

## Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

As always, feel free to forward RUEX 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.

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We begin with the usual roundup of news from rail user groups around the UK. I'm grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins. There wasn't space to include a Guest Rail User Group last month, but this month we have two...

### GUEST RAIL USER GROUPS OF THE MONTH

**Friends of Denton Station**

[website](#)

**& Friends of Reddish South Station**

[website](#)

The Reddish South Station group was founded in 2007 with a handful of supporters and now has "hundreds of people", all backing their campaign for proper passenger services to Manchester Victoria. One of the FORSS members went on to establish FODS, the Friends of Denton Station, which now has over 30 members, adding weight to the campaign. The two stations are presently served only on request, once a week, by a "Parliamentary" train to Stalybridge known locally as the "Ghost Train". Ghost Trains were featured on a December edition of Radio 2's Jeremy Vine Show, and the Chairmen of both groups contributed to the discussions.

Campaigners hope that the goal of a regular service for the line will become a complementary part of the Northern Hub rail-development scheme. In the meantime, volunteers keep themselves busy tending the station gardens, manning information stalls and getting locals to sign petitions for reinstatement of passenger services.

Both groups are delighted that Compass Tours are arranging rail tours this year which will call at the two stations; they hope that these will be well supported as success would show that the stations have real potential. The tours are: Welsh Mountaineer (28 Mar), Roses Express (18 Apr) and Snowden Mountain Ranger (30 June). Details/bookings: [www.compasstoursbyrail.co.uk](http://www.compasstoursbyrail.co.uk).

The next event will be a Folk Train, departing Reddish South for Stalybridge at 09:26 on Good Friday. The folk group will continue playing in the world-famous Stalybridge Buffet bar while breakfast is served. All welcome!

**Friends of the West Highland Lines**

[website](#)

Transport Scotland's "Rail 2014" consultation, in advance of the ScotRail franchise renewal process, gave FoWHL the opportunity to put across a number of aspirations, including: a high-quality train service as befitting world-class tourist routes – at least 4 trains each way per day are needed; more competitive journey times; and replacement of the unsuitable Class 156 units.

Several delegates to FoWHL's "Trains and Tourism" mini-conference in Dec 2010 were unable to attend due to appalling weather, so the group hosted a follow-up event in Nov 2011. Present were the Scottish Minister for Tourism and representatives from the railway and tourism industries, and the national park authority. Members of FoWHL gave a presentation showing the group's contributions to attracting visitors (including tree clearance to open up some iconic views) and another to prove the point that, sadly, some overseas tourist railways are far more strongly promoted than the West Highland Lines. This provoked some interesting discussions.

In a footnote, we read that further tree clearance in the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park has now commenced. Elsewhere in the group's glossy magazine, it's reported that Mallaig Station won the Gold award in a Keep Scotland Beautiful scheme, which looks at litter, recycling and even links with the local community. Overall winner in the competition was Whitecraigs Station in East Renfrewshire.

On 19 May 2012, FoWHL will stage what must be Britain's most remote AGM for members of a rail user group ... at an isolated lodge on Corroul Estate some miles from Corroul Station. Connecting transport is promised for those that make it to the station, and refreshments will be laid on.

### **Rail Action Group, East of Scotland**

[website](#)

On 28 Feb, Scottish Minister for Transport, Keith Brown MSP, accompanied by local MSPs and councillors, visited East Lothian and Berwickshire. He was welcomed to East Linton by Paul McLennan, East Lothian Council Leader and RAGES member, plus a large contingent of rail professionals and campaigners, including the RAGES committee. After a discussion and photographs, the party set off for Reston. Tom Thorburn, RAGES chairman, was able to accompany the Minister in his car and have an additional discussion on the aims of the group.

At Reston, the dignitaries were met by Jim Fullarton, RAGES member, and Barrie Forrest, RAGES vice chairman. The party visited the proposed site of the new Reston station, where a good airing of the need for a station was given. The party then visited Eyemouth where local issues such as tourism and transport for college students were discussed.

RAGES thanked the Minister for taking the time to visit the area and hoped for a good outcome when the additional study information, currently being prepared by SEStran, was made available to him. He certainly was left in no doubt about the support he had seen and heard that afternoon.

### **Aln Valley Railway**

[website](#)

In February, a major milestone in the revitalisation of the Aln Valley Railway between Alnmouth and Alnwick took place at Alnwick Castle, with the signing of the Lease between the Aln Valley Railway Trust and the Duke of Northumberland. The lease will allow the first construction elements of the railway to begin with a view to having some limited running of short trains by the end of summer this year. Hopefully visitors will be able to visit the site to see the construction progress.

In a press release, AVR Trust Chairman Martin Robinson said: "We are absolutely delighted to have reached this important milestone in the restoration of the railway. Everybody involved has worked tremendously hard to achieve this, but there is still a huge amount of work still to done, especially if we are to hit our target dates. Our first works contract has already been let to a local Alnwick firm. However, we need more volunteers for everything! All offers of help will be very welcome."

Potential volunteers or donors should contact the Aln Valley Railway's [Secretary](#).

### **Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Lines**

[website](#)

STORM submitted a formal response to the consultation on re-franchising Northern and Trans-Pennine, making many of the points they've raised with train operators and Transport for Greater Manchester in recent years. The group is in favour of retaining existing franchise areas or perhaps combining the Northern and Trans-Pennine franchise subject to some safeguards, but does not want to see Northern split into NW and NE franchises. STORM also has reservations about the proposal to transfer responsibility for the franchise to the five northern passenger transport authorities: would funding be adequate and how would the remaining local authorities be represented?

### **Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association**

[website](#)

MCRUA welcomes the news that the service on the Mid Cheshire Line was officially designated a Community Rail Service in January. Realising that this gives them access to new types of grant funding, MCRUA was quick off the mark securing a grant of £941 towards a travel leaflet and an accompanying promotion. A possibility being actively discussed for the line is running tram-train vehicles which could make use of Metrolink tracks to gain access to Manchester.

At a recent public meeting, MCRUA members had the opportunity to hear from one of the bidders for the new Northern franchise, and to put across their own views as to what improvements they would like to see. The inadequate size of car parks at two stations on the line has long been a cause for concern, although there is hope that something may be done now that MCRUA has succeeded in getting the local MP involved.

Everyone is invited to come and enjoy Music Trains on the Mid Cheshire Line – the programme for 2012 will be a little different and more frequent. Details are on MCRUA's website.

### **Shrewsbury-Chester Rail Users' Association**

[contact](#)

In a brief news update, we read that SCRUA has pledged £100 to a feasibility study for the re-opening of Baschurch Station. The committee continues to meet regularly and to push for improvements along the line.

### **Stourbridge Line User Group**

[website](#)

In January, two SLUG members had the privilege of attending a prestigious event at the Houses of Parliament organised by Centro, saying afterwards that their day had been a rewarding experience – they had been able to engage with important decision makers and put across their campaign aspirations.

SLUG's Chairman has been reflecting on campaign successes of 2011. The group has campaigned consistently about peak hour overcrowding and now London Midland has strengthened sets in the morning with extra carriages. A regular service for Hartlebury is likely for next December, the service between Kidderminster and London has been protected and decision-makers are showing interest in the reopening of the Stourbridge to Dudley railway line. SLUG also hopes that its intervention on proposed ticket office closures will have an impact.

A contributor to SLUG's newsletter sets out the range of day return tickets available for a return journey to London: Chiltern has no less than 15 options ranging from £25 to £178.60, and a further 15 fares for those with railcards! The new Business Zone fare will bring the total to 16. Advance tickets give you yet more choice (the author has just bought a ticket for his next trip to London ... for just £4.95, one way!).

### **Bedford Commuters' Association**

[website](#)

The BCA committee has had initial meetings with four of the companies bidding for the new Thameslink franchise to raise issues of concern, and anticipates further meetings as the process continues. The committee also asked their MP to raise questions about the new Thameslink franchise with Rail Minister, Theresa Villiers – for example, what will be the consultation timescale and which franchise will encompass the new East-West Rail Line? The Minister has now replied, saying (among other things) that the consultation document for the Thameslink franchise is expected in May 2012, and that it is expected that there will be a competition between the existing franchises (Gt Western, London Midland, E Midlands and Chiltern) to operate services on the EWRL.

District councils have been sending out their draft Local Area Travel Plans for consultation - the BCA recently responded to the draft plan for Ampthill & Flitwick, emphasising the need for a "Station Travel Plan" for Flitwick.

The BCA welcome the recent decision of First Capital Connect to abolish charges for using cash machines at its stations - the BCA has long campaigned for this. The group is also pleased that the latest statistics from the National Passenger Survey show that FCC ratings under “Value for Money”, “Punctuality” and “Overall Satisfaction” have all improved.

Responding to a suggestion from a new member, the BCA committee is inviting feedback from its members via their “admin” email address; they aim to make it easier for members to contribute news, views, comments or complaints.

### **Southwark Rail Users' Group**

[website](#)

Last Autumn, SRUG ran a leaflet campaign entitled “Save our Victoria Service”, urging rail users to email the Transport Minister and London Mayor about how they will be affected by the loss of South London Line trains from Dec 2012. Their efforts paid off as they’ve now received a reply from the Minister to the effect that both Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill will retain 2 trains/h in the daytime to both Victoria and Blackfriars, but alas not in the evenings or at weekends. SRUG wants to see the new Southeastern franchise from 2014 include a regular 4 trains/h service to Victoria from their local stations, 7 days a week. Details and campaign materials are on the group’s website.

SRUG was formed in 2007 as an informal grouping within the Bellenden Residents’ Group and Peckham Residents’ Network. It campaigns for improvements to rail stations and services affecting: Peckham Rye, Nunhead, South Bermondsey, Queens Road, Denmark Hill, East Dulwich and North Dulwich. Any rail user or supporter can join by virtue of signing up to an email list – there are now nearly 600 people on the list.

### **Windsor Lines Passengers' Association**

[website](#)

Although pleased to be getting extra carriages to lengthen trains on the Windsor Lines by the end of 2014, the WLPA is concerned that seating per car will be somewhat reduced to create more standing room. Some additional services are planned for 2014, and the WLPA comments that these have been on their list of aspirations for some time. Another “job done” from their wish list is the installation of additional seating at Camberley Station.

In recent weeks, the committee has met with the new managing director of South West Trains to put across their views, and has also met representatives from Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch. The group is disappointed to see that SWT has slipped down the league in PF’s National Passenger Survey.

On the subject of smart ticketing, WLPA sees advantages and disadvantages: it would be possible to offer season tickets for those who work for, say, only three days a week ... but there’s the sinister prospect of being able to price commuters off the most congested trains: “that’s hard on those who cannot change their work pattern”.

### **East Sussex Rail Alliance**

[website](#)

Four rail user groups have come together under the ESRA umbrella to issue an “Initial Position Paper” in connection with each of the two franchise renewal processes that affect Sussex, namely: the Southeastern and the Thameslink franchises. The Bexhill, East Coastway Commuters, Marshlink and St Leonards & Hastings user groups aim to influence the Dept. for Transport, prospective bidders and other stakeholders with their brief and business-like franchise papers.

Each paper sets out service priorities and aspirations in respect of stations, connections, fares and customer service. The Alliance believes that the Brighton Main Line and East Coastway timetables need to be re-cast, and they provide an outline of the service pattern they would like to see. They also make the point that the current Integrated Kent Franchise paid little attention to the needs of

Hastings Line users at the time of its conception – even the name of this franchise indicates that East Sussex is somewhat neglected!

### Friends of Crewkerne Station

[contact](#)

At the recent meeting of TravelWatch South West in Taunton, the Chairman of the recently-formed adoption group at Crewkerne used his slot in the “Just-a-Minute” session to pose the question: “My local station has something missing - see if you can spot what it is.”

He continued: "It has a Way Out sign pointing to a door that is locked at the busiest time for passengers arriving by train. It has toilets which are locked for most of the day and were threatened with closure for 6 weeks when the TOC wanted to improve them. It has a local transport information poster that had 29 mistakes on it. It has a disused platform which looks unsightly and uncared for. What's missing? - local management of the station!

“Well, we now have a very successful station adoption group with flowers on the station and some improved signage. We managed to get temporary toilets during the closure period and an improved local bus information poster. We are lobbying for further improvements, which although slow to happen, wouldn't happen at all without local input.

"Every station needs one - we have found ACoRP incredibly helpful, and now I believe every station needs a local group to support it - because TOCs won't."

### Avocet Line Rail User Group

[website](#)

After submitting a 10-page response to the Great Western franchise consultations, ALRUG issued a press release to publicise the main issues raised. The press release begins with statistics highlighting the fantastic passenger growth on the Exeter- Exmouth line: 11% in the past year and over 60% in the last 10 years. It then calls for measures to address this growth: station improvements, new trains, a half-hourly service on Sundays and progress with the Devon Metro proposals. The latter includes two additional stations to serve new housing developments on the eastern side of Exeter.

In preparing its consultation response, ALRUG had exchanged views with council officials, local MPs and others. Local rail users were consulted through the group's website, newsletter and notice boards, and a draft response had been discussed at a public meeting at Exmouth. The full document is on the ALRUG website.

*...next, news from Railfuture...*

### UPDATED LIST OF RAIL USER GROUPS

I've just updated Railfuture's [national list of rail user groups](#), having made quite a number of changes since the previous issue. **Please take a moment to check the entries for any groups in the list that you know about, and let me have any changes.** Are there any groups not shown on the list that should be included?

### RAILFUTURE TO STUDY AIRPORT LINKS – *we'll need your help!*

It may seem strange for Railfuture to concern itself with air travel - but even back in the 1930s the Great Western Railway supported an air service from North Devon to South Wales; and our French sister organisation published a report a few years ago entitled "L'avion - a conommer avec moderation" (The aeroplane - to be consumed in moderation)!

For some long-distance journeys the aeroplane is almost the inevitable mode. What is important then is that air travellers to and from our country have attractive public transport access to and from the airport; and indeed that airport workers do not have to rely on cars to get to and from work.

Railfuture's International Committee has therefore decided to do a new study, updating the one they undertook in 2009 but also including information on good and bad experiences of members

travelling to and from UK airports (of which there are 54). We plan to send out a questionnaire in June and **will welcome the help of local rail user associations in sending it out or publicising it to their members**. More details in the next Rail User Express. At this stage, however, **please send any comments to [Trevor Garrod](#)**.

### RAILFUTURE CONTRIBUTE TO A REVIEW OF EUROPEAN RAIL PASSENGER RIGHTS

Railfuture's International Committee has taken part in a review carried out for the European Commission by the consultants Steer Davies Gleave. We have had passenger charters in our country for longer than some of our European neighbours, of course; but for journeys to or from the UK the EU passenger rights are important.

For a copy of the Railfuture submission, please email [Trevor Garrod](#) - who can also provide a copy, or copies, of the EU leaflet on rail passengers' rights.

### LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH NEWS

After much campaigning, the Railfuture Lincs is pleased that an early morning train is to call at Rauceby Station, which should benefit commuters from nearby Graylees village – it's hoped that a more direct footpath can be created between the station and the large housing development at Graylees. Elsewhere in the February newsletter, we read that the Branch committee has been working with other organisations on a bid for grant funding from the Govt's Local Sustainable Transport Fund with the aim of securing improvements to the environs of Hykeham Station and better public transport serving the station. Members have also been busy manning the Branch information stall at events around the County.

### NEWS FROM RAILFUTURE IN WALES

Branch representatives met the local Stena Line route manager to discuss ferry services between Wales and Ireland following the withdrawal of the fast ferry summer service between Fishguard and Rosslare and the Winter high-speed service between Holyhead and Dun Laoghaire. This has resulted in improved publicity of "[SailRail](#)" by Stena and Arriva Trains Wales which now has a dedicated web page providing details of ferry services and enabling bookings to be made.

In their response to the Welsh Govt's consultation on its National Transport Plan, the Branch called for (among other things): improved rail links with the rest of Britain and with the various gateways to continental Europe; re-instatement of some withdrawn Rail-Link buses and better bus-rail integration; some additional rail services which could be achieved at marginal cost; clarity over the full extent of electrification and consequent rolling stock allocations; and progress on rail schemes that have been recommended in past studies but not delivered.

### LONDON & SOUTH EAST BRANCH TO HEAR PLANS FOR OLYMPIC TRANSPORT

Guest speakers at the next meeting of Railfuture London & SE on Sat 28 April will be Network Rail's Olympic Programme Manager, Paul Ellis, and Greater Anglia's Project Manager, Thijs Jan Noomen; a speaker from Southeastern has also been invited. The venue is Greater Anglia's London Academy at Solar House, 1-9 Romford Road, Stratford, about 10 mins walk from Stratford Station. The meeting, to which all are welcome, commences at 10:45, and will be followed in the afternoon by the Branch AGM.

### RAILFUTURE SUMMER CONFERENCE

"How Scotland Took the Rail Way Forward" is the theme for Railfuture's [Summer Conference](#) on Sat 16 June 2012 at the Golden Lion Hotel in Stirling. The fee (including lunch, drinks and report) is only £25 for Railfuture members who book before 30 April, and £30 for non-members. Don't miss it!

***We begin our general news section with announcements of FOUR important consultations to exercise our minds in the coming months...***

### **NETWORK RAIL TO STUDY “ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS” – consultation ends 30 April**

Network Rail is to look at three alternative rail solutions as part of its continued efforts to deliver a better value-for-money railway. Tram and train, community rail initiatives and more innovative ways of replacing diesel traction with electrically-powered trains will all be studied in more detail as part of the company’s alternative solutions route utilisation strategy (RUS).

To further develop the strategy an invitation is being made to NR’s partners, customers and other interested industry parties to submit their ideas. This approach differs from previous RUSs and the submissions will help shape a second draft which will go out to formal consultation in the summer.

The three alternatives being looked at by NR are:

- Can the application of tram or tram train technologies (such as the tram train concept) deliver savings in capital, operating and maintenance costs, whilst simultaneously delivering improvements for passengers?
- Are there cheaper and more innovative ways of replacing diesel traction with electrically-powered trains?
- To what extent can the further development of community rail initiatives provide locally applicable opportunities for adding value to railway operations?

*– from NR press release*

### **DEVOLVING DECISION-MAKING ON RAIL SERVICES IN ENGLAND – consultation ends 28 June**

Most train services in England are specified, funded and managed centrally by the Department for Transport based in London. In line with its aspirations for localism, the Government is seeking to devolve, where appropriate, more accountability and decision-making related to local passenger rail services to sub-national bodies, such as local authorities and PTEs. The consultation explores how this might be done in parts of England; it complements the Command Paper, “[Reforming Our Railways](#)”, just published.

The Government is seeking views on whether improved outcomes for transport users might be achieved if more decisions relating to local rail services were made closer to the communities they serve. They are also inviting PTEs and local authorities to indicate their interest and come forward with outline proposals for taking on decision-making responsibility for passenger rail services.

See <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-10/>

### **RAIL FARES AND TICKETING REVIEW – consultation ends 28 June**

This consultation is designed to gather evidence to inform the Government’s forthcoming Rail Fares and Ticketing Review. The Government’s goal for rail fares and ticketing is to allow more passengers to travel and to have a better experience of rail, at the same time as reducing rail industry costs. A more efficient rail industry can deliver more benefits for passengers and allow rail to grow, while minimising the public subsidy for rail.

The long-standing concerns about complexity in the system must be addressed. Buying a rail ticket should be a straightforward transaction, not an obstacle course. Passengers should be able to choose confidently from a range of fares, finding the best one for their journey without having to understand every nuance of the fares and retail structure.

See <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/dft-2012-09.html>

## **TRANSPORT COMMITTEE HOLDS INQUIRY INTO REFORM OF THE RAILWAYS – *deadline: 18 Apr***

The House of Commons [Transport Committee](#) has decided to hold an inquiry into reform of the railways. This will take account of, but not be limited to, the report by Sir Roy McNulty on improving efficiency in the rail industry and the Government's proposals for reform, fares and decentralisation. The issues which the Committee will examine include those set out below and written submissions are invited:

1. What should be the Government's vision for the railways in 2020, taking account of likely spending constraints? How should the balance be struck between taxpayer and farepayer?
2. How are the targeted efficiency savings to be delivered? What will be the consequences?
3. Will the reforms to rail franchises proposed by the Government, including alliances, deliver better services at lower costs?
4. How should fares and ticketing be reformed?
5. What are the implications of the proposals for rail decentralisation and how should responsibilities be devolved to local authorities?

The Committee intends to hold the first oral evidence sessions in June and July. It will hold further sessions in the Autumn, after the Government has published its High Level Output Specification (HLOS) for the railways in July. There will be an opportunity to submit further written evidence at this point. They would be grateful to receive written submissions by Wednesday 18 April 2012.

## **PASSENGER FOCUS “SHARING BEST PRACTICE” EVENTS – *not to be missed!***

A total of eight regional events are being organised by Passenger Focus to discuss the future role of their organisation with Bus and Rail User Groups. The first was held at Ely in January (a report from Railfuture's Trevor Garrod was included in the February edition of RUEx). The next five are:

SOUTH WEST	20 March 2012 at The Grand, Bristol
MIDLANDS	30 March 2012 at Maple House, Birmingham
YORKSHIRE & NORTH EAST	13 April 2012 at The Park Inn, York
SCOTLAND	19 April 2012 at The Queens Hotel, Perth
NORTH WEST	26 April 2012 at County Hall, Preston

To reserve your place at one of these events, contact [Matthew.Andrews@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:Matthew.Andrews@passengerfocus.org.uk)

## **TRAIN OPERATORS COMMIT TO NEW REGULATIONS ON PASSENGER INFORMATION**

All train operators have signed-up to new licence conditions aimed at ensuring passengers receive appropriate, accurate and timely information, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) confirmed earlier this month.

ORR Chief Executive, Richard Price, said: “I am pleased that all train companies have now joined other parts of the rail industry by signing-up to new obligations aimed at ensuring passengers receive appropriate, accurate and timely information. ORR has repeatedly made clear that rail passengers should receive reliable information so that they can plan journeys and make informed decisions, especially when rail services are disrupted. It is striking that currently only one third of passengers think delays are handled well.

“The provision of good passenger information is a fundamental requirement, not an optional ‘add-on’. Good performers have nothing to fear, but poor performers will not be allowed to undermine the industry as a whole. We look forward to working with the rail industry as it gets on with the job of meeting passengers’ expectations, ensuring that train operators, working with station managers and Network Rail, meet the standards set out in their own code of practice on passenger information.” – *Rail.Co*

## **NEW CYCLE SPACES AT RAILWAY STATIONS**

Cyclists and walkers from across the UK are on track to benefit from thousands of new cycle spaces and routes from the middle of this year, Transport Minister Norman Baker has announced.

Over 7,500 new cycle spaces at railway stations and 38 new and improved routes have been agreed, as part of a £30 million package of developments to connect communities, reduce carbon emissions, get people active and make cycling safer and more convenient. The schemes will also promote economic growth by providing commuters with improved sustainable travel options.

The Department for Transport has worked closely with the Association of Train Operating Companies, UK transport charity Sustrans, the Cycle Rail Working Group and local councils to design and approve the 68 projects to provide better access for cyclists and pedestrians. See <http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/press-releases/dft-press-20120307a/> – from DfT press release

## **STRATFORD PARKWAY PROGRESS**

Warwickshire County Council has appointed consultant Mott MacDonald to produce the outline designs for the new Stratford Parkway Station scheme. The consultant has previously designed the Warwick and Coleshill Parkway stations in the county. Outline design work on the £8.8m project is due to be completed by early summer 2012, with the new station scheduled to open by December 2013. – Thanks to Andy Long of the BCA for spotting this

## **FIVE CITIES UNITE FOR NORTHERN HUB RAIL CAMPAIGN...**

The five largest cities in the north of England have joined forces to urge the government to fund the Northern Hub programme, a major rail improvement scheme that would generate £4bn in economic benefits. The leaders of Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle and Sheffield City Councils have written jointly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to stress how important it will be for the Treasury to commit to the £560 million scheme, in full, for delivery between 2014 and 2019.

As well as the full support of the five cities, the Northern Hub also has public backing, with over 83 per cent of those surveyed agreeing with the scheme and 80 per cent saying they will be more likely to travel by train if the plans are carried out. Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is working with council leaders, MPs and business communities to push for the Northern Hub to be funded as a complete package, rather than on a piecemeal basis, in order for the economic potential of the scheme to be fulfilled. – from TfGM press release

## **...AND FOUR LOCAL AUTHORITIES LAUNCH THE GREATER BRISTOL METRO CAMPAIGN**

The Greater Bristol Metro campaign was officially launched last month by the West of England Partnership, the body that represents the four local authorities in the area. They are lobbying the Government and transport companies to include a raft of local rail improvements when the Great Western rail franchise is re-appointed next year.

Rail consultants Halcrow have produced a two-phase plan for the improvements, and gave a presentation to partnership members at a meeting recently. The first phase of improvements would cost £40m, and most of that sum – around £33m – would go on reopening the Portishead rail line for passenger trains. The rest would be spent on doubling the track at Filton Bank and adding an extra service between Bristol and Bath. Phase one also includes an enhanced service on the Severn Beach line.

Phase two prioritises the reopening of the Henbury loop, a network of stations in the north of the city. Two new stations at Henbury and North Filton would cost £21 million and provide links to the development at Filton Airfield. - [thisissomerset.co.uk](http://thisissomerset.co.uk)

## EXTRA TRAINS FOR LONDON MIDLAND AND TRANSPENNINE

Passengers are on track to benefit from faster, longer trains and over 12,000 extra seats each day on journeys into London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield, Glasgow and Edinburgh, Rail Minister Theresa Villiers announced at the end of Feb.

The capacity boost is being provided thanks to 80 new train carriages set to be introduced on the First TransPennine Express and London Midland networks from December 2013. The two franchises will get 40 extra carriages each. LM will receive a total of 40 Siemens Class 350/3 carriages while TPE will receive 40 Class 350/4 carriages; those on TPE will be configured slightly differently to meet the needs of long distance and airport passengers.

The new carriages are part of wider plans by the Government to introduce 2,700 carriages onto the rail network by 2019. – *Dept for Transport press release*

*[If the lease market worked properly, train operators would be able to get the trains they need from the Rolling Stock companies without the need for taxpayers to chuck sackloads of cash at the system ... although, to be fair, the Government is trying to address this problem in their Command Paper, "Reforming Our Railways" – Ed]*

## USE YOUR AVIOS ON EUROSTAR

When Airmiles and BA Miles rebranded as Avios last November, there was much disquiet from Airmiles collectors as flight taxes are no longer free. However, if you swap Avios points for Eurostar return tickets, you don't pay taxes or charges, making it excellent value; eg, 9,000 Avios for a Paris return, depending on availability. - *moneysavingexpert.com*

## STATION USAGE DATA

In the last edition of RUEx, I said that station usage data is normally published by the Office of Rail Regulation in February each year.

Martin Howard of the [Saunderton Rail Users' Group](#) wrote back to say that his contact at ORR had told him they were intending to publish the figures for 2010/11 in March this year. So keep looking on the ORR website [here](#) – they must appear soon!

## RAIL TRAVEL SETS NEW RECORD

A surge in the sale of cut price train tickets combined with rocketing petrol prices are helping to drive up demand for rail to historic levels, according to new figures published on 12 Mar. Analysis by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) shows that passenger numbers grew by 6% in the last 12 months. Journeys on the rail network reached over 1.4billion – a new high for a peacetime year since the 1920s.

Strong growth in sales of reduced-price tickets in particular suggests that people are increasingly turning to rail by opting for affordable tickets that compare well with the cost of other forms of transport. Figures from ATOC show that over the last 12 months, sales of reduced-price tickets rose by 9%. This includes:

- Advance tickets up by 16%
- Journeys on Railcards rose by 11%. More than 100 million journeys a year are now made with a Railcard, with holders saving on average £138 a year. Railcards give a third of the price off most tickets for young people, families and the over 60s.
- Off-Peak fares grew by nearly 7% and Super Off-Peak fares (generally limited to travel at the quietest times) increased by 12%.

ATOC opinion polling shows that the record price of petrol is also prompting hundreds of thousands of people to switch from road to rail. – *ATOC Press Release*

## SUPPORT FOR RAILFREIGHT

I don't usually cover freight issues in RUEx, but Railfuture's Freight Committee has asked for our help supporting four major freight enhancements that Network Rail wants to deliver in Control Period 5. The projects are: Felixstowe-Nuneaton capacity upgrade, Southampton-West Coast Main Line enhancements, improvements to the WCML north of Preston, and Great Western Main Line gauge enhancements. For further information and how you can help to support these projects, please contact [Peter Wakefield](#).

## ANOTHER CARNET DISCOVERED

In the February edition of RUEx, I asked if anyone knew of a carnet ticket scheme other than the one introduced by the Devon & Cornwall Community Rail Partnership. Andrew McCallum, the secretary of Railfuture Thames Valley, replied that Chiltern Railway offer carnet tickets, but added "their scheme is not aimed at part time workers; rather it is aimed at businesses for staff who need to travel to London, and offers 12 Anytime Returns for the price of 10. No destination other than London is available so it is a product with somewhat restricted use." Details [here](#).

## STATION IMAGES ADDED TO GOOGLE

Network Rail has teamed up with Google to add some of its biggest stations to the online 360 degree Google Street View application, helping people to better find their way around some of the Britain's busiest transport hubs. Over the past fortnight, the Google Trolley has captured images of the concourses of 13 stations including London Liverpool Street, Manchester Piccadilly and Leeds. – *Transport Xtra, 7 Mar*

## LAST MINUTE NEWS ITEMS...

Prospective open-access train operator **Go-op** has just published its Spring newsletter. Read it [here](#). Also just published on the Dept. for Transport website is the annual "[British Social Attitudes \(Transport\)](#)" survey which gives statistics on public attitudes towards transport in Great Britain. The Association of Community Rail Partnerships have just issued their [Community Rail Awards programme](#) for 2012. The closing date for entries is 22 June – so get to work on your projects!

## EVENTS

National & regional rail events are highlighted in **yellow**. Community & environmental events are in **green**.

**Sat 17 Mar** [ESTA](#) Spring Meeting at the URC Church Hall, Halesworth from 14:15.

**Sat 17 Mar** [Railfuture Wessex Branch](#) AGM in Winchester, with speaker from Network Rail.

**Tue 20 Mar** [Passenger Focus](#) "Sharing Best Practice" event, Bristol.

**Fri 23 Mar** [Reforming the Railways](#) conference at Huddersfield Univ. Speakers from Halcrow, Dutch Rail Gp, Aecom, PTEG, TfGM, Metro & TSSA. Vol Gp fee £20. Email: [railconf.info@gmail.com](mailto:railconf.info@gmail.com)

**Sat 24 Mar** [Railfuture Scotland](#) spring meeting/AGM, Friends Meeting House, Edinburgh from 14:00.

**Fri 30 Mar** [Passenger Focus](#) "Sharing Best Practice" event, Birmingham.

**Sat 31 Mar** [Norfolk Orbital Rail](#) meet at Assembly Rooms, Theatre St, Norwich.

**Thu 5 Apr** Railfuture London & SE Branch, Coastway division meeting from 18:00. [Contact](#).

**Fri 13 Apr** [Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users Assn](#) AGM

**Fri 13 Apr** [Passenger Focus](#) "Sharing Best Practice" event, York.

**Mon 16 Apr** Friends of the Lym'n-Brock'st Line: lecture on the Brockenhurst-Christchurch Line

**Thu 19 Apr** [Passenger Focus](#) "Sharing Best Practice" event, Perth.

**Thu 26 Apr** [Passenger Focus](#) "Sharing Best Practice" event, Preston.

**Sat 28 Apr** [Bus Users UK](#) AGM in Liverpool.

**Sat 28 Apr** Railfuture [London & SE Branch](#) AGM at 1-9 Romford Road, London E15 4LJ from 10:45.

**Sat 28 Apr** Railfuture South Wales Branch AGM at Friends Meeting House, 43 Charles St, Cardiff from 1315. Contact [Chairman](#) for info.

**Sat 28 Apr** [Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line](#) AGM in Carlisle

**Sat 28 Apr** [PENRUG](#) AGM at Thetford.

**Thu 3 May** Railfuture London & SE Branch, Coastway division meeting from 18:00. [Contact](#).

**Sat 5 May** [ESTA](#) AGM in St Mary's Church Hall, Woodbridge from 14:00. Speaker from Network Rail.

**Sat 5 May** MCRUA's [Lincolnshire Poacher](#) railtour from Chester and Mid-Cheshire stations.

**Wed 9 May** Railfuture London & SE, Eastern division meeting in Stratford from 18:30. [Contact](#)

**Sat 12 May** Railfuture AGM at the Worcester Guild Hall.

**Mon 14 May** ACoRP "Members' Seminar, Midlands" in Crewe. Details [here](#).

**Tue 15 May** ACoRP "Members' Seminar, North" in York. Details [here](#).

**Wed 16 May** ACoRP "Members' Seminar, South" in London. Details [here](#).

**Thu 17 May** [Edenbridge & Dist. Rail Travellers' Assn](#) open AGM at WI Hall, Edenbridge from 19:00

**Thu 17 May** [SCRUA](#) AGM at Gobowen Station from 19:30.

**Sat 19 May** Railfuture London & SE, Kent division meeting at The Elephant, Faversham. [Contact](#)

**Tue 22 May** [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) AGM

**Sat 26 May** Provisional date for [West Sussex Rail Users Association](#) AGM, to be held in Horsham.

**Thu 31 May** [Assn of Public Transport Users'](#) annual meeting with First Capital Connect & Network Rail at Trinity URC church hall, Beaconsfield Rd, St Albans from 19:30.

**2 – 10 Jun** Railfest at the [National Railway Museum](#), York

**Thu 7 Jun** Railfuture London & SE Branch, Coastway division meeting from 18:00. [Contact](#).

**16 - 24 Jun** [National Bike Week](#) – team up with local cyclists to promote train+bike travel.

**Sat 16 Jun** Railfuture [Rail Reopenings Conference](#) Stirling. Topics incl Alloa and Airdrie-Bathgate reopenings and the Borders Rail scheme. Fee only £25 (£30 non members) includes lunch & report.

**Fri 22 Jun** Closing date for entries in ACoRP's 2012 Community Rail Awards.

**Wed 18 Jul** ACoRP seminar "National Station Adoption" in Manchester. Details [here](#).

**Sat 22 Sep** Annual [World Car Free Day](#) helpfully falls on a Saturday this year!

**Fri 28 Sep** ACoRP Community Rail Awards at the Steam museum in Swindon.

**Sat 6 Oct** SW TravelWatch autumn meeting at the Somerset College of Art & Tech'y in Taunton.

**Sat Oct 27** [CSV Make A Difference Day 2012](#). A day for recruiting volunteers from the community, setting them to work and reaping the publicity. Register your event on the CSV website.

**Tue 30 Oct** [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) public meeting

**Sat 3 Nov** Railfuture Rail Users' Conference, Birmingham

**More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.**

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

*This bulletin has been sent by*

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