornton Abbey. Many regular passengers had been lost to other modes of transport, and it would take much to regain their trust. With the Northern franchise coming to an end, Arriva had little incentive to change anything. The East Midlands franchise process was belated, but had now begun. The three bidders are Stagecoach, Arriva and First Group/Trenitalia.

Friends of the Brigg Line

On 12 August, a single car 153 set formed the 0803 service from Sheffield, resulting in major overcrowding between Worksop and Retford; it left Brigg with 71 passengers. Despite FoBL contacting the contractors for the last 7 weeks, Brigg station still has a Northern Rail advert for the Duo Ticket that was withdrawn from the line in Spring 2016.

NR had recently removed the footbridge at Pilning Station near Bristol for electrification work, leaving the station with only one platform, which is inadequate. Meanwhile, the new £400,000 non-ramp footbridge at Gainsborough Central is superfluous, as the station has a very safe foot crossing, so the common sense idea would be to dismantle that footbridge and donate it to the people of Pilning Station who need one.

Melton Constable Trust

MCT understands the concern with level crossings when it relates to fast trains, but they are essential if lines to towns such as Holt and Fakenham are to be re-opened. They should be open to consideration where high speeds are not expected.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group

The hourly Cambridge – Norwich service has boosted passenger numbers at Brandon to over 105,000/year. It now needs real time information screens that cater for those with impaired vision; covered and secure cycle parking; covered waiting accommodation with seating at the west end of Platform 1, and better lighting with no shadow areas on both platforms and their approaches.

The [East Midlands franchise consultation document](#) would withdraw through services from Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield to Norwich. All or nearly all Liverpool trains would be replaced east of Nottingham by a local service from Sheffield or Nottingham to Ely and beyond. Other "options" include Nottingham-Cambridge and/or from Birmingham-Norwich services, which PENRUG would welcome.

PENRUG believes it is essential to retain a regular hourly to Liverpool-Norwich service via Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham, and Peterborough, and a Birmingham-Standed Airport service via Leicester, Peterborough, and Cambridge, with their present core stops. More Norfolk passengers travel to and from Manchester and Sheffield than to any station on the East Coast, so though services are important. Liverpool-Norwich trains are particularly popular on Sundays in university terms. They should run on all such Sundays using diversionary routes when appropriate. Earlier Sunday trains from and later trains to Liverpool would be welcomed, as would a year-round departure from Norwich before 1000.

Bedford Commuters Association

BCA is fighting the EM franchise proposal to split the MML into a commuter service to Kettering and Corby, and intercity services to Nottingham and Sheffield, effectively withdrawing intercity services from Bedford.

The BCA requires:

- A half hourly service from first train to last to London St Pancras
- A half hourly service from first train to last to Leicester then either Nottingham or Derby
- A robust contingency plan to cover for train cancellations
- More new good quality rolling stock to provide extra capacity.

The BCA response to Phase 2 of the Thameslink 2018 timetable consultation notes that, both from Flitwick and from Bedford, there are 4 fewer trains arriving in London between 0700 and 0959 than stated in the Phase 1 proposal. They would also like some peak services to call at West Hampstead, a more even spread of departures from Flitwick, and an additional service from Bedford to Flitwick between 1748 and 1818.

Thameslink Single and Return Tickets are now available on the Key Smartcard, although BCA has identified three noticeable shortcomings with the current version:

- No support for Railcards
- Valid only on GTR services, not on EMT or TfL services
- No Carnet discounts.

Barking — Gospel Oak Rail User Group

BGORUG laments a further 6-month delay to complete electrification, including weekend closures and two blockades, provisionally scheduled for 17 September - 22 October and 27 November - 14 January. Meanwhile, the overworked 2-car Class 172 DMU's are proving increasingly unreliable. Vivarail could make three of its D-trains available in the new year to combat overcrowding.

Following a public enquiry, the Transport Secretary has made an Order under the Transport and Works Act authorising TfL to construct and operate a 4km extension of the BGO line from Barking to the Barking Riverside development area, and has granted powers of compulsory purchase or temporary use of land required for its construction, operation and maintenance.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

Ongoing operational issues included:

- Reports from passengers about drivers littering the platform at Chesham Station.
- Circle and Hammersmith & City line trains terminating at Edgware Road using different platforms
- Decommissioning of the sidings at Wembley Park, as they cannot accommodate the S8 stock
- The demise of the pocket timetable was again commented on unfavourably.

East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership

The CRP Travel and Tourism Information Hub at Petersfield Railway Station is now open from 1000–1500 on Wednesdays to Sundays until the end of October, providing friendly, comprehensive information about travel and tourism in the South Downs National Park. The opening hours or days could possibly be extended with more volunteers, for either 3 or 6 hours/day. Call Mark Miller on 07900 103296.

West Sussex Rail Users Association

WSRUA welcomes the suspension of industrial action by ASLEF and RMT pending talks with DfT, and hopes that these will resolve the long-running dispute. It notes the major upgrade work at Waterloo from 5-28 August, at London Bridge from 26 August–2 September, and on Southern lines over the August Bank Holiday. Association members had detailed discussion with the GTR team on the draft 2018 timetable.

Tarka Rail Association

At its AGM, Chris Austin, a former director of the Strategic Rail Authority, gave a presentation on Community Rail Development, and the transition from railway closures to an era of growing demand. Peter Heaton-Jones, the newly re-elected MP for North Devon and a TRA Vice President, sought to shake off the tourist image of the Tarka line, emphasising that it was very much an all-seasons railway. Dan Okey, Regional Development Manager for the West, set out GWR's future aspirations, and how it had overcome delays to the electrification programme. Finally Richard Burningham gave a Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership perspective: a recent survey of current and prospective users had some interesting results, whilst usage figures showed a healthy recovery from the previous year, when atrocious weather had disrupted services. TRA also hosted the GWR community rail conference in Barnstaple.

Avocet Line Rail Users Group

At the Avocet Line Forum, GWR, local councils and community groups along the line from Exeter to Exmouth had a robust discussion as to whether GWR were doing everything possible to minimize cancellations, late running and overcrowding. The GWR Community Rail Conference for its directors and managers, local councils, community rail partnerships, user groups, and station adoption groups was assured that no units would leave before next spring, by which time units should arrive from Bristol.

The Customer and Communities Infrastructure Fund (CCIF) has accepted ALRUG's bid for illuminated timetable displays that will remedy a long-standing problem. GWR are now working on installing them at St James' Park, Polsloe Bridge, Digby & Sowton, Exton and Lymptone Village. As well as improving the passenger experience, the signs will also benefit the local business that produces them.

A 10 car Intercity Express train on a test run from Paddington to Penzance called at Exeter St David's on June 22. The new trains are due to enter Devon and Cornwall service next May.

RAILFUTURE

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



Want to see your nominations for this year's Railfuture RUG Awards listed in the September RUG Awards? This is the last and final call! Nominations close at 2359 on Saturday 2 September in the following categories:

- 1 & 2 - Best newsletter - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 3 & 4 - Best website - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 5 - Best social media promotion
- 6 - Best campaign
- 7 - Best individual RUG campaigner [for Railfuture members only]
- 8 - Best new group
- 9 - Judges' Special Award

This year, every nomination for a RUG Award confirmed after the closing date as going forward to the Judging Panel will receive a copy of "Britain's Growing Railway", the recently published 6th edition of Railfuture's A-Z Guide to Rail Re-openings. Then be at the Conference in Leicester on 4 November to discover as it happens: "And the winner is..." Be pictured receiving an award for your own publicity! Discount bookings for members, individuals and affiliated RUGs closes on 31 August.

Britain's Growing Railway celebrates the success of many Railfuture campaigns, and points the way to the future. The 192-page book costs £9.95 and is available online at www.railfuture.org.uk/shop. With 400 stations opened or reopened since 1960, along with 600 miles of new track, Britain has the fastest growing railway in Europe. However, the network needs to expand still further. Local communities throughout Britain are demanding the return of their lost railway services, or the building of new lines and stations.

RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND

The current status of the Levenmouth Rail Campaign is set out on a new [Railfuture web page](#).

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

The election of a Mayor for Cambridgeshire provides an opportunity for key decisions to be taken locally and implemented quickly using additional Government funding. The new combined authority is responsible for producing a county transport strategy linked to new development. A Campaign Leaflet “New stations and lines in Cambridgeshire” on the Branch’s [website](#) sets out a rail strategy for the area, with a list of projects that would provide a real alternative to increased car use and congestion, and for each project the issue that it addresses, its current status and the action required.

RAILFUTURE THAMES VALLEY

Stephen Barker, Strategic Development Engineer, Chiltern Railways, told the 2017 AGM that its Oxford - London Marylebone service was proving so popular that train planners had to juggle stock diagrams to meet the demand. However, although the current half hourly service could be expanded, Marylebone station could expand only by buying up adjacent property at huge cost.

The West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study had recommended Old Oak Common as an alternative London terminus for Chiltern, with an interchange to HS2, GWR, Crossrail and London Overground. Accessed via the Northolt line, it would allow up to four additional trains per hour into London, while offering passengers greater choice when travelling into the capital; around two thirds of Marylebone users would reach their final destination sooner. Discussions with the DfT and HS2 suggest that it would be viable, so it will be compared to the cost of expanding Marylebone. Stephen also works part time with Rob Brighthouse (former MD of Chiltern Railways) with the aim of lowering the cost of East-West Rail. The newly formed company would deliver EWR faster and cheaper than if it were in the public sector.

The Thames Valley Branch’s core objectives and progress this year were:

- Witney Oxford Transport. The October 2016 conference was a success - but a Busway is only the first stage of the plan.
- Bourne End – High Wycombe. Wycombe District Council is making £100,000 available for a study of the scheme, and is also providing £350,000 to assess the feasibility of work at Bourne End to allow 2tph on the existing branch.
- Grove – Wantage. This is a no-brainer. Enlarging the car park at Didcot is costing £20 million, but most passengers come from the west, some from as far as Fairford and Cirencester, so they would be better served by a Parkway station closer to home. With such a strong business case, some progress is expected in the coming year.
- Cowley Branch - Hanborough. Railfuture’s support for the planning application included a car park at Hanborough. The appeal was successful, but the Inspector was not convinced of the need for a car park. Much blame must be put on the Local Authority.
- EWR. This is progressing to a Transport and Works Act Order, but is all rather frustrating.
- HS2. The Branch hosts a long stretch of the line, and so would appreciate its members’ thoughts as the project moves into the delivery phase.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

ACoRP is holding its first ever webinar on Wednesday 11 October from 1500 to about 1600. It will look at identifying potential new uses for station buildings, and how to develop a plan. You will be able to book a place towards the end of August, when ACoRP will provide instructions on how to join in.

With £100,000 secured, East Suffolk Lines CRP has received the go ahead for its plans to transform the former parcels office at Lowestoft Station into a public space able to host a variety of events. Additional funding came from the Designated Community Rail Development Fund, the Railway Heritage Trust, the Wherry Lines CRP, and from the local business community. Waveney District Council donated equipment, and NR has worked on the site. Construction should start in the autumn, with the opening next spring.

The Forest of Bowland is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) between Clitheroe, Longridge, Lancaster and Settle. To help walkers and day-trippers explore the area without a long drive at either end of the day, the new 833 Bowland Explorer bus service links railway stations at the northern and southern gateways to the Forest. On Sundays and Bank Holidays until 24 September, it leaves Lancaster Bus Station for Bentham, where it meets rail services from Leeds and Carnforth. It then travels via Ingleton and Clapham through the AONB to Clitheroe, where it collects passengers from Blackburn, Bolton and Manchester before making two more trips into the Forest, and returning to Bentham and Lancaster. Timetable and fare details are available at www.communityraillancashire.co.uk, and www.forestofbowland.com/Bowland-Explorer, which also has information about walks along the route.

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST

In a letter to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling, TWNW expressed its utmost concern at recent announcements regarding electrification and the implications for rail expansion in the North of England, in particular the decision to cancel Oxenholme-Windermere. Over two years ago, Baroness Kramer celebrated the announcement that the line would be electrified early as part of the scheme to bring new services to the North of England. The Lake District's recently acquired World Heritage status is expected to boost tourism in the area, so bi-mode is not the answer. The North TransPennine route that links the growing conurbations of Manchester and Leeds is also overdue for electrification.

TRANSPORTFOCUS

Over the past year Transportfocus and the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) have developed a new standard to measure a train's punctuality at every station, instead of on arrival at its final destination. Passengers expect 'on time' to mean a train arriving within one minute of the scheduled time, not the current industry standard of 5 minutes (or 10 for long-distance trains). For every minute's delay, passenger satisfaction declined by 1.5 percentage points overall; for commuters this rose to 3 points. The new figures will be published at a national level [on the website of the Rail Delivery Group](#). Each train operator is expected to publish the Information on its website by April 2018, and passengers will be able to find out the punctuality record of any individual service at www.mytrainjourney.co.uk.

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

My summary of the Gibb Report on the GTR franchise cited Section 3 of Appendix 5, which referred to: "the reopening of the 25-mile line between Uckfield and Lewes...and the use of this route as a new line between Brighton and London (www.BML2.co.uk)". I am indebted to Richard Porter and Steve Boulding for pointing out that the actual distance between these two stations is more like 8 miles; the 25 miles probably refers to electrification of the line from Hurst Green to Uckfield. Also, as currently proposed, the Brighton branch of BML2 would actually bypass Lewes through a new tunnel at Ashcombe.

At the official opening of Cambridge North station on 7 August, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling stressed the importance to the area of completing EWR, upgrading Ely North Junction – and Wisbech reopening! We can but hope that his fine words herald equally fine deeds. The [Wisbech project](#) having successfully established its feasibility at GRIP 2, the new Cambridgeshire Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) agreed at its very first meeting to fund the GRIP 3 process, to assess and cost the various engineering solutions, and select the most appropriate to deliver stakeholders' requirements.

The [July update to the DfT Rail Franchise Schedule](#) extends the London Midland franchise from October to December 2017, with a possible further extension until February 2018. However, the EWR franchise has disappeared. So will the Reading-Oxford-Bedford and Milton Keynes-Princes Risborough services be operated as an extension to the Chiltern franchise?

If the MML is split into commuter and intercity services, as proposed in the EM Franchise consultation, what if any service would there be from stations such as Luton and Bedford to Leicester and beyond? The only reference in the consultation document to EWR is equally odd. On p38, under the heading "New routes to investment", it reads "The recently announced East West rail line, running from Oxford to Cambridge..." Has it escaped the DfT's notice that its Western section from Reading and Oxford to Bedford will open early in the EM franchise period, with an interchange to MML at Bedford Midland? London Luton Airport would like to see 6 EM trains/hour (up from 5), 4 of which would call at Luton Airport Parkway, which is getting a Mass Passenger Transit system. A premium fare would apply on these Express services.

The DfT has [listed](#) the “Top 10” overcrowded train services in England and Wales in the spring and autumn of 2016. Every train operator is required to plan its timetables so that, as far as possible, crowding is not unduly concentrated on any particular route or individual service. Overcrowding is measured using ‘Passengers in excess of capacity’ (PiXC) figures that show the number of standard class passengers who exceed the standard class capacity of the train, at the busiest point of the journey to or from the city centre. For example, a train with a capacity of 200, carrying 210 passengers has a PiXC of 10, and a Load Factor of 105%. Many of the services listed are operated by GTR; hopefully, these will be resolved when the new Thameslink timetable starts in May 2018.

Following a public consultation, the DfT has decided that Norton Bridge station on the West Coast Main Line, some 5 miles north-west of Stafford, should be closed, but would maintain its contribution to the existing rail replacement bus services until the end of March 2019. The closure is subject to ratification by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), which is not automatic. If ORR agrees, the station would close on a date to be confirmed after 15 October 2017, or four weeks after ratification by the ORR, whichever is the later.

Northern has confirmed that from May 2018, Class 319 Flex bi-mode trains, re-designated as Class 769s, will operate on the Oxenholme–Windermere line. From 2019, these will be joined by new DMUs being built by CAF, which will feature, as standard, air conditioning, free Wi-Fi, and plug sockets throughout. The DfT has also asked Northern to identify alternative-fuel options; the announcement cancelling electrification made reference to both battery and hydrogen technology.

A member of Hertfordshire County Council has written to Lord Adonis, Chairman of the National Infrastructure Commission, regarding the apparent deadlock in funding of the Metropolitan line extension from Croxley to Watford Junction. Procurement processes to ensure the scheme can progress must start this summer, or powers under the Transport and Works Act Order will lapse in August 2018. He concluded: “London’s aspirations for growth, as set out in the Mayor’s recent transport strategy, require collaborative working with neighbours to collectively undertake the necessary cross boundary, co-investment schemes.”

My predecessor, Tony Smale, suggests checking the information on the Onward Travel Poster at local stations. [The email address shown on the poster](#) is now up and running again, as is an [alternative](#). For most stations in Britain, it can be done on the NR [website](#). Select your station; click on “Getting to and from the station”, and scan the list for “Onward travel information”. For most stations it will say: “Information to plan your onward journey is available in a printable format [here](#)” - and if the online version is more up to date than the version at the station, then that too is worth reporting!

CONSULTATIONS

- Oxford City Council: [Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\) for the Oxford Station Area](#), closes 25 August.
- ORR: [Improving Network Rail's renewals efficiency](#), closes 13 September - comments to Chris Austin/Roger Blake.
- Central Bedfordshire Council: [Flitwick town centre regeneration](#), closes 13 September.
- National Infrastructure Commission's 2nd Call for Evidence: [How digital technologies can improve the nation's infrastructure](#), closes 15 September - comments on Better Asset Management and Big Data to Ian Brown/Chris Page.
- [Mayor of London's draft Transport Strategy 2017](#), closes 2 October, comments to Roger Blake.
- DfT: [East Midlands franchise](#), closes 11 October, comments to David Harby.
- DfT: [Crewe Hub Consultation](#), closes 12 October.

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

...and finally

Thank you, STORM for drawing my attention to a Daily Mail [report](#) of dry humour on the London Underground.

ALRUG reports a sign in the Bonaparte bar at Bristol Temple Meads: “Last train home? Why not ‘jolly up’ your journey with 4 cans for £7?” Other passengers might not see it in quite the same way!

EVENTS

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

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

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

August

- Wednesday 16. East Norfolk Transport Users Association AGM and Public Meeting, Christchurch, Deneside, **Great Yarmouth**, 1400
- Monday 21. Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group. 43-47 Great George Street, **Leeds** LS1 3BB, 1900
- Tuesday 29. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth Academy, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also the final Tuesday of every month until November 2017).

September

- Monday 4. English Regional Transport Association, The Tavistock, 117 Tavistock Street, Bedford, MK40 2SB, 1830 (Also 2 October, 6 November, 4 December).
- Saturday 16. Copeland Rail Users Group, **Seascale** Methodist Church Hall, 1350 (Also 14 October, Ravensglass & Eskdale (aka Ratty) museum, 1400).
- Tuesday 19. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, **Chesham** Town Hall, 1930 (Also 31 October and 12 December.)
- Wednesday 20. The Fox and Hounds Hotel, Eggesford (Also 18 October, UMBERLEIGH; 15 November, Eggesford.)
- Wednesday 20. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, No 1 Inn, **Cleethorpes**, 1900 (Also 15 Nov, Sloop, Barton, 2000)).
- Monday 25. Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group, Grove Pub next to Bridgewater Place Tower, **Leeds**, LS11 5PL, 1930
- Saturday 30. Railfuture East Anglia, Norwich (Also 2 December, Cambridge).

Further Ahead

- 5 October. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2017, Roundhouse, **Derby**, [click here for details](#)
- 14 October. ESTA Autumn Meeting, Gannon Rooms, Station Approach, **Saxmundham**, 14:00.
- 16 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Malthouse, **Topsham**, 1900.
- 17 October. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Rd, **Felixstowe**, IP11 7EL, 1430
- 21 October. Railfuture Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, 1030-1600, venue TBC.
- 4 November. Railfuture Annual RUG Awards, the Curve, 60 Rutland St, Leicester, LE1 1SB, 1000 for 1045.
- 6 November. Bedford Commuters Association AGM, RAFA Club, Ashburnham Road, **Bedford**, 1930
- 25 November. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045.

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

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