

## 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](http://railfuture.org.uk) in your list of useful contacts on your website and in newsletters!

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**We begin with a special announcement from Railfuture Board Member, Roger Blake**

## Rewarding RUGs

Railwatch No.132 for July gave the first announcement (on pages 16-17) of the latest innovation from Railfuture - national awards for the unsung heroes and heroines and their campaigning, and other railway development and promotional work in the rail user group movement. This news item, as heralded in that article, gives more details of the initial awards scheme which will be celebrated in a modest ceremony at the next national Railfuture conference in Birmingham on Saturday 3rd November 2012.

The award categories are for:

- 1 - **Best newsletter** - Gold and Silver awards
- 2 - **Best website** - Gold and Silver awards
- 3 - **Most effective campaign**
- 4 - **Most effective new group**
- 5 - **Most outstanding individual RUG campaigner** [the red carpet award?]
- 6 - **Judges' Special Award**

*Now for the Terms and Conditions.* The closing date for your submissions will be 23.59 on Monday 1st October 2012. There are no application forms. Just one nomination in each category will be sufficient for the nominated newsletter, website, campaign, new group, or individual to be considered; these awards will not be decided by popular vote but on merit, by a panel of judges in which we plan to include our Vice-Presidents.

The same person, or group, can nominate in more than one category. RUGs and individuals can, and indeed are encouraged to, nominate their own newsletter/website/campaign/new group/individual as well as others - please don't be shy! There will however be no personal self-nomination accepted in the fifth category. The Special Award is reserved to the sole discretion of the judging panel.

For **Best newsletter**, confirm your wish for a newsletter, whether your own group's or anyone else's, to be considered for the award by sending either an email to [awards@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:awards@railfuture.org.uk) or a letter and, in either case, post a paper copy of the latest and up to the three other most recent newsletters to RUG Awards at 70 Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, London, N16 0DX.

For **Best website**, which will be judged at any time during October, again send an email or letter confirming your nomination, of either your own or any group's website, with a link to the website, to the email or postal address as above.

For **Most effective campaign**, **Most effective new group**, and **Most outstanding individual RUG campaigner**, email or post as above with your submissions of up to 200 words each. A limited selection of supporting evidence can be sent by post.

All submissions must identify the individual making the nomination, indicate whether it is personal or on behalf of a named group and if so in any particular capacity, and include a full postal address, a telephone number, and an email address where possible.

The general intention is that these awards are open to Railfuture members and RUGs affiliated to Railfuture, with eligibility to enter for an award being one of the benefits of Railfuture membership. [The Directory of Rail Users Groups, accessible off the home page of the national website, shows affiliated RUGs with an 'A']. However, we recognise that many currently non-affiliated groups and their members do sterling work in a wide variety of ways which should not be allowed to pass unremarked. Such groups should nevertheless be able to identify at least one currently-subscribing Railfuture member, by membership number or postcode. [The national website has details of how to join, including online payment using Paypal - please feel free to do so now, before the closing date].

In this initial year therefore, as the prizes include your next year's individual or affiliate membership subscription to Railfuture, it may in effect be a 'free introductory offer' for award-winning non-members. All nominees must have their current membership status [individual or RUG] indicated together with date of expiry of any current subscription, and if none then confirmation of a wish to apply for individual or RUG membership if a prize-winner. Railfuture wishes in principle to be as inclusive as reasonably possible and while membership is at the ultimate discretion of the national Board of Directors, it is very rarely withheld. It should be noted that the membership requirements for RUG awards entry are likely to be tightened-up if, as hoped, the awards develop into a second year in 2013 - the introductory offer of a year's free membership subscription is one that may not be repeated!

One of the added incentives for nominees to come to the 3rd November Birmingham conference is the prospect of being handed an award in person, and being in a photograph receiving it from the judging panel. One of the added perks for others coming to Birmingham is the chance of a prize for guessing an award-winner from amongst the nominees to be announced there. Book now at [www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences) The early-bird members' discount expires at the end of August!

Any queries to Roger Blake at either the email or postal addresses above, or evenings/weekends on telephone [020] 7254 1580, leaving a message with your name and number if no personal answer.

**Please get nominating, be bold ... and may Birmingham for some be a very awarding experience!**

**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...**

#### **GUEST RAIL USER GROUPS OF THE MONTH – *two for the price of one!***

##### **Don Valley Railway**

[website](#)

The Don Valley Railway is a not-for-profit company committed to seeing the reinstatement of a regular rail service along the line between Stocksbridge and Sheffield, which is still used for freight but hasn't seen a regular passenger service since 1970. A feasibility study in 2010 indicated that the infrastructure cost to introduce a half-hourly shuttle service between Stocksbridge/Deepcar and Sheffield Victoria would be around £4.3 million. Last month, there was speculation in the local press as to whether tram-train technology could be used on the line.

The DVR project team is now working on a Business Plan with key partners, including local authorities. "It is clear that what is required is a microfranchise-type operation" says the DVR, "similar to that operated by Wensleydale Railway, with a 40mph linespeed and the ability to share the route with occasional freight." They've recently been getting help from Mott MacDonald; in the spirit of "Big Society" cooperation, the rail division of this major consultancy company is providing information free of charge on how to develop the scheme and get it presented to Network Rail.

## **Devizes Passengers**

[facebook page](#)

Due to local government boundary changes, an existing user group called “Kennet Passengers” morphed into Devizes Passengers covering the Devizes area last October ... although, to reflect residents’ wider travel patterns, the group does not adhere strictly to the Devizes geographical area. They’ve already established a help-yourself travel information desk in the town to make up for the loss of the tourist information centre.

The ambition is to set up a rail group to undertake three distinct projects: (i) integrated ticketing where local people can purchase rail tickets from rail-less Devizes\*, (ii) reviewing access to nearby railway stations by bus, and (iii) overseeing a feasibility study with Network Rail for a station serving Devizes from, say, the former Lavington Station located in the hamlet of Littleton Panell.

The group has initiated discussions with First Great Western but these are on hold until the franchise has been let. “We’re concerned about the possible loss of a through train from Pewsey to Paddington when electrification comes on stream, but with so many other gains to look forward to we might have to grin and bear changing at Newbury.”

*\*if anyone knows of a ticketing scheme like this elsewhere in Britain, please reply to me at [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk) and I’ll pass the details on to the Devizes group.*

Nigel Bray of Railfuture Severnside Branch says that the question of opening a station to serve Devizes was mentioned at the Severnside Branch AGM this year by their guest speaker from Wiltshire Council. The Branch supported this suggestion via its response to the Council’s Core Strategy consultation document.

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

## **Huddersfield Penistone & Sheffield Rail Users’ Association [contact](#)**

With the welcome announcement of rail infrastructure investment in their region, HPSRUA looks forward to seeing a railway fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, they will continue to press for better trains on local lines, fearing that they will be left with hand-me-down diesels while modern trains are introduced on the newly-electrified routes: “can an electric Penistone Line be far behind?”

HPSRUA has declared its support for the devolution of decision making to a new regional authority in the North in the hope that it will bring speedier improvements to their line.

It’s been a busy year so far for the HPSRUA committee: the chairman attended the Westminster meeting of the All Parliamentary Group “Rail in the North” in July; committee members represented HPSRUA at a consultation seminar in Leeds on the new East Coast franchise; the group is in dialogue with Grand Central about the company’s plans to expand the Mirfield-Bradford-London service; and they’ve participated in the West Yorkshire RailPlan consultations. At the latter, the three HPSRUA attendees rejected the option of tram-train conversion on their line, preferring instead “a proper railway”.

Although the bidding process for the next Northern/Transpennine franchise is some way off, HPSRUA prepared the ground by making a list of features it wants to see in the tender document, which they then submitted to both local Passenger Transport Executives and the Dept. for Transport.

An interesting point made by the guest speaker from the South Yorkshire PTE at the group’s AGM was that Community Rail designation had not delivered the expected cost reductions on the Penistone Line. [*I’ve heard this complaint before, and wonder if the objective of a lower-cost railway has been achieved anywhere in Britain – Ed*].

### **Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail Users' Group**

[contact](#)

While welcoming the recent announcement that the Northern Hub Rail project will be fully funded, SHRUG expressed concern (via a press release) that inter-city travellers using the express services between Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds will gain all the benefit of the investment at the expense of local commuters and rail users. "On our local line, Marsden and Slaithwaite in West Yorkshire are both busy stations, while Greenfield and Mossley are in the top third of busiest stations in Greater Manchester. Yet unlike almost every other similarly busy stations these four stations do not already have a half-hourly or better service. Many of our local off-peak trains are already so overcrowded that passengers are sometimes unable to even get aboard the train."

SHRUG is calling upon local rail users to demand that local MPs work with Transport for Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire Metro to ensure that, whoever is running the rail services after the new franchise starts in 2014, has to provide a frequent, modern, fast, clean electric train service as soon as possible.

After issuing their press statement, SHRUG was pleased to hear that local MPs have raised the issue of local rail services both in Parliament and on Radio Manchester.

### **Friends of Denton Station**

[website](#)

Sat 2 June saw the culmination of "quite a bit of planning and logistical miracles" when materials funded by Manchester Airport Community Trust were delivered to the station for making into very large planters. The FoDS volunteer team assembled them and planted them up, transforming the appearance of the station into something the local community can be proud of.

Later in the month, representatives from FoDS and the neighbouring Friends of Reddish South attended a meeting with executives from Transport for Greater Manchester to discuss options for a regular passenger service on the line; the proximity of a major motorway intersection means that Denton would be an ideal hub for park & ride. Meanwhile, there's been good support for the excursion trains operated by Compass Tours, which call at the two stations.

### **Friends of the Barton Line (Humberside)**

[website](#)

There's disturbing news that, as of July, tickets between the Barton Line and station further afield are only valid via Habrough (ie no longer valid via Hull). FBL considers that this restriction effectively throttles any desire to book long distance journeys from Barton Line stations because the connections at Habrough are "hinderingly inconvenient", despite repeated requests for improvements from FBL. The group points out that Barton Line usage statistics are going to be adversely affected by this new rule.

### **Stourbridge Line Users' Group**

[website](#)

Every year, SLUG holds a public meeting which precedes its AGM, and they feel this arrangement improves the image of the group in the community and it leads to new members being recruited. This year's meeting featured an impressive line-up of guest speakers from the rail industry and local authorities, and provoked a lively discussion. The chairman considered it an honour to be elected to serve for a further term, but at the same time was disappointed that no new blood had come forward to serve on the committee – he's appealing to younger members to become involved: "just think how good it would look on your curriculum vitae!"

SLUG's committee welcomed the announcement of investment in electrification and signalling in their region and hope that the displaced diesel trains will be used to strengthen Stourbridge Line services. The group continues to campaign for the re-opening of the Stourbridge to Walsall line for both freight and passenger services. They point out that, when the Lickey Incline is electrified and

three Cross-City trains an hour go to Bromsgrove, more freight will be using the Stourbridge Line instead.

### **Cotswold Line Promotion Group**

[website](#)

The CLPG has been pressing for improvements in Sunday morning services for many years, so the news that London Midland could be introducing regular Sunday morning trains (from Dec 2012) between Worcester and Hereford for the first time in over 40 years is very welcome. There's also news that Pershore gained a brand new Sunday bus service from the end of May, linking the railway station with the town centre; the CLPG helped with publicity for the new service.

In the Chairman's column, we read that the committee of the rail user group for the Tarka Line in Devon recently needed some advice about campaigning to achieve service improvements such as more capacity and shorter journey times ... and so they approached the CLPG, who were pleased to share some of their experiences.

The "Cotswold Line in Bloom 2012" is the title for the colourful set of photographs across the centre spread of the CLPG's magazine, showing some of the very attractive displays produced by talented, volunteer station gardeners. At Ascott-under-Wychwood, they've created a "Jubilee Garden" featuring the Union Flag made of red, white and blue flowers.

An appeal in the previous edition of the group's magazine persuaded several more people to volunteer to deliver the CLPG magazine around some of the towns and villages, and thus save a considerable amount in postage. However, only three people responded to the question of whether members would like to receive the newsletter by email, so the committee decided not to pursue this further. And finally, we're told that the seats are filling up fast for the CLPG's HST charter train, which this year ventures north to York.

### **Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee**

[contact](#)

OBRAC's secretary, Chris Wright, was "overcome with the news that Oxford-Bedford is to be electrified and the closed parts re-opened".

Chris reminds us that the Varsity Line, as a through route, was controversially closed by Labour in 1967. Although losing money, basic economies like signalling modernisation, de-staffing of stations and efficient timetabling had not taken place. Growth plans, including the new town of Milton Keynes, would have changed the finances of the line.

When Iain Stewart, a long-time supporter of [East-West Rail Link](#), became MP for Milton Keynes South, he set up an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and within days, EWRL funding was approved, subject to further business-case work and some council funding. "The work of the East West Rail Consortium has been key to developing the plans", says Chris, "the Consortium has the support of councils, MPs and Local Enterprise Partnerships along the route. The APPG is to continue and will now promote this scheme."

It is encouraging that Local Government and MPs in East Anglia have asked for the route extension to East Anglia to be re-examined, an idea first proposed in the 1851 by the promoters of Oxford-Bletchley! However, the main worry at the moment is the bats in Wolvercote tunnel holding up the Chiltern Railway's Oxford-Bicester-Marylebone proposals; "one cannot imagine the pioneering Victorians permitting such a delay!"

OBRAC concludes that the united support of officials, councils, MPs, LEs and train operators as well as the community is essential, adding that population growth and a regional perspective together helped to build the case. APPG involvement seems to be the magic touch! The group feels that the Dept. for Transport needs to be more proactive on re-openings and should not just rely on local councils.

### **Association of Public Transport Users (Herts)**

[website](#)

APTU is preparing to respond the Department for Transport consultation on the new Thameslink franchise, and is seeking the views of its members on two key issues: preferred destinations south of the Thames (and whether a “turn up and go” service via a limited number of routes is better than having a multitude of destinations), and service priorities during the blockade of London Bridge which is due to begin in 2015.

First Capital Connect stopped selling carnet tickets due to high levels of fraudulent use, and APTU’s committee has been lobbying the Company for their return after hearing of complaints from regular travellers – they understand that FCC will be introducing a revised scheme this autumn, and so they’ll be monitoring the situation to ensure that it meets passengers’ needs. Other problems which the committee have dealt with in recent weeks include: off peak rather than the correct super off-peak tickets being offered at ticket vending machines, and problems with making payments for car parking following the sudden appointment of a new parking sub-contractor.

### **Southwark Rail Users’ Group**

[website](#)

The SRUG committee is putting together detailed comments on the new, combined Thameslink, Southern and Gt Northern franchise based on addressing deficiencies in their local services. They want rail services for SRUG stations (Peckham Rye, Nunhead, Denmark Hill, N. Dulwich, E. Dulwich, Queens Rd Peckham and S. Bermondsey) to be comparable to the Tube; services on the line are currently infrequent, irregular and don’t run at certain times or on certain days.

SRUG note that Transport for London share their aspirations for a Tube-like level of service; the group is encouraging its members and fellow transport campaigners to make their own representation to the Dept. for Transport. SRUG also suggests lobbying MPs and writing letters to the local press.

### **Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group**

[website](#)

BTPG were given an assurance from the Dept. for Transport that bidders for the next Great Western Franchise would be invited to say how they would serve stations beyond Newbury (where the wires will end under the proposed electrification scheme). Now that the Invitation to Tender has been published, the group is alarmed to see that there are separate service-level specifications for Paddington-Newbury and Newbury-Bedwyn, which will allow the operator to run a diesel shuttle for outlying stations, depriving them of their direct link to Paddington. There is not even mention of a Paddington to Westbury/Exeter semi-fast service that, if all else fails, might provide direct London trains.

The group has responded formally to the DfT’s ITT document, and has alerted local MPs to the problem. They report that the MPs are very supportive and are setting up a meeting with the Secretary of State.

### **West Sussex Rail Users’ Association**

[website](#)

WSRUA had a commendable 170 replies to their questionnaire about priorities for the new Southern franchise. The group has now submitted its response to the consultation process, which reflects the priorities highlighted in the questionnaire replies as well as some basic service requirements. The committee’s next task is to meet the five bidders to make sure they know the group’s requirements and to find out what they are prepared to offer in the new franchise.

### **Isle of Wight Bus and Rail Users Group**

[contact](#)

Stuart George of the IoW user group represents the island on Railfuture’s Wessex Branch committee. After the ministerial announcement about the High Level Output Specification and the various major schemes which are to proceed, Stuart made the wry comment:

“Perhaps we're a bit paranoid on the Isle of Wight, but this is the result of experience. We don't have much confidence in high level decisions ever trickling down to us. Two examples: at the Wessex Branch AGM in Winchester, the Network Rail speaker covered every line in the Wessex area but failed to even mention Island Line; and when Stagecoach were awarded the South West Trains franchise, they announced improvements such as real-time train information at all their stations but we later discovered Island Line stations were specifically excluded from most of these improvements.”

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

### **RAILWAYS IN THE HEART OF ENGLAND - how well are we doing?**

This is the theme for Railfuture's Rail User Conference at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. **Book now!**

The line-up of speakers includes: Christian Wolmar, Railfuture President; Mick Miller, Birmingham New Street Gateway project (Network Rail); Toby Ratcliff and Peter Sargent from Centro; representatives from Chiltern Railways, Arriva Cross Country and London Midland; and a representative from Birmingham City Council. The booking fee of only £30 includes lunch and a conference report. A £5 discount applies for bookings from Railfuture members prior to 31 Aug.

For further details about the conference, please email [birmingham2012@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:birmingham2012@railfuture.org.uk). A booking form can be downloaded from Railfuture's website.

### **RAILFUTURE LINCOLNSHIRE**

Issues warranting the attention of the Branch committee recently include: the imposition of car parking charges at two rural stations, excessive queues at Lincoln station booking office and the plans to replace the level crossing that bisects Lincoln High Street with a pedestrian bridge.

There's news that crossing the line at Stamford will become a lot easier for the disabled or those with heavy luggage now that a system has been installed whereby passengers wanting to use the barrow crossing can phone the signaller at Ketton signal box, who then unlocks the gate remotely.

Enclosed with the latest edition of RailLincs is a station survey questionnaire which members are asked to fill in for their local station.

Finally, we're told that the Branch will be manning a stand at the 2012 Grantham Rail Show over the weekend of 1-2 Sept.

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

### **LATEST CONSULTATIONS**

The Office of Rail Regulation has published a consultation paper about **Transparency in the Rail Industry**. The paper begins by saying that “Transparency really matters. It is central to the drive to make public services more accountable and more responsive to their users and to stimulating businesses to improve their performance and to innovate. It can facilitate comparisons between different parts of the sector and help to empower those who use rail services to make better informed choices. It can help to build confidence and trust in the railways; this is important, as increased confidence and trust can help to drive the different and better behaviours across the rail sector required to deliver better value for money and greater focus on customers.” The consultation deadline is 19 Oct. See <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.10984>

The closing date for the Dept for Transport consultation on the combined **Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise** has been extended to 14 Sept. The **Inter-City East Coast franchise** consultation closes on 18 Sept. The DfT is also consulting on their **Aviation Policy Framework**, which gives rail users the opportunity to argue for alternatives to domestic air travel and better rail links to airports – the closing date is 31 Oct. A consultation on the DfT's **Strategic Roads Policy** is expected soon. See <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations>

### **PRESSURE GROWS FOR FARES RETHINK**

The chancellor is coming under growing pressure for January's rail fares rises to be cut back, as some Conservative MPs fear for their seats. George Osborne is being warned that the increases [*affecting England only*], which could be as high as 11.2 per cent in some cases, would pose a disincentive for people to work, and also place more pressure on families who are trying to make ends meet.

Rail campaigners as well as passengers are hoping that the Government will consider a U-turn on fares for the second year running. Fares had been due to rise by RPI+3 per cent in January this year, but the rise was capped by the Chancellor at RPI+1 per cent in his 2011 autumn spending review. – *Railnews*

The Campaign for Better Transport has published a list of MPs which it thinks are vulnerable to a commuter backlash; see <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/blogs/rail/marginal-seats-2012> . Don't miss their highly-entertaining *Train Toff's Club* video at this same web address which warns that trains are set to become a "rich man's toy" – lots of thought-provoking commentary!

### **REPORT URGES MINISTERS TO END WAR ON RAIL PASSENGERS**

Rail users are being hit twice as hard as motorists, with higher fares and cuts in services, according to a report by a UK think-tank. A report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has recommended the Government invests in rail and bus services, while pushing forward planned fuel duty increases, to help cash-strapped rail users.

The report, which is called 'War on motorists: myth or legend', argues that motorists can cut costs by switching to smaller and more fuel-efficient cars and by cutting out non-essential journeys, compared public transport passengers who often have no alternative. Between 1997 and 2010, rail fares rose by 66.2 per cent while all motoring costs rose by just 32.5 per cent.

This month, the Government announced that many rail fares will rise by 6.2 per cent. The report argues that delays in fuel duty increases cost the taxpayer £2.8 billion last year – money which could have been used to support improvements in public transport systems.

Will Straw, IPPR associate director, said: "No number of Tax Payers Alliance petitions will change the facts. Compared to users of public transport, there is no war on motorists. Rail and bus users have seen fares spiral out of control while the cost of driving has actually fallen over the last decade. Users of public transport rarely have an alternative, while car drivers can switch to smaller and more fuel-efficient cars and cut out non-essential journeys. Given the pressures on the public purse, the Chancellor should avoid further delays in fuel duty and think again on rail fare hikes."

David Sidebottom, Passenger Focus director, said: "Passengers have had to endure years of inflation-busting fare increases, so the IPPR's findings confirm what passengers have been telling us. The effect of this month's inflation announcement may lead to fare rises of up to 11.2 per cent on some routes in the New Year. These fare rises will definitely leave passengers feeling an extra chill in 2013. Last year Britain's rail passengers spent over £7 billion on fares, so they're already doing their bit in contributing to the future of the railway." - *Rail.co*

## **PASSENGER FOCUS “EXCHANGE” NEWSLETTER**

Many of you will already have received the first edition of a new user-group newsletter from Passenger Focus entitled “Exchange”. PF will use these newsletters to keep rail user groups up to date about their work, and inform them about key dates and developments in the rail industry.

Anyone not already on PF’s mailing list can subscribe to future editions of *Exchange* by sending an email to [usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk).

## **REMOTE PART OF ROUTE MAY WITHER FOLLOWING ELECTRIFICATION**

“The recently-announced plans for rail electrification are, it’s fair to say, welcome and much overdue, despite the obvious ‘missing links’ [*and the consequent need to change from electric to diesel unit for the last few miles*].

“The problem is, if you sever an existing service but say ‘don’t worry, you’ll get it back in five years’ time [*when the line is electrified throughout*]’ it may never happen. The use of the service declines and the business case for actually investing in a particular route gets weaker, not stronger, because people stop using it. All the experience of the last 40 years shows that when you artificially sever a service (e.g. Manchester – Liverpool at Kirkby, or Preston – Liverpool at Ormskirk) the more remote part of the route withers.” –*Paul Salveson writing in his weekly bulletin “Salvo”*.

## **CYCLE-RAIL TOOLKIT**

New guidance for train operators, designed to make it easier for people to combine cycling with rail travel, was launched on 22 Aug by Transport Minister Norman Baker.

The Minister asked the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) to develop guidance on cycle and rail integration for train operating companies and the *Cycle-Rail Toolkit* is the result of their work. The toolkit will help train operators improve provision for cyclists by setting out how to provide good facilities, encourage new cycle-rail users and promote and market these facilities to ensure that as many people as possible benefit.

The guidance has been developed in consultation with TOCs, the DfT, the wider rail industry and cycling campaign bodies and draws good practice from both national and international examples. It is aimed at TOC managers and local authorities and will be a useful tool for those looking to improve access to rail services or considering bidding for new rail franchises. – *DfT press release*

To see the guidance document, go to <http://cycle-rail.co.uk/links/> and click on “Toolkit”

## **LIFTS AT UNMANNED STATIONS**

A correspondent to the message board of the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester group, STORM, contributed the following to a discussion about de-staffing stations:

‘I’ve come across this item about lifts at unmanned stations written by a South East Trains spokesperson and referring to Staplehurst: “To operate and run the lifts outside of hours when the station was manned requires a fibre optic cable so a passenger can push a help point and it would go through to the control centre where they can look at CCTV cameras and operate it remotely”’. – *STORM bulletin*

## **THREE RIVERS WANT YOU TO FOLLOW AND LIKE THEM!**

The Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership in Hampshire now has its own [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#). We’re asked to take a look and Like/Follow as necessary to help boost the CRP’s presence on these sites. They’re also updating their website, which should go live in the coming months.

## MPs AT THE FOREFRONT OF TWO REOPENING CAMPAIGNS

Congleton MP Fiona Bruce has insisted reopening **Middlewich** railway station is her 'priority for the area'. More than 1,600 people have signed a petition calling for the Northwich to Sandbach line to be upgraded for passengers and Mrs Bruce is to now present the petition to Parliament.

The [Middlewich Rail Link](#) group was set up 20 years ago. The line has been freight only since passenger services were withdrawn in January 1960. Reopening the line would cost around £2m and a report released in 2009 revealed the town is the largest in Cheshire without a station. The report claimed an estimated total of 670 people a day would travel to or from the town if it had a platform.

Campaigners say opening the line would not only provide a much-needed transport hub for residents, but encourage further economic growth as the site stands adjacent to a new business estate. Cheshire East Council has recently been awarded £3.5m from the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund, and it's hoped some of that money will go toward the Middlewich plans.

– *Crewe Chronicle*

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Meanwhile, a West Lancashire MP is campaigning for a town centre railway station in **Skelmersdale** and has launched a petition asking residents to make their voice heard in calling for a station.

MP Rosie Cooper said: "I am launching this petition to say YES to a town centre railway station in Skelmersdale because I believe there is a real desire within the town to have its rail services returned. This petition is the chance for local residents to make their voices heard and to give their backing to the campaign. A railway station in the heart of Skelmersdale is the next stage in the regeneration of the town; the new college campus is built, the redeveloped town centre is on its way and now it is time to link it all up with a railway station. For me the situation that the largest town in West Lancashire does not have a railway station in the 21st century is unacceptable.

In recent months Rosie has raised this need for a town centre railway station in Skelmersdale during a Parliamentary Debate in the House of Commons. In the coming weeks and months, Rosie's campaign will be out and about in Skelmersdale meeting local residents through various events and activities to hear their views on the need for a railway station in the centre of Skelmersdale. – *Clicklancashire.com*

## ANOTHER WORD ABOUT CHEQUES

After Lionel Shields from Tonbridge Line Commuters told us that "we have now published details of our bank account in our bulletin and invited members to renew using BACS", Charles Burns of Railfuture Wessex wrote to me with this warning: "beware: the wider the distribution of bank account info the greater the possibility of fraudulent activity."

Charles also thought that my description of bankers as "spivs and fat cats" was a little harsh. Well, OK, let's delete "fat" and substitute "obese".

## JOIN THE QUEUE

"We are told that we must increase patronage significantly in order to financially justify the necessary passing loops to allow a half-hourly service. Do supermarkets wait for a long queue to form before they stock more food and wine?" – *Colin Hill writing in HPSRUA's magazine "Track Record"*

## EVENTS

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

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

**Thu 6 Sep** Railfuture [London branch \(Coastway\)](#) meet at The Station, High St, Uckfield from 18:00.

**Sat 8 Sep** [Railfuture NW Branch](#) meeting at [Littleborough Station history centre](#) from 1300.

**Mon 10 Sep** Open meeting of the [Watford Rail Users' Group](#) at Watford Town Hall from 18:45, attended by local train operators.

**Tue 11 Sep** [Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton RUG](#) meet at Melbourn Village College from 19:30; college students will cover proceedings both with video bloggers and a volunteer note-taker.

**Wed 12 Sep** Railfuture [London branch \(east\)](#) meet at Stratford from 18:30.

**Sat 22 Sep** Annual [World Car Free Day](#) helpfully falls on a Saturday this year. *Get 'em on the train!!!*

**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 29 Sep** Railfuture East Anglia meet at Chapelfields Chapel, Norwich from 14:15. Guest speaker from East Midlands Trains.

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

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

**Thu 11 Oct** [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) conference at Merseytravel's new office, One Mann Island on Liverpool's waterfront from 11:00, preceded by the AGM.

**Sat 13 Oct** [ESTA](#) autumn meeting at the Friends Meeting House, Beccles from 14:30.

**Mon 22 Oct** [ALRUG](#) AGM at the Manor Hotel, Exmouth from 19:00.

**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](#) "Railways in the Heart of England" at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham from 10:45 with guest speakers from Network Rail, Centro, Chiltern Railways and Birmingham City Council. Fee only £30 (£5 discount for members booking before 31 Aug).

**Sat 10 Nov** [HPSRUA](#) meeting at Methodist Hall, Silkstone Common from 10:15 with guest speaker.

**Sat 17 Nov** [Railfuture NW Branch](#) meet at the George & Dragon, 422 Manchester Road, Stockport (nr Heaton Chapel Station); lunch from 12:00, then meeting at 13:00.

**Sat 27 Apr, 2013** [Bus Users UK](#) AGM in Oxford

**Sat 11 May, 2013** [Railfuture](#) AGM at the Town Hall, Durham

**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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