

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.

Please include railfuture.org.uk in your list of useful contacts on your website and in newsletters!

**Please support
Britain's number one
advocate for the
railways and rail users!**

*For details about
group affiliation to
Railfuture, contact the
[Membership Secretary](#)*

BIG HITTERS JOIN RAILFUTURE

Railfuture welcomed some respected big names from the rail industry into its ranks at its AGM in Worcester. The group's new president is **Christian Wolmar**, the well-known writer on rail issues. Former rail minister **Lord Andrew Adonis** is vice president, as are **Adrian Shooter CBE**, former boss of Chiltern Railways, **Chris Green**, who was chief executive of Virgin Trains and a non-executive director of Network Rail, **Roger Ford**, who writes for Modern Railways magazine, and **Barry Doe**, an expert on fares and timetabling.

Christian Wolmar said: "I am delighted and honoured to have been elected president of what is an increasingly important organisation. Over the years Railfuture has shown precisely what its name implies. The railways have a fantastic future and the fact that this is now widely recognised in political circles is down to the lobbying of organisations like Railfuture. Now it is vital that the current levels of investment are maintained to ensure that Britain has a railway fit for the 21st century."

Railfuture's new chairman, **Dr. David Berman**, said "These people are serious big hitters from the rail industry, and their willingness to join us shows that our campaigning is on the right track. We hope that these respected names will further strengthen our work in fighting for a better railway for all".

We continue 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.

My mention of Gosport in the last edition of Rail User Express elicited a response from a member of Friends of the Derwent Valley Line who used to live in the town. So it's appropriate that I include FDVL as this month's Guest Rail User Group...

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH

Friends of the Derwent Valley Line

[website](#)

Originally constituted in 2004, the Friends of the Derwent Valley Line is a voluntary group representing passengers and local communities along the Derby to Matlock railway line. The group sits on the Management Panel of the Derwent Valley Community Rail Partnership, and actively supports the work of the CRP. A continued increase in passengers on the line is welcome, but this does lead to overcrowding on occasions, and the FDVL feels that its campaign for an hourly all-stations service is fully justified.

Most stations on the line have been adopted by local teams associated with Friends of the Derwent Valley Line or other local groups. FDVL is developing a series of walks along the line, and their first walks leaflet can be downloaded from the website. With the permission of East Midlands Trains, members recently undertook an on-train passenger survey with a view to exploring new travel opportunities.

...next, news from our regular contributors (from north to south)...

Friends of the Far North Line

[website](#)

FoFNL were very unhappy when it was revealed that the completion date for upgrades to the Highland Main Line between Perth and Inverness (promising more passing loops and higher line speeds) has slipped to 2025, with an even later date of 2030 for upgrades to the route via Aberdeen. This was alongside other news that major upgrades to trunk roads in the Highlands are being given the green light. The group's concerns, expressed to the Parliamentary Committee in March, made headlines in both the *Herald* and the *Scotsman*.

Network Rail is trialling a new style of half-barrier level crossing and, if all goes well, intends to roll out the design across Scotland including several locations on the Far North Line; FoFNL hopes that lines speeds can be raised as a result, especially if the new barriers are combined with some kind of obstacle detection, as commonly used in Europe.

One of FoFNL's committee members has written to the MD of East Coast about the lack of hot food on board the northbound Highland Chieftain, arguing that many passengers will have been travelling since early morning, and that some would be heading further north after leaving the train at Inverness. A reply is awaited.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the successful opening of the low-cost station at Beaully, and FoFNL welcomes an optimistic press release from the Highlands & Islands Transport Partnership which suggests that another low-cost station at nearby Conon Bridge could be opened soon, following the signing of an agreement with Network Rail to begin design work.

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

[website](#)

The campaign for a regular local service between Edinburgh & Berwick, and reopened stations at East Linton and Reston, was given a boost earlier this year when a delegation headed by the Scottish Minister for Transport visited the line and were shown around by RAGES committee members, with the media in tow. The next stage in the campaign was a 40-minute debate at Holyrood, on 21 March, on a motion in support of the campaign objectives introduced by John Lamont MSP. Several RAGES members packed the public gallery to hear a number of MSPs speaking in support (including praise for the RAGES campaign). The Minister's closing remarks suggested that the proposals would receive favourable consideration, but were subject to formal scheme appraisal. RAGES hopes that the forthcoming ScotRail franchise renewal process would present an opportunity to secure at least the local service aspirations.

The long-awaited meeting with East Coast's Managing Director, Karen Boswell, took place in Dunbar recently, with local authority representatives in attendance. The RAGES committee used their newly-purchased digital projector to illustrate their concerns and aspirations. Points discussed included the lack of connectivity between Dunbar and Berwick, anomalies between certain fares in the Musselburgh area and insufficient car park spaces at Dunbar. In her presentation, Karen mentioned that East Coast envisaged only limited changes to the service pattern over the next 5 years.

CKP Railways (Keswick-Penrith reopening)

[website](#)

Events marking the 150th anniversary of the construction of the Cockermouth, Keswick and Penrith railway (and the 40th anniversary of closure between Keswick and Penrith) were held in May; guided walks and further festivities planned for this summer.

In the spring newsletter, we read that CKP Railways, the community-interest company planning to reopen the section between Keswick and Penrith, has been fighting a planning application for a housing development alongside the line, as the clearances were found to be too tight to allow reinstatement of the railway – they hope for a satisfactory outcome. Meanwhile, the drive is on to raise around £1m for the next stage in the development of the line, which will involve legal

agreements and planning approvals. The principal means of fund raising is through the sale of investment bonds in multiples of £100 to individuals and organisations – details on the website.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line (STORM) [website](#)

Three representatives from Northern attended STORM's AGM in May; the most important news was that the company is considering taking on volunteers over and above station adopters to help passengers at times of disruption. STORM members felt that this could be a worthwhile idea but it needs some development work. The main discussions at the meeting focussed on progress with bringing Metrolink to Oldham and Rochdale, and the inconvenience of the temporary travel arrangements. STORM understands that the date for Metrolink opening to Oldham Mumps is 13 June, subject to final testing.

In his report, the Chairman welcomed the additional evening trains between Manchester and Rochdale, but said that more capacity was also needed on Sundays. There was good news about the go-ahead for the curves at Todmorden and Castleford, but some frustration that the approval of government funds for the full implementation of the Northern Hub project has not yet been given. Passengers locally still have to squeeze aboard obsolete Pacers and Sprinters (or are forced to wait for the next train) whilst it seems the rest of the UK network gets newer and better rolling stock almost on demand. There's also concern that car parking is nowhere near adequate at any local station.

Friends of the Barton Line [website](#)

A note of appreciation was received from East Coast Trains after members of FBL had distributed their timetables; meanwhile, the FBL committee has reported an error in Northern's latest timetable relating to the bus link to Hull on Sundays. In the diary of events, we note that both the first and last days of the summer Sunday service on the Barton line provide FBL members with a good excuse for a day out with lunch.

At a Northern Trains drop-in event for station adopters, two representatives from FBL managed to obtain clarification about the new Humber Region Rail Development Company which was set up in 2011. They discovered that it's a not-for-profit company financed by train operators and East Yorkshire Council to ensure that the region has a strong, co-ordinated voice in the formulation of service level agreements. Two local community rail partnerships are represented on the board, and it is hoped that Lincolnshire local authorities will want to participate.

Elsewhere we read that Michael Portillo has been spotted on the Barton line recently, recording material for a new series of Great Railway Journeys, due to be broadcast later this year.

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group [website](#)

NCRUG welcomes the new customer information screens for Frodsham and Helsby but points out that they don't display the expected train times when there's a delay, nor are they (yet) programmed to show when buses replace trains.

For the third year running, Northern has agreed (at NCRUG's request) to extend a morning service via Helsby and Frodsham to Liverpool South Parkway on 21 July so that locals can enjoy their annual pilgrimage around the Halton Curve, returning by vintage bus. On the same day, it's planned to hold a special event at Frodsham to celebrate the completion of the Station House renovations. The group continues to campaign for a regular service via the Halton Curve – they hope the scheme will be included for funding in Network Rail's Control Period 5 (2014-19).

NCRUG contributed to Network Rail's "Alternative Solutions" RUS consultations by suggesting a low-cost approach to providing a more frequent passenger service on the Ellesmere Port to Helsby line: lightweight vehicles could be used for the branch, perhaps running on liquid petroleum gas which is readily available from the nearby Stanlow Oil Refinery. The group also suggested extending Merseyrail's third-rail electrification to Helsby.

Mid-Cheshire Rail Users' Association

[website](#)

MCRUA's "Lincolnshire Poacher" special train on 5th May was a sell-out success (Skegness was exceptionally bracing on the day!) with around 550 passengers; the prize draw held on board raised £125 for charity. The group's 2012 programme of Music Trains has got off to a good start, and continues through to November with three trains a month featuring folk, jazz and even a string quartet.

Most of the 10,000 copies of MCRUA's "Walks In & Around Knutsford" booklet, sponsored by the National Lottery, have been handed out; a reprint is planned and work is under way to produce other booklets in the series.

At a recent public meeting addressed by representatives from Northern, aspirations for the future franchise of rail services from 2014 were discussed and MCRUA's committee will be analysing and publishing the findings. The group recognises that accurate passenger numbers are key when looking at resource allocation for local lines, so they're asking for volunteers to help with passenger counts at stations and on trains.

Elsewhere in MCRUA's summer newsletter, we read that the line's Community Rail Partnership has produced a handy leaflet explaining all you need to know about group rail travel; you can read it on the [CRP website](#).

Stourbridge Line User Group

[website](#)

A special edition of SLUG's newsletter has been circulated, consisting of dozens of photos of the new Public Transport Interchange at Stourbridge, which opened at the end of April. The pictures look very impressive, and the comments alongside are mostly appreciative, but there are a few niggles (eg: the walkway canopy from the nearest bus stand does not extend across to the station booking office). We're told that seating at the bus stands is plentiful, and information is bold and comprehensive. Train departures are shown alongside bus times on the information screens – "a most welcome innovation".

"At last, there's a passenger-friendly subway leading to the Interchange which is light, airy and secure" says SLUG, adding "it's more than just a bus station, and a great accomplishment for Network West Midlands.

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

Skip loads of free compost supplied by the County Council's waste contractor, were parked at Meldreth and Shepreth stations recently, and the rail user group invited its supporters to turn up and help with station gardening ... then help themselves to free compost! There's a reminder that volunteering opportunities, such as helping with station gardening, count towards gaining a Duke of Edinburgh award.

Rail commuters using the two stations are asked to bring along breakfast toast crust, orange peel and any other titbits. The reason for this strange request is that worm compost units have been installed to produce fertiliser for the station gardens, and the worms need feeding regularly!

In other vermological news, we read that glow worms have been spotted on grass verges near the stations, and the council grass cutters have been placed on alert.

Association of Public Transport Users (Herts)

[website](#)

APTU has been in correspondence with First Capital Connect on a number of issues, in particular the contingency planning for the Olympic Games period. FCC gave an assurance that they would be strengthening trains and that further capacity could be provided last minute, according to advice from the Olympic Delivery Authority. FCC also gave answers about the way they dealt with service disruption (the newsletter editor then quoted a pertinent item from a previous edition of RUEX in

which I reported that all train operators had signed up to new licence conditions aimed at ensuring passengers receive accurate and timely information).

For St Albans Station, APTU has asked FCC if they could install extra seating as a replacement for some that were removed several years ago, and if they could repair the steps leading down to the station from street level. They note that the current works to install extra cycle parking will bring the total to over 1,000 spaces (!!!), making it one of the biggest in the UK.

The publication of the Thameslink Franchise consultation Document is imminent, and APTU will be working with Railfuture and neighbouring rail user groups on a combined response because they feel that a single response is more likely to be taken into account.

Felixstowe Travel Watch

[website](#)

Just as they celebrate the 40th anniversary of their association (founded to fight threats to the train service), the FTW committee now perceive a new threat arising from the inability of the single line track to Felixstowe to cope with both an hourly passenger service and the increasing number of container trains. The Port of Felixstowe is suggesting that some of the off-peak passenger trains should be replaced by express bus services, although the planning agreement for port expansion does stipulate that a key section of the line is to be dualled by 2018. In the meantime, the FTW is appealing to its members to make good use of the hourly service and encourage others to do so, adding "there is clearly going to be some considerable debate on this vexed subject."

The concourse of the Coop store in Felixstowe is the favoured location for FTW's information stall, and two dates have been booked in 2012. FTW's newsletter for May carries the first news update from the new Greater Anglia train operator, which includes the promise of increased support for community rail partnerships and station adopters across the region.

Southwark Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

In advance of service changes in May, SRUG sent out a bulletin advising their members that alterations to services to/from Victoria and Blackfriars were on the way. The changes are the consequence of Blackfriars station reopening after a long closure for redevelopment.

The group is campaigning for a 7 day-a-week, full day and evening service to Blackfriars/St Pancras and beyond to be included in the new Thameslink franchise agreement which is now being developed by the Department for Transport. They point out that the loss of Southeastern rail services to Victoria will expose very clearly the serious deterioration in their Victoria services, adding that: "we lose the South London Line's two trains an hour to Victoria from London Bridge on 9 December when the East London Line starts running. From that date, at Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill, we will have just two trains an hour to Victoria (instead of four during the weekday), and none at all in the evenings and on Sundays."

...next, news from Railfuture...

RAILFUTURE CONFERENCE IN STIRLING

In a few days, Railfuture members will be converging on the Golden Lion Hotel in Stirling for the summer conference on Saturday June 16th. For members staying the night in Stirling, or not in a hurry to leave, it is proposed to take a train ride to Alloa in the early evening.

The successful reopenings of the Stirling-Alloa and Airdrie-Bathgate lines will be featured at the conference, as will the ongoing project to rebuild the line from Edinburgh southwards to Galashiels and Tweedbank. A spokesman from Network Rail will talk about the improvements planned for the rail network in central Scotland. The conference will also hear about European transport policy and current campaigning by Railfuture Scotland. Last minute enquiries to: stirling@railfuture.org.uk.

Representatives of Railfuture branches and rail user groups attending the conference in Stirling are asked to bring along their leaflets, newsletters and other publications.

RAILFUTURE “LINKS TO AIRPORTS” STUDY

The Railfuture International Committee would still appreciate the help of rail user groups in distributing their questionnaire about links to airports (see previous issue of Rail User Express for details). If you think you can help, please email [Trevor Garrod](mailto:Trevor.Garrold@railfuture.org.uk). The deadline for responses is the end of September.

RAILFUTURE WESSEX BRANCH: STATION SURVEYS

After trialling station surveys in the Fareham area last year, Wessex Branch members are rolling out their programme of surveys to include Havant and neighbouring stations, plus stations in north Dorset. The exercise, which has the approval of the train operator, involves checking facilities at stations and in the immediate environs with a view to suggesting areas where the experience for passengers could be improved. Findings are sent to both the train operator and the local transport authority.

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE BRANCH

With the consultation process in advance of the next Northern franchise (which could be combined with the TransPennine franchise) just months away, the Yorkshire Branch committee thinks that now is the time to start thinking about what rail users want to see in the next franchise. Top of the list must be replacement of Pacer and Sprinter diesel units, with the upgrading of stations close behind. The Branch is backing rail users in the east of their area in their argument that the proposed additional TransPennine trains to Manchester should include one per hour to/from Hull rather than York.

The branch committee was represented at the “Reforming the Railways” conference at Huddersfield in March, which included a session on “Devolving Rail to the Regions”, which itself is the subject of a current Dept. for Transport consultation paper.

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

COMBINED THAMESLINK, SOUTHERN AND GREAT NORTHERN FRANCHISE - consultation

Passengers across London, the South East, Sussex and the South Coast are being asked for their views to help shape a major new franchise for train services across their area, Rail Minister Theresa Villiers announced at the end of May. The franchise is expected to cover most of the existing First Capital Connect franchise, including the Thameslink line which is undergoing a £6 billion upgrade. Services currently run by Southern will be added to the new combined franchise from 2015. This would see a single train operator to take responsibility for all rail services from Brighton to King’s Lynn and Southampton to Ashford with London at the heart, creating the largest franchise in the UK rail market. The combined franchise is due to start in September 2013 and run for a minimum of seven years. – dft.gov.uk

An Invitation to Tender for this combined franchise is expected to be released in October. To compile this, the DfT is seeking views from the public about areas of the specification for the combined franchise – the closing date for comments is 23 August 2012. Details [here](#).

Railfuture’s London & SE Branch will be compiling a response in consultation with neighbouring branches and the Passenger Committee.

WITHDRAWAL OF ONCE-A-DAY PASSENGER SERVICE IN LONDON - consultation

A [consultation document](#) relating to the proposed withdrawal of scheduled passenger services between Wandsworth Road, Kensington (Olympia) and Ealing Broadway was published by the Dept. for Transport in May. These passenger services are currently provided by a daily Southern train between Wandsworth Road and Kensington (Olympia); also by a weekly rail replacement bus service between Ealing Broadway and Wandsworth Road. There is no proposal to close the lines to other rail traffic. The closing date for comments is 9 August 2012. – *dft.gov.uk*

A there appears to be no effect on infrastructure or on other services, Railfuture is minded to take a neutral stance on this proposal.

WEST YORKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN - consultation

A document detailing Metro's 15-year Local Transport Plan, entitled "MyJourney West Yorkshire", has been published setting out West Yorkshire's transport needs and ambitions until 2026. You can download any of the plan documents [here](#), then complete the online consultations to share your views. The consultation closes on 2 July 2012 and a number of drop-in events are planned for June in various towns and cities. – *thanks to STORM for spotting this*

ABOLITION OF BRBR (RESIDUARY) LTD - consultation

Since BRBR was established in 2001, the Company has pursued its remit of extracting value from the disparate portfolio of assets and liabilities inherited from the British Railways Board. By the date of abolition BRBR will have disposed of more than 90% of its inherited property assets and in doing so will have generated over £400m by way of sales proceeds. However, it is no longer viable given the reduced scale of BRBR's activities to maintain BRBR as a separate corporate entity. It is therefore proposed that BRBR be abolished and its functions, properties, rights and liabilities transferred to a combination of the Secretary of State for Transport, London & Continental Railways, Network Rail and Rail Safety and Standards Board. – *dft.gov.uk*

A consultation seeking views on the proposed abolition of BRBR and on the transfer of its functions, property, rights and liabilities was launched in May and closes on **25 June 2012**. Details [here](#). Railfuture's response to this consultation will be put together by its Policy Committee.

OTHER CONSULTATIONS

The Dept. for Transport consultations on **Rail fares and ticketing** and **Devolving decision making on rail passenger services** both end on **28 June 2012**.

Consultations on the **Integrated Kent franchise**, **East Coast franchise**, **Aviation policy** and **Strategic roads policy** are expected to be published soon.

GOODBYE RUS ... HELLO LTPP

The rail industry has agreed a new process to plan for future demand for rail services, decide how capacity can best be used and assess value for money options for investment. Replacing the previous Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) programme, the Long Term Planning Process (LTPP) has been developed to allow Network Rail and the industry to respond flexibly to the challenges posed by this growth whilst planning the long-term capability of the rail network up to 30 years ahead.

This is in line with wider changes within the industry, such as longer and less prescriptive franchises, Network Rail's reorganisation into ten devolved routes, and new alliances between train operating companies and Network Rail at route level. – *rail.co*

NETWORK RAIL ENGINEERING EXPLAINED ON VIDEOS

Network Rail has produced a series of 15 videos explaining their work for an intended audience of school leavers seeking careers in the rail industry. The subject matter includes how trains are controlled, the design of level crossings and how rail is manufactured. The videos show operations in depots, out on the track, and in laboratories and manufacturing plants. They can be viewed online via the NR website by following this [link](#). – thanks to STORM for spotting this

Rail campaigners are often confronted with baffling technical arguments as to why a certain course of action is possible or impracticable, and would therefore find much of interest in these videos – Ed.

LOW COST ELECTRIFICATION FOR BRANCH LINES

Just published on the Dept. for Transport website is a report with the above title by DeltaRail published in July 2010; this examines the possibility of replacing diesel traction on low-usage branch lines with modern tram-type vehicles to reduce operating costs and overall carbon emissions while providing an improved ride for passengers. You can read the report [here](#). – *dft.go.uk* [Oddly, the report still bears its original “Strictly Confidential” markings!!! – Ed]

Tram trains will be running in Britain in 2015, as the result of a decision by the Department for Transport to invest £58 million in a trial scheme in South Yorkshire. Transport minister Norman Baker has given the green light to a project which will link the present Sheffield tram network and Rotherham via a new 400m connection near Meadowhall. – *Railnews*

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF

A stark warning has been issued on the danger of the cost of the Luton Dunstable Busway overrunning, after contractor costs were revealed to have risen by £11 million. Luton Borough Council officers in charge of the scheme say they are still confident it can be delivered for its original £89.25 million price tag. But the cost of the design and construction of busway, by contractor BAM Nuttall, has risen to £62 million from the original £51 million forecast at the tender stage. – *Luton Today*

INNOCENT PASSENGERS CAUGHT IN TICKET CRACKDOWN

A new report from [Passenger Focus](#), entitled Ticket to Ride, reveals that passengers using Britain’s rail network face very inconsistent treatment when travelling without a ‘valid’ ticket. Passengers who make an innocent mistake can find themselves facing a hefty bill, or in some of the worst cases, a criminal prosecution. Passenger Focus has been contacted by hundreds of passengers who have faced very unfair treatment as a result of an inconsistent application of complex rules. In some cases individual staff deal with situations well, but sometimes the consequences can be severe with payment of large ‘fines’ and threats of criminal prosecution.

Passenger Focus wants to see:

- the introduction of a code of practice for non Penalty Fare areas which sets out clear and consistent guidelines on how passengers who board without a ‘valid’ ticket should be dealt with.
- passengers should only face criminal prosecution with proof of intent to defraud
- greater flexibility when a passenger can prove they bought a valid ticket but cannot produce the ticket (or all of them) when asked
- greater transparency on how many penalties are issued, for what and how many appeals are upheld or overturned.

-PF press release

Railfuture agrees with Passenger Focus that rail travellers are being treated harshly when they haven't got exactly the right ticket. "We believe that passengers making an innocent mistake should be treated with fairness – they shouldn't be made to feel like a criminal," said chairman Dr David Berman. "We support the rail industry's attempts to tackle fare evasion but it's financially counter-productive for a train operator to upset a passenger so much that they might be put off from using the train ever again. Railfuture has been approached by members of the public who have experienced the same situations as stated by Passenger Focus, so we know that their report is accurate. We survey our members, and they consistently tell us that they want a simpler fare structure. It's one of the big issues that would make people more likely to use the train more often.

"Being scared that their ticket isn't valid is one factor that puts people off travelling by train. It's yet another reason not to close ticket offices, as ticket machines cannot give the same reassurance that face-to-face contact with a human can. Sometimes the stress of being at the head of a long queue can lead to people making mistakes at the ticket machines, and people cannot reasonably be expected to take in all the information on cluttered screens. Fare simplification must come first. It's an issue which is frequently raised at our conferences." – *Railfuture press release*

NETWORK RAIL IS WARNED OVER LATE TRAINS

The Office Of Rail Regulation has told Network Rail to improve the punctuality of long-distance passenger services, or face a 'substantial' penalty. The ORR has predicted that Network Rail is set to breach its operating licence in the coming year, and now the regulator is preparing to issue an enforcement notice. It has conceded that levels of punctuality are 'good by historical standards', but goes on to point out that Network Rail is committed to doing better still.

An inquiry by the ORR revealed that Network Rail had 'struggled to cope' with the challenges of reaching its long distance punctuality target, although it is recognised that some factors are outside NR's control – particularly the growing menace of cable theft. Nonetheless, the regulator is insisting that more can and must be done, having concluded that some of the problems have been 'of the company's own making', including problems with timetable planning and poor handling of equipment failures. It has ordered NR to provide fresh plans, drawn up in conjunction with operators, to keep more trains on time. - *Railnews*

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

The next conference of TravelWatch NorthWest will be held at Blackpool Town Hall on Thursday 14 June, starting at 1030. In the afternoon, delegates will have the opportunity to take a tram ride and visit the new tram depot, courtesy of Blackpool Transport Services. Representatives from rail user groups can book a slot in the "Just a Minute" session to have their say on a subject of their choosing. The conference is free but donations to help with costs would be welcomed. For full details and a booking form, contact [TWNW admin](#) or see the [TWNW website](#).

Future date: TWNW's autumn conference will be held in Liverpool on Thursday 11 October.

PLAN TO ESTABLISH A NORTH OF ENGLAND RAIL EXECUTIVE

New details of how local authorities in the North of England could take over the governance of local rail services were released in May. The proposed governance arrangements have been drawn up by the chief executives of the local authorities in Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and York. They will now be discussed with local authorities in the North East, Merseyside and Lancashire. – *from Local Transport Today, spotted by Andrew Long*

BUT...

Leaders of the North East's 12 local authorities have met to go over the options now facing them, with many favouring a "go-it-alone" plan to control trains from Whitby up to Berwick and across to

Cumbria, with civic centre bosses setting out the terms of any new franchise. A North Eastern franchise would be more locally focused and accountable, but some transport authority members have questioned whether it would have the level of funding needed to match its aspirations. The alternative is to join with councils in Manchester and Yorkshire where officials are already setting up a Rail in the North Executive. Such a move would, it is feared, see the North East squeezed out and forced to fight for funding against a substantially stronger Manchester. – *Newcastle Journal*

COMMUNITY RAIL STATUS FOR FURNESS LINE

Passengers in Cumbria and North Lancashire will have more say on how local rail services are run after the service designation of the Furness Line as a community rail service, Rail Minister Theresa Villiers announced on 1 June. Designation of the line between Barrow-in-Furness to Carnforth and on to Lancaster will enable train companies to work more closely with the Furness Line Community Rail Partnership to better design services to meet local needs.

Rail Minister Theresa Villiers said: “I want to encourage communities to become more closely involved with their railways to help create the services and stations passengers deserve. That’s why I am delighted to announce this latest community rail service designation. Today’s designation is a major step towards helping the Furness Line Community Rail Partnership work closely with local groups to provide innovative and more cost effective rail services for their community.” – *dft.gov.uk*

BEECHING ANNIVERSARY

27 March 2013 will mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of the report by Richard Beeching entitled “The Reshaping of British Railways”. This presents rail users with an ideal opportunity to draw attention to closed lines and stations in their area, together with the possibilities for reopening. Now is the time to start planning your campaign!

MORE THAN 1 IN 4 WOMEN IN LONDON FEEL UNSAFE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

In the wake of findings from a YouGov poll that a quarter of women in London often don't feel safe on public transport, campaign group [End Violence Against Women](#) called for Mayoral and Assembly candidates in May’s elections to take action, including: better staffing levels and staff training, better lighting and adequate policing.

The YouGov poll found that almost twice as many women in London as men say they do not feel safe using London public transport at all times of day and night (28% of women as to 15% of men). Of women in the survey who chose to comment further on their feelings about safety when travelling in London, the highest number said they wanted to see action on transport staffing - including wanting more staff, better training for staff, and staff to be more visible. After staffing, the next most commonly expressed desires were for more visible policing on the transport system, and better lighting on buses and trains, at stops and stations and beyond. – *EVAW press release*

[It could be useful to quote evidence from EVAW’s website when fighting proposals to reduce station staffing levels; another idea is to invite a representative from EVAW to one of your meetings – Ed]

SPLIT TICKET TOOL

Money Saving Expert’s new, online, [split-ticket tool](#) uncovers hidden ticket combinations to cut the cost of walk-on single fares. The website hopes to introduce a tool covering advances and returns in the future, though it's more complex as there are many more options.

Once the tool has told you what the cheapest tickets are, just go to the station kiosk (not machines) and ask for the separate tickets in the results. There is no problem making this request – you can buy tickets for any route at any station. As with all split ticketing, the train MUST call at all the stations you buy tickets to and from.

You can also download the new [TicketySplit Lite iPhone app](#) or bookmark the [TicketySplit mobile site](#).

– [moneysavingexpert.com](#)

SAVE ON FOOD AND DRINKS WITH THE NEW BITE CARD

[BITE card](#) is changing. Thanks to the international loyalty programme TravelWise, the new BITE card will give you even more great discounts and delicious offers. Register now to get your new improved BITE card – or risk losing your tasty 20% off at food and drink outlets across UK railway stations. Don't delay, your old card will expire soon so sign up now and get more BITE. New to BITE? You too can get your teeth into great offers if you sign up now. – [bitecard.co.uk](#)

SMK AWARDS FOR TRANSPORT CAMPAIGNERS

The [Sheila McKechnie Foundation Campaigner Awards](#) includes a category for transport campaigners working anywhere in the UK to meet the challenges of our time by improving access, creating sustainable, integrated solutions and/or helping change the way people think about transport. If you're campaigning on an issue relating to transport and would benefit from the SMK awards programme, then you can apply to be in with a chance of winning. You'll have to be quick: the deadline for applications is 18 June 2012.

Winners of an SMK Campaigner Award receive a tailored package of support, which includes one to one coaching from a highly experienced campaigner, an intensive and inspiring residential skills-building weekend and an invitation to a high profile awards ceremony. Winners are also invited to join the SMK Alumni Programme.

THE FUTURE OF CHEQUES

Following recent correspondence about cheques in Rail User Express, Alan Findlay wrote in to say: "My understanding is that banks have now said that cheques will continue to be available indefinitely. It would be worth checking this before looking into alternatives which may be unnecessary."

Railfuture's Finance Officer, David Harby, then added his views on the subject: "After much pressure banks have said that cheques will continue but they are still keen to reduce the number of cheques issued. In Railfuture, we will still need alternative payment options for a number of other reasons such as:

- I often now get queries from members who want to pay their annual membership but who no longer have cheque books.
- It costs us more in bank charges for cheques as opposed to electronic payments as well as being more time consuming in processing them and depositing them in our bank.
- We have members living overseas who do not have sterling bank accounts. By electronic payment they can transfer money to us in sterling and be charged in their local currency."

EVENTS

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

Mon 11 Jun [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at The Sackville Bar, Bexhill from 19:00.

Mon 11 Jun [Watford Rail Users' Group](#) meet at Watford Town Hall from 18:45.

Tue 12 Jun Chingford Line Users' Association AGM at St Mary's Welcome Centre, Walthamstow Village from 19:30.

Thu 14 Jun [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) conference at the Town Hall, Blackpool from 10:30 with speakers from Blackpool Transport and First TPE; followed by tram ride at 14:00.

Thu 14 Jun [Dornoch Rail Link Action Group](#) AGM at the Pentland Hotel, Thurso from 11:15. Guest speaker from DRS.

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 £30 - includes lunch, drinks & report.

Sat 16 Jun [Railfuture Yorks](#) summer meeting at Priory Place Methodist Ch, Doncaster from 1400.

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

Sat 23 Jun Joint Railfuture [East Anglia](#)/London branch meeting at the YMCA, Colchester from 14:15

Thu 5 Jul National Rail Conference in Liverpool

Sat 7 Jul [SARPA](#) meet at the Railway Inn, Borth from 12:00.

Wed 11 Jul [Friends of the Barton Line](#) AGM at the Sloop Inn, Barton-u-Humber from 20:00.

Wed 11 Jul Railfuture [London branch \(E\)](#) meet at Stratford from 18:30

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

Thu 19 Jul [MCRUA](#) AGM at the Golden Pheasant, Plumley from 19:15.

Thu 19 Jul Railfuture [London branch \(Sx\)](#) meet at Lewes from 18:00

Sat 21 Jul Special train via the Halton Curve and celebrations at Frodsham, courtesy of [NCRUG](#)

Sat 18 Aug Railfuture [London branch \(Sx & Kent\)](#) meet in Robertsbridge

Tue 4 Sep [SARPA](#) meet at the Sportsman, Newtown from 18:30.

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

Sat 22 Sep Railfuture [Yorks branch](#) meet in Hebden Bridge Town Hall

Fri 28 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards at the Steam museum in Swindon.

Sat 29 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Festival, Bristol.

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

Sat 6 Oct [SARPA](#) AGM at Shrewsbury Station from 13:00.

Thu 11 Oct [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) conference at Merseytravel, Liverpool.

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 all the way from leafy Dorset by

Tony Smale, Railfuture Rail User Group Liaison Officer
e-mail: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk phone: 01929 462116

The Railway Development Society Limited is a (not for profit) Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 5011634.

Registered Office:- 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND