

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, please contact the [Membership Secretary](#)

The affiliation fee is only £21 a year (larger groups may be asked to pay a little more to cover the cost of mailing additional copies of Railfuture's magazine *RailWatch*).

WOLMAR INAUGURATES RAIL USER GROUP AWARDS

Railfuture President Christian Wolmar presented the first-ever Awards to local Rail Users Groups for their various contributions to rail campaigning. At Railfuture's annual conference for rail users in Birmingham on 3 Nov, nine awards were presented in categories for best newsletter, best website, best campaign, best new group, best campaigner, and a Judges' Special Award. The judging panel comprised Christian Wolmar and Vice-Presidents Ian Brown, Barry Doe and Adrian Shooter.

★ The gold award for best newsletter went to the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, with silver for the Huddersfield-Penistone-Sheffield Rail Users Association and a commendation for the Friends of Denton Station.

★ The gold award for best website went to the Meldreth-Shepreth-Foxton Rail User Group, with silver for the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group.

★ The Cotswold Line Promotion Group also took home the award for best campaign, while the Meldreth-Shepreth-Foxton Rail User Group captured the award for best new group. The best campaigner was judged to be Susan van de Ven, Chair of the Meldreth-Shepreth-Foxton Rail User Group.

★ The Judges' Special Award went to Tony Smale, the Railfuture member who edits the Rail User Express newsletter and compiles the Directory of 300 Rail User Groups nationwide.

Awards presenter Christian Wolmar commented "These new awards recognise the special contribution rail users groups and their volunteers make to campaigning for improvements to railway services and stations. Too often their efforts pass unremarked and unrewarded. As the national champion of railway development and rail users, Railfuture has taken the initiative with these innovative awards." - *Railfuture press release*

So well done to all those user groups that won awards. I really had no idea my name would be on one of the certificates – what an honour! The full report and pictures are on the Railfuture website (see under "Latest News").

The credit for coming up with the idea and for getting the pilot RUG Award scheme off the ground at quite short notice goes to Roger Blake, Railfuture member and Principal Transport Planner at Hackney Council. Roger promises us another round of awards for next year, so you have plenty of time to think about which categories to enter for 2013. Maybe do what they did at Meldreth: go for the whole lot!

We continue on the next page 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.

Dornoch Rail Link Action Group

[website](#)

DORLAG notes that low-cost electrification of rural lines is being discussed in some quarters and says that the plethora of renewable energy schemes in the north means that the Far North Line could be a good candidate – although the overhead line equipment would have to withstand extreme weather conditions.

Other news in the Autumn newsletter include: hope of work beginning on Conon Bridge station reopening, and ongoing freight developments at Georgemas Junction which represent “the best chance of major freight increases on the Far North Line since the Second World War.”

Friends of the West Highland Lines

[website](#)

After the Scottish Transport Minister announced that he will be encouraging passengers, transport operators, local authorities and businesses to become involved in Community Rail Partnerships, the FoWHL committee took the idea on board and have embarked on discussions with interested parties. Elsewhere in their magazine, the West Highland News, we read that Mallaig Station received Gold accreditation in the Keep Scotland Beautiful station awards, and credit is given to station-adopter Sonia Cameron who single-handedly looks after Mallaig, Morar and Arisaig stations!

Scotland’s forests are fast maturing, and over the next 10 to 15 years it’s expected that there will be further increases in logging; FoWHL comments that it’s surely time that some of the transportation is switched from road to rail, and they argue that the Country’s Freight Facilities Grant scheme needs to be beefed up. Following on from their work with the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority to restore iconic views from the railway by selective removal of trees, FoWHL were invited to mount their own photographic displays at the Park Authority open days ... and they were able to pick up a few new members as a result.

What will they think of next? – the West Highland News reports that ScotRail is to fit GPS technology to its toilet systems on Class 156 units so that the flush will only operate when the train is *not* at a station. Continuing the “loo” theme, we read that Michael Portillo has been spotted filming the final series of Great British Railway Journeys on the Far North Line, and he officially opened a new loo at the historic Dunrobin Station.

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

[website](#)

The latest “RAGES Rag” begins with the “terrific news from First ScotRail” that Dunbar will benefit from four additional trains each way to/from Edinburgh on Saturdays from the December timetable change. At a “Meet the Manager” event at Berwick-upon-Tweed, RAGES were a bit put out to find that East Coast managers didn’t know much about their group; it transpired that the station was previously managed from Edinburgh but now comes under Newcastle.

As part of its contract to study public transport in East Lothian and the Scottish Borders, the MVA Consultancy has been meeting local councils and other community representatives to discuss options. It’s reported that, at one of the meetings, MVA was presenting a case for bus travel but the communities made it very clear that they wanted a rail service! The full report is expected before Christmas 2012.

At the RAGES autumn AGM, it was reported that the group has 152 paid-up members and eight community councils have signed up as corporate members. Also the initiative to adopt bankers’ orders for subscription payments is going well. After 12 years of free website hosting by BT, the group found itself facing charges so the decision was taken to move the hosting to a local web provider – and the website has now been given a makeover as part of the change [*there are some quite novel features, so you may like to take a look – Ed*]. RAGES is now on Facebook and has a QR code, printed on the newsletter masthead, which points smartphone users to the website.

Friends of Wemyss Bay Station

[website](#)

“Wemyss Bay is one of the world’s greatest stations, I do not exaggerate. It is amazing, the pride of The Caledonian Railway in its Edwardian heyday and little changed. It is enhanced by the provision of a bookshop and gallery, run by the Friends of Wemyss Bay Station who also have their own greenhouse and nursery to supply the station’s planters and hanging baskets. Dugald Cameron has written a splendid history of the station – available from the Friends at £7.70 inc. post and package. Go to their website for ordering details and news on what they are up to.” – *from Paul Salveson’s weekly “Salvo”*

Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association

[website](#)

The debate over the Stranraer line continues, but SAYLSA thinks the route is being primed for relegation to branch line status as ScotRail’s preferred option, with no capability to run charters on any day except Sundays. The local Council show no interest in the historic Harbour station, which SAYLSA wants to see restored, and the Scottish Government is granting planning permission for hundreds of wind turbines beside the railway which will help kill it off as a scenic spectacle.

It remains little known that whilst Transport Scotland discouraged a complimentary coach service to Scrabster because it would undermine the Far North line rail service, it is happy to see the Stranraer line haemorrhage passengers, as ferry travellers are bused by coach to Ayr despite the road journey being longer, environmentally damaging and more dangerous. “The Stranraer line south of Girvan is hanging like a thread” warns the group, “and there is clearly a deliberate campaign being waged to run it down. We wish we could be more positive, but we will continue lobbying.”

Campaign for Borders Rail

[website](#)

The historic announcement on 6 Nov 2012 of the Borders Railway contract signing by Transport Scotland and Network Rail also brought confirmation of the success of CBR’s campaign (together with the Waverley Route Trust) for Tweedbank station to be redesigned to accommodate tourist charter trains. The Tweedbank terminus platform tracks will now be extended to 285m length, enabling commercially viable 12-coach charters to use the Borders Railway.

Great credit should go to the Scottish Government for listening to CBR, which has argued long and hard for this. The Borders delegation to the Settle & Carlisle line in August – an inspired idea organised by Bill Jamieson and including Claudia Beamish MSP and regional tourism representatives – was crucial in firing up Claudia to press for a meeting with the Transport Minister, Keith Brown. He listened to CBR’s arguments, and has now accepted the merits of the case we have been making for more than a decade.

[News of the forthcoming contract-signing was disclosed in a special announcement at Railfuture’s Rail Users’ Conference on 3 Nov – Ed]

Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users’ Association

[contact](#)

Commenting on the formation of a new body called Rail in the North Executive to oversee the Northern franchise, HPSRUA fears that the network could become fragmented with urban authorities like Newcastle fighting their corners while rural services become very disjointed. HPSRUA says it will encourage the next franchisee to include a promise for longer trains on the Penistone line and to extend platforms accordingly, as recommended by a recent enhancement study – although they fear the study will get placed on a shelf to gather dust! In any event, the group will continue to campaign for the replacement of the older diesel multiple units on their line, pointing out that the Pacers are running out of life and are not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

A correspondent to HPSRUA’s newsletter “Track Record” has been looking closely at the Government’s proposals for electrification and wonders why Yorkshire cities have been left out. He points out that “South Yorkshire will remain as the largest populated area in the UK without an electrified local rail network.”

Ormskirk, Preston & Southport Travellers' Assn [website](#)

OPSTA reports that the new timetable introduced last December for Ormskirk-Preston has already yielded an encouraging increase in passenger, and the group is cautiously optimistic that an hourly service will start in 2014 or 2015. The group's campaign to reopen a station at Midge Hall had been placed on the back burner because there didn't seem to be enough potential traffic to make the numbers work – now, South Ribble Council's new Local Plan shows a major development at the former Leyland Motors test track nearby, and it's clear that the reopening of the station would be a key element of this proposal.

OPSTA's Chairman recently met Shadow Transport Minister Maria Eagle and together they took a look at the Burscough Curves site so that she could see for herself how small a job it would be to reinstate track connecting the two lines. Noting that the Todmorden Curve linking Burnley with Manchester is now under construction, OPSTA's Chairman asked himself: "how does this project get the green light while the Burscough Curves seem as far away as ever?" To find the answer, he went to see the Chief Executive at Burnley Council and found that there are important lessons for OPSTA, such as: getting the active support of MPs, highlighting benefits such as regional regeneration and access to employment, and making sure local authorities are fully behind the scheme.

Northern Rail recently asked their station adopters to conduct a survey of posters at their stations, and OPSTA's Chairman confirms that he's found quite a few examples of incomplete or confusing information. He asks members to take a careful look at their local stations "as if you are a visitor", and to check, in particular, the Welcome poster and the Onward Travel poster.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group [website](#)

PENRUG was alarmed to see that Norfolk County Council suggested withdrawing all trains from the Liverpool-Peterborough-Norwich service in its draft Rail Prospectus, and joined with other user groups to oppose the idea. Ironically, the Prospectus calls for more trains on some of the routes that affect Norfolk.

It's the tenth anniversary of the introduction of an hourly service between Norwich and Cambridge, and PENRUG is grateful to the staff who maintain the trains and provide a reliable service. The group says that the service has attracted many more people to the railway, although they feel that the carriage interiors could now do with a deep clean and the seats need re-upholstering.

Local stations also come in for a bit of criticism in PENRUG's newsletter: peeling paintwork, rampant buddleia and grass growing through the platforms are mentioned. "Opening hours for the toilets, waiting rooms and booking office at Thetford have been reduced with no evidence of a minor closure procedure," reports PENRUG, adding "The Dept for Transport should monitor what happens at stations ... and fine the station operator if National Passenger Survey scores fall below a specified level." The group welcomes the promise of more track capacity through Ely by 2019.

East Norfolk Transport Users' Association [website](#)

ENTUA has revised the document which sets out the group's aspirations for the coming years. At the top of the list is the introduction of a half hourly Gt Yarmouth to Norwich service, 0800 to 1800, Monday to Saturday. Another aspiration is for Greater Anglia's Norwich to Cambridge service and East Midlands Trains' service from Peterborough both to be extended to Gt Yarmouth, at least on summer Saturdays. They also want an end to the use of Class 153 single-car units in the peak, and a radical overhaul of station facilities at Gt Yarmouth.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association [website](#)

ESTA is honing its publicity machine to help get the message across about the new hourly service on the Ipswich-Lowestoft line from December, made possible by the completion of a new passing loop at Beccles. Appropriately, ESTA's Christmas Lunch will be held at Beccles on the first Saturday after the introduction of the new timetable.

Train operators had assured ESTA's committee that East Suffolk Line trains would be held for up to 5 mins in the event of a late-running train from London, but now it's up in writing: a new notice on Platform 3 at Ipswich states the fact! During the Latitude Festival at Henham, a connecting bus ran from Halesworth Station, and ESTA suggested that train staff should announce the facility on arrival at the station; a member of the group did, in fact, pin up his own posters about the special bus, which he felt was necessary because other notices at Halesworth give the impression that there are no bus services at all.

ESTA was encouraged to see their regional MPs publishing a "Rail Prospectus for East Anglia" in view of the fact that rail investment seems to be happening everywhere but in their area; however, the report contained very little about secondary routes and ESTA was able to give a couple of suggestions when one of the MP's asked for their views. Elsewhere we read that ESTA is already involved in discussions in advance of the next East Anglia rail-franchise competition, and in the meantime is seeking clarification from the current train operator about planned alterations to the service pattern at minor stations in the area. Members of the group are encouraged to keep sending in their bus and train monitoring reports, either in writing or via the special [email address](#).

Felixstowe Travel Watch

[website](#)

The Felixstowe group is also planning to hold a public information stall at a town centre location to help publicise the new timetables for both rail and bus services. Abellio is six months into running the Greater Anglia rail franchise; their performance over the Olympic period was widely regarded as being quite good but the picture on the Felixstowe branch was "generally depressingly familiar" - Felixstowe carnival day saw trains cancelled at short notice, a lack of meaningful information at station helplines and a less-than-rigorous approach to fares collection by some staff.

The alarming suggestion that off-peak passenger services on the line could be replaced by buses to allow more freight paths to/from the Port of Felixstowe prompted FTW members to conduct a passenger count on nearly 200 trains (!) from June to August. The average number per train was at least 44, with 217 recorded on a fine day in the school holidays – trains also carried a large number of pushchairs, cycles and wheelchairs.

The group's ambitious tours programme for 2012 included a 5-day trip taking in the Floriade event in the Netherlands: "these trips give great pleasure to so many members and are an inducement to others to join FTW ... the surplus which they generate allows us to carry out other vital tasks: lobbying, attending meetings, writing letters and so on."

Association of Public Transport Users

[website](#)

Before it was announced that the fare increases for January would be less than expected, APTU's Chairman had been quoted in the local paper arguing that the increase should be put on hold. Now that the average rise in fares has been set, APTU will follow its usual policy of lobbying for the increase to be spread evenly.

APTU's committee has been foraging around, uncovering news about what the franchising-process hold-up means for the future of Thameslink services, and whether the delay in signing off a contract with Siemens for the new trains will compound the problem – full details are in the group's October newsletter. The group hopes that a forthcoming meeting with First Capital Connect will throw more light in these areas.

Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group

[website](#)

Despite there being widespread industry support for electrifying their line, BGOLUG is dismayed that the Government still holds the view that the cost cannot be justified; however, discussions with interested parties are ongoing and there may be better news when Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan is announced in January.

Lack of funds also seems to be hampering the upgrade of Blackhorse Road station to full “Overground” specifications, and BGOLUG promises to go on lobbying for improved passenger accommodation on the platforms. Along with other rail users, the group is also campaigning for improved early morning and late evening services on the Overground network.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

[website](#)

After BTPG flagged up the possible loss of direct trains to Paddington resulting from electrification and franchise renewal, Local MP Claire Perry has now become fully engaged in the matter; she’s been contacting councillors, neighbouring MPs and relevant Government ministers to resolve the various issues, and has held surgeries at both Pewsey and Bedwyn stations in order to listen to the views of passengers. Members of BTPG are asked to continue writing to their MPs with evidence about how any service cuts would affect their rail journeys or impact on their businesses. Meanwhile, Claire Perry will be taking her “dossier of evidence and feedback” to a meeting with Rail Minister, Simon Burns.

Bexhill Rail Action Group

[website](#)

In September, BRAG along with other rail user groups in East Sussex completed submissions for the public consultations for the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern (TSGN) and the Southeastern franchises; these documents can be downloaded from the BRAG website. Now that the whole process is on hold, an announcement about what interim arrangements are to be put in place is eagerly awaited. Commenting on timetable changes planned for December, BRAG say that they have some doubts about the robustness of some of the changes and have sought clarification from Southern. They’re also concerned about daytime services between Ashford and Hastings being replaced by buses on a number of occasions recently due to defective rolling stock.

BRAG have received news of a consultation to consider the building of a station at Glyn Gap. The details are still sketchy, but the group understands that this is a Rother District Council initiative involving transport consultants Mott MacDonald. BRAG say they support the idea in principle.

South Hampshire Rail Users’ Group

[website](#)

In SHRUG’s response to the Great Western Franchise consultation they commented about how awkward it is currently to travel between the Bournemouth area and Bristol, South Wales or the West of England; the group was intrigued to note that the GW Franchise Specification, published after the consultation, allowed for the option of running services from GW territory over the Southampton-Bournemouth route.

On the Combined Thameslink, Southern and Gt Northern Franchise proposals, SHRUG pointed out that absorbing Southern several years after the new franchise starts will be contentious if one franchise is performing much better, and/or has better satisfaction levels, than the other at the time of absorption. Other points made by the group included: a pressing requirement to improve the service on the Southampton-Portsmouth corridor, the need for good connections to Gatwick Airport and Ashford (via Brighton), and a desire to see Southern’s popular Daysave tickets retained.

After the renovation of Southampton Central station, SHRUG was dismayed to find that a fee of 20p had been imposed for using the toilets without any apparent improvement in the quality of the facilities or the maintenance regime.

...news from Railfuture follows on the next page...

PASSENGER COMMITTEE CALLS FOR DPTAC TO BE RETAINED

The response from Railfuture's Passenger Committee to the Dept. for Transport's consultation on the proposed abolition of DPTAC (the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee) was basically that the organisation should not be abolished as none of the proposed options for replacing it was considered adequate.

GETTING TO/FROM UK AIRPORTS CAN BE DIFFICULT AND EXPENSIVE...

...this is the finding of new research by **Railfuture** and **Bus Users UK** (BUUK). Their report, just out, highlights problems such as buying tickets for international rail journeys and public transport links to airports.

"We don't always need major infrastructure projects to improve our airports links," said Chris Brown, who compiled the report, "sometimes better signage and other information, or rolling stock with more luggage space will make a difference."

"For some journeys, particularly to destinations outside Europe, there is no realistic alternative to air travel, which is why we've produced this report. One of the big problems we found is the lack of 24-hour access to airports, as trains don't run all day and all night. The train operating companies are not very good at promoting their connections to airports, and cuts to bus services have meant that the vital last link in the journey is missing, meaning that people feel that they might as well drive all away to the airport.

"It should be made easy for visitors to our country to continue by public transport when they land. At some airport stations, the range of destinations to which tickets could be purchased is very restricted. At Heathrow, for example, rail tickets are available only to London. Fares to airports are not always attractive, and some rolling stock is not ideal for airport links because of shortage of luggage space.

"But it's not all bad: we found that the airports provide good information about their transport links, and the Transport for London website is especially helpful on how to get to London airports."

The report offers a number of recommendations, such as train operating companies providing improved information, and advocates further research on the needs of airport workers. The report will be made available to the manager of each airport surveyed, to train operators who serve airports, and to relevant politicians. You can read it online [here](#). – *Railfuture press release*

Railfuture intends to update this research in future years, so if you have any thoughts to add to what has already been documented, please let me have them and I will pass them to the report's author.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

The East Anglian Branch of Railfuture is conducting a passenger count at Halesworth Station and possibly elsewhere this autumn. The aim is to establish passenger numbers on a typical day and provide a benchmark. It is then intended to conduct a similar count in 2013 to gauge the effect of the improved (hourly) train service on the line which comes into effect in Dec 2012.

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

PASSENGER FOCUS WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

By now, many of you will have established contact with Passenger Focus to ensure that your user group is on the PF mailing list for news bulletins, consultations and invitations to events. If you are in any doubt as to whether PF have contact details for your group, please get in touch with them anyway just to be certain! Here is a copy of the invitation they've been sending out rail user groups...

As you may be aware, we ran a series of workshops earlier this year to update you on our work, and to begin to share best practice. This has helped us to understand how we can better support each other's work in the future.

One of the key points raised, was a need for groups to be able to more easily share information and experience. With this in mind, we are trying to contact as many groups as possible to compile a list of email addresses for our website.

We'd be very grateful if you could provide a contact email for the list at your earliest convenience, by writing to usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk We would recommend that you use a generic rather than personal email address. Please note that we will never publish any contact information without your explicit permission.

Kind regards

Matthew Andrews, *Passenger Team Executive*

Note: PF's new London address is: Passenger Focus, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX.

OTHER PLACES TO LIST YOUR GROUP

Anyone reading this bulletin can be fairly certain that their group is shown on Railfuture's List of Rail User Groups. I'm relying on you to let me know of any amendments to your group's name or website address, and please remember to tell me if you change your email address (some copies of this bulletin have been disappearing into a black hole, which seems a pity).

The Campaign for Better Transport maintains a Directory of Local Groups on their [website](#), (select "In Your Area" from the title menu), so people searching for your group could be scrolling through the CBT list. Some train operators have a list of stakeholders on their website, and these include rail user groups. Look too on the websites of local authorities in your area; many of them have long lists of community groups, often sorted into categories. Local directories that drop through your door may also list community groups, so you could ask to be shown in the next edition.

Another ploy to raise the profile of your group on the Internet is to ask other organisations to show your group on their "Useful Links" page (with a promise to return the favour); search for neighbouring bus and rail user groups, campaign groups with a green agenda and perhaps transport history societies.

If you have any other tips along these lines, please let me know and I'll include them in a future edition of RUEX.

RESHAPING OUR RAILWAYS – 50 YEARS ON

The (in)famous report entitled "The Reshaping of British Railways" by Dr Richard Beeching was published on 27 March 1963. The report resulted in the closure of one third of Britain's railway lines, many rural stations and the removal of many freight services, in an attempt to make the railways profitable in the face of the growth of road transport. There is bound to be a great deal of media interest when the 50th anniversary of the report's publication falls next March, so rail user groups need to be ready with the necessary facts. You can read the report on the Railways Archive website [here](#) (click on the PDF symbol at the top of the page).

Which towns and villages in your region lost their rail services as a consequence of the Beeching Report? More importantly, which were reprieved following strenuous campaigns by rail users? And is there a local hero that deserves credit? It's particularly important to trumpet the turnaround in railway fortunes in recent times, highlighting stations and lines that have reopened, and services that are seeing record numbers of passengers.

If you are already in touch with a transport correspondent, you could offer your help in compiling an accurate, thought-provoking article about local railways past and present. The 50th anniversary would be a good opportunity to release your own report detailing ambitions for the future of rail in your area. Seize the moment to organise a public meeting or other event designed to take forward a pro-rail agenda for the 21st Century!

THE “RESHAPING” NEVER ENDS...

Network Rail has achieved efficiencies of £775m over the past three years and is currently on target to deliver required savings by 2014, says a [report](#) just published by the Office of Rail Regulation.

ORR’s annual assessment of NR’s efficiency and financial performance examines the amount of money that NR has spent and what it has delivered in return for the money it received from train operators and Government. In particular, the report assesses NR’s progress in meeting the regulator’s stretching efficiency target for its current five year funding period (2009-2014) of cutting £1bn annually from the cost of operating, maintaining and improving Britain’s rail infrastructure. It also reports on the Efficiency Benefit Sharing Mechanism, established to incentivise NR and train operators to work together to achieve savings.

NR has implemented a number of initiatives to reduce its costs. These include rationalising signalling and control centres and reorganising its rail maintenance function, resulting in reduced staff costs and reduced use of sub-contractors. The regulator has concerns about the sustainability of NR’s management of parts of the railway infrastructure, such as bridges, tunnels and major structures, and the company itself has not reported efficiencies in this area. – *ORR press release*

RAIL DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH IS A “FIRST ORDER PRIORITY” SAYS MINISTER

Speaking at a reception for the all-party parliamentary Rail in the North group on 31 Oct, Transport Minister Simon Burns said:

“...you only get concrete results by rolling up your sleeves and getting on with it. And that’s precisely what this government’s been doing on rail: £18 billion invested in our railways during this Spending Review period; a massively ambitious programme of rail modernisation; and a range of ground-breaking reforms, from driving down costs and driving up efficiencies to devolving decision-making.

“Indeed, on the second of those reforms, devolution, I know that there was a big response from people and organisations in the north to our rail decentralisation consultation...so I want to thank everyone who took the trouble to have their say. No community left out, no region left behind.

“This is a government that believes in top quality railways. And that belief is underpinned by a rock-solid principle. Namely that no community should be left out, no region should be left behind. As far as I’m concerned, if we want all of Britain to be open for business then we can’t afford for any part of Britain to be isolated or disconnected from the country’s wider transport system.

“Local, and actually national success, demands that north, south, east and west are plugged in and joined up. This is the very reason that transforming the performance and the prospects of rail in the north is a first order priority for the government.” – *dft.gov.uk*

You can read the full speech [here](#).

CYCLE-RAIL TOOLKIT

Despite the fact that 60% of the UK’s population lives within a 15 min cycle ride of a railway station, with one or two exceptions, the level of cycling to stations is low (around 2%). According to the Dutch Ministry of Transport, 40% of train passengers in Holland use the bicycle to get to the station.

So the purpose of a 60-page [Cycle-Rail Toolkit](#) from the Association of Train Operating Companies is to set out best practice in the delivery of measures to encourage more people to choose Cycle-Rail and support those who have already made that choice. Whilst primarily aimed at network and station operators and organisations bidding for rail franchises, the intended audience also includes passenger transport executives, local authorities and those involved in community rail projects. The toolkit is accompanied by additional guidance on the delivery of effective station travel plans.

The importance of cycling to rail stations as part of the end-to-end journey is growing daily. It brings not only sustainable access to the rail network at a time when demand for rail travel is increasing,

but also the potential for enhanced profitability for network and station operators. For the customer, aside from walking, cycling to the station consistently offers the most reliable journey time as it is the least susceptible to delays caused by congestion. Cycling is also door-to-door; no waiting around for buses or taxis to arrive. – *text taken from the Toolkit's preface*

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

The committee of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association is considering taking out public liability insurance but anticipates that the annual premium will be difficult for them to afford. They know of another, somewhat larger users' association that has such a policy and wonder how many others there are that have their own policy (or are insured by virtue of their affiliation to a larger body). Can anyone recommend a particular policy? **Please send any suggestions to ruglink@railfuture.org.uk and I will include them in a future edition of RUEx.**

ACoRP's [Station Adoption Toolkit](#) gives this advice: "As insurance now comes under the watchful eye of the Financial Services Authority, ACoRP employees are not able to give advice on insurance over and above the fact that it's a good idea. Our broker can however, and BJK Insurance specialises in 'community' type insurance. They have been fully briefed in what station adoption groups do and will be happy to give you a quote for your group. The contact is Phil Snow, tel 01271 353055, email Phil.Snow@bjkinsurance.co.uk, 2nd Floor, Devonshire House, Riverside Road, Pottington Business Park, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 1EY"

Railfuture's own Public Liability Insurance comes as part of a "Working from Home" policy package which also includes employer's liability, legal expenses and the cost of recovering documents following a fire/flood. It should be noted that, in some instances, volunteers are classed as "employees" under employment legislation. Our annual premium is £550, but that includes cover for national conferences and a multitude of branch events.

WILTSHIRE TRANSPORT USER GROUPS WORKING TOGETHER

The TransWilts Community Rail Partnership is sponsoring a meeting on Sat 1 Dec 2012 at The Laverton, in Westbury. The objective is to get travel and transport groups together to talk through common issues, learn from each others' experiences, co-ordinate approaches to transport operators and government, and share resources. Keynote addresses will inform delegates about the direction of transport policy in Wiltshire in the context of national issues such as rail refranchising and the local sustainable transport fund. Details and response form are [here](#).

COMMUNITY RAIL SERVICE DESIGNATION FOR THE BENTHAM LINE

Passengers in the North West will have more say on how local rail services are run after the service designation of the Bentham Line as a community rail service, Rail Minister Norman Baker announced in October. Designation of the line between **Leeds and Morecambe** will enable train companies to work more closely with the Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Partnership to better design services to meet local needs.

Councillor Richard Rollins, Chairman of the Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe CRP said: "This is excellent news. Designation will enable the Community Rail Partnership to work in partnership with the local community to make significant developments along the line. Key objectives include station improvements and service developments." – *DfT press release*

FIX MY TRANSPORT!

The [FixMyTransport website](#) was built by mySociety, itself an offshoot of a charity called UK Citizens Online Democracy. The aim of the website is to help people get common public transport problems resolved. It is targeted specifically at smaller problems such as persistently broken ticket machines,

buses that always leave early, or silly rules that appear to do nothing but create inconvenience for travellers. You can use the site to contact any transport operator in the UK – the team will send your message direct to their Customer Services department. They put it online, too; that way, others can read your problems, and offer support and advice.

FixMyTransport represents an experiment to discover whether a sufficiently well-designed internet service can help tip people over the edge from grumbling about a problem to taking action to resolve it. Hopefully you will see your campaign gain momentum and get resolved, and the team predict you'll get "a warm fuzzy feeling because you made public transport better for everybody."

COMPANIES OBLIGED TO OFFER BEST DEAL

Ofgem plans to force energy suppliers to inform householders about their cheapest deals and greatly simplify the number of pricing plans on offer as part of the biggest shakeup of the market for domestic energy for more than a decade.

After canvassing the views of customers, Ofgem is drawing together plans to prevent suppliers from offering any more than four primary tariffs for each fuel type, and to greatly simplify bills. The proposals would, according to Ofgem's chief executive, bring a "simpler, clearer, fairer and more competitive energy market for all consumers". The Ofgem proposals come in the same week as a government announcement that energy companies would be obliged to not only inform customers of their lowest tariff but place them on this by default. – *Guardian*

It's fortunate there isn't another bunch of suppliers that routinely rip off their customers by offering a bewildering array of tariffs, otherwise the Government would be forced into further action! – Ed

Seriously though, this story is potentially a "game changer". It's a forceful argument for Government intervention to achieve a simpler and fairer system of fares on our railways.

UNREGULATED FARES RACE AHEAD

"Long distance price caps are still needed to protect passengers," says Passenger Focus. "Regulated fares rose by 0.2 per cent in real terms between 1995 and 2010 while unregulated fares rose by 47.7 per cent in the same period."

FOOTNOTE ... from a S.E. Asia correspondent

"There was a grumble in the Bangkok Post this week that the State Railway of Thailand has not increased its fares for the last **28 years**. It is suggested that this accounts for the run down state of the network." – *a correspondent writing in STORM's weekly bulletin*

EVENTS

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

Mon 12 Nov Bexhill Rail Action Group ([BRAG](#)) meeting at The Sackville, Bexhill seafront from 19:00.

Wed 14 Nov Railfuture London and South East branch, [Eastern division](#) meeting in Stratford from 18.30.

Thu 15 Nov [Cambridge-Sudbury Rail Renewal Assn](#) public meeting at Days Inn, Harehill from 10.30.

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 17 Nov [Railfuture Scotland](#) autumn meeting (joint with local RUGs) at Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh from 14:00. Open discussion about lobbying across the region.

Sat 17 Nov Railfuture London and South East branch, [Kent division](#) meeting. The Victory, Farleigh Bridge, East Farleigh, Maidstone, ME16 9NB. 14.00.

Mon 19 Nov [BCA](#) AGM at the RAFA Club, Bedford from 19:15. Representatives from train operators and Network Rail will be on hand to answer questions.

Wed 21 Nov [Campaign for High Speed Rail](#) briefing at Midland Hotel, Manchester from 17:00, attended by HS2 Ltd and Passenger Focus. RSVP to [Nicola Minford](#)

Mon 26 Nov [Tyne & Wear Public Transport Users Group](#) AGM. St. John's Church Hall, Newcastle.

Wed 28 Nov First AGM of the [Friends of Crewkerne Station](#) at Crewkerne Town Hall from 19:30.

Wed 28 Nov Amplicon's free technical seminar "Network and Monitoring Solutions for Smarter Transport" at the Bluebell Railway, East Sussex. Details [here](#).

Thu 29 Nov [Marshlink CRP](#), Stakeholder meeting. Rye Town Hall. 10.00-12.30.

Sat 1 Dec [TransWilts CRP](#) user group meeting at The Laverton, Westbury from 10:45 (opens 10:00).

Sat 1 Dec Railfuture London and South East regional branch, [Surrey division](#) meeting. Redhill. 10.30.

Mon 3 Dec [RVR](#) meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Thu 6 Dec [Westminster Energy, Environment & Transport Forum](#) seminar "Getting UK Rail on Track: HS2, capacity, franchising & sustainability", London

Thu 6 Dec Railfuture London and South East branch, [Sussex and Coastway division](#) meeting, at The Railway Club in Newhaven from 18:00.

Sat 8 Dec Santa Special to Hellifield – see [RVR website](#) for details.

Sat 8 Nov Santa Special on the Bedford-Bletchley Line – see [Marston Vale CRP website](#) for details.

Sun 9 Dec **New national rail timetable begins.**

Mon 10 Dec [BRAG](#) meeting and Christmas meal at The Sackville, Bexhill seafront from 19:00.

Wed 12 Dec [Meldreth Shepreth & Foxton Rail User Group](#) meeting in Foxton Village Hall from 19:30.

Sun 16 Dec [Penistone Line Partnership](#) special train to Manchester

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Tue 8 Jan Chesham Transport User's Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30

Tue 19 Feb Chesham Transport User's Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30

Sat 23 Feb [ESTA](#) spring meeting at Saxmundham

Mar 14-15 [ACoRP](#) Seminar about Designated Community Rail Lines. Details to be announced.

Wed 27 Mar 50th Anniversary of the publication of the Beeching Report. Mark the event with your own "reshaping" report!

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

Sat 4 May [ESTA](#) AGM. Venue to be decided.

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

Sat 22 Jun [Railfuture](#) summer conference at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton

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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