

Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

As always, feel free to forward RUEX to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). If you want further details of any of the stories mentioned, look on the relevant website or, failing that, get back to me so I can send you the full text.

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We begin with the usual roundup of news from rail user groups around the UK. I'm grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.

I'VE HAD SUCH AN AVALANCHE OF USER GROUP NEWSLETTERS, THAT I'VE HAD TO HOLD SOME OVER FOR A FUTURE EDITION OF RAIL USER EXPRESS. MOST OF THE PUBLICATIONS THAT I'VE INCLUDED BELOW PRE-DATE THE 3RD OF OCTOBER WHEN THE FRANCHISING PROCESS HIT THE BUFFERS.

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH

Clydesdale Rail Action Group

It's been an uphill battle for the Clydesdale Rail Action Group to get trains to call at Carstairs. At the start of privatisation, there were plenty of InterCity services passing through, but none that stopped. ScotRail has since stopped a couple of services, but now it seems that Carstairs will get 4 or 5 extra services to Edinburgh. Thanks are due to First ScotRail; Transport Scotland were determined that Carstairs would not get any improvement, and support from other quarters has not been forthcoming. Although the promised additional trains are very welcome, the service will still be far short of the group's aspirations. Secretary, Ralph Barker, comments: "It should not take a hard 20-year campaign to get a train to stop at an existing station!"

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

Friends of the Far North Line

[website](#)

What, we are asked, has the sudden abandonment of the ambitious rail investment programme for the Edinburgh-Glasgow corridor got to do with the Far North Line? Well, if nothing else, it means that the cascade of diesel units to other lines in Scotland for much-needed service enhancements will now not take place. "Almost overnight, Scotland has gone from a country that sees its transport demands being met by rail expansion into one in which rail barely features at all," says FoFNL Convenor, John Brandon. Nearer home, there's frustration that there's no start yet on the new station for Conon Bridge, and work on proving the business case for an hourly Inverness-Tain service has stalled for lack of funds.

Elsewhere in the September magazine, we read that committee meeting costs have been kept to a minimum, thanks in part to the free use of a meetings room at Edinburgh Waverly; however, an attempt at telephone conferencing on another occasion had to be aborted due to "technical reasons".

There's a report on FoFNL's successful conference held in Dingwall earlier in the summer as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the railway coming to the town. Among the distinguished

speakers at the event was local MP, Charles Kennedy who spoke about past campaigns to retain the Sleeper service and future developments. Frank Roach from the Highlands transport partnership (Hitrans) came up with an interesting angle on railway costs in the UK, saying: "a review of regional rail in Europe has shown that comparisons purporting to show rail in Britain as more expensive than in Europe ignore the greater transparency of costs in Britain and the hidden costs in European accounting methods. Additionally, Network Rail has to spend £1.5 billion annually on servicing debt."

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

[website](#)

The announcement that four new Saturday services will be introduced between Dunbar and Edinburgh from December to match the weekday service was warmly welcomed by the Chairman of RAGES: "this is terrific news from First ScotRail that Dunbar will be getting these new Saturday Services."

Keswick to Penrith Railway Reopening

[website](#)

CKP Railways plc has undertaken all the design and development work to date for their reopening project using funding provided by willing supporters buying bonds and through commissions from supportive businesses. Those supporters are earning a return while development work continues.

For the next legal and construction stages, funding on a more "industrial" scale will be needed. "Conventional sources of funding such as Banks and Government grants are unlikely to be available for many years ahead," says CKP, "so some new and unusual sources and methods are likely to be needed to re-connect communities."

CKP Railways plc is working on innovative methods to bring together all those who would benefit from the re-opening of the railway with potential sources of funding in a way which would see everyone having a long term vested interest in the success of the railway. The company hopes to be able to announce some significant steps forward by Spring 2013. In the meantime, their website gives details of how to buy railway investment bonds for amounts between £100 and £10,000, and how you can support the project by purchasing books, DVDs etc.

Ribble Valley Rail

[website](#)

Members of station adoption groups along the line continue to ensure that stations are a blaze of colourful flowers and the platforms are clean and tidy, and a pleasant place for passengers to sit and wait for trains.

On a very wet June afternoon, several pupils from Whalley Primary School turned up at Whalley station to plant out an area of land that they had previously cleared to create a garden area to their own design. The project was a follow on to their previous artwork and code trail, thereby cementing their link with the village station. Meanwhile a colourful piece of artwork created by young people from the Nightsafe Centre in Blackburn (a charity for the homeless) was unveiled by the town mayor at Blackburn Station. Local artist Alastair Nicholson worked with the young people to create a banner, which effectively links the station to the nearby centre.

The RVR is helping the [Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line](#) with their passenger survey which is part of FoSCL's campaign to encourage travel between Manchester and the Pennines via the under-utilised line between Clitheroe and Hellifield. This accords with RVR's wish to see a regular passenger service beyond the current terminus, Clitheroe.

The RVR's Santa Special Train this December will, for the first time, run from Blackburn right through to Hellifield, where there will be various attractions to occupy both adults and children.

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

With the imminent opening of the Metrolink extensions, including Oldham-Rochdale, STORM has drawn the attention of the various authorities to the need for some inter-availability of return and season tickets between Metrolink and conventional rail services. The group believes that such inter-availability will lead to increased usage of both rail and Metrolink services and would not be detrimental to either operator.

One member writing on STORM's weekly blog complains that the hard seats on the trams are totally unsuitable for a journey of the length of Rochdale to Manchester: "whoever specified that design of seat should be compelled to sit on one at his desk - forever!"

Anticipating problems for passengers during the engineering blockade at Stalybridge, STORM and the neighbouring Halifax & District group (HADRAG) have offered assistance with handing out timetable booklets, mainly at unstaffed stations in the area affected.

Don Valley Railway [website](#)

The DVR has devised a petition in support of their campaign to reopen the line between Stocksbridge and Sheffield, which they plan to circulate by making house-to-house calls. There will be advance notice of their action in the local newspaper (to avoid suspicion of bogus callers), and they intend to provide follow-up information for any supporters that give an email address. They already have around 100 signatures as a result of public meetings in the area.

Under supervision from South Yorks Passenger Transport Executive, the DVR team are continuing to develop a business plan and will be researching alternative rail technologies such as tram-train. Serious fund-raising will be necessary if the team are to develop a viable project with Network Rail.

Friends of the Barton Line [website](#)

On the subject of devolution, FoBL feel that some local autonomy would be a good thing provided sufficient influence is allocated to minor local authorities in the more rural areas. Anticipating high fare rises next January, the group argues that their line already suffers from high per-mile fares, poor service and bus competition. Their campaign for extending the Summer Sunday train service continues, and they're in discussion with Network Rail about use of NR land at Barton Station.

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

Now an annual fixture in NCRUG's calendar, the excursion earlier this summer over the freight-only Halton Curve was a great success and attracted a record number of passengers. After returning to Frodsham by vintage bus, members and friends were allowed their first glimpse inside the restored station house, with Network Rail surveyors on hand to show people round. Frodsham's station house had been boarded up for the past 20 years and was in a sorry state. Scaffolding has now come down to reveal a building restored to its Victorian splendour ... "the masonry seems to glow when the sun shines on it." Frodsham's station adopters managed to restore the gardens around the station house in time for their open day in July; geraniums for both Frodsham and Helsby Stations were donated by the local council.

Network Rail has now begun restoring the station building at Helsby, although local vandals seem to have taken the works as a cue to hang around and cause minor damage. Helsby's adopters are keeping a log and will be reporting back to the police.

Commenting on the award of the West Coast franchise to First, NCRUG welcomed the promise of additional destinations on the network and hoped that revenue protection at Warrington Bank Quay would be improved as this has repercussions for the north Cheshire line through the station: "we know that many journeys are made without payment."

Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association

[website](#)

There's disappointment that the Dept. for Transport has allowed London Midland to reduce ticket-office opening hours at Acton Bridge, Hartford and Winsford; from the outset, MCRUA had opposed these changes. There's also dismay after the removal of the barrow crossing at Northwich Station, meaning that there is now no disabled access to the Chester-bound platform.

MCRUA's new booklet "Rail Walks in Cheshire" was formally launched at Northwich Station by the local MP, work is in progress on a similar booklet for the Mid-Cheshire Line stations in Greater Manchester, and funding for a reprint of the Knutsford walks booklet is being sought after the originally batch of 10,000 ran out. Wednesday music trains on the line continue to operate until 7 Nov – details are on the group's website.

In response to an appeal for volunteers, sufficient numbers came forward to enable MCRUA to embark on a comprehensive passenger count on trains and at stations – it's thought that loadings are up by some 20% since the last count in 2009. Others have come forward to help with station gardening and the distribution of leaflets.

The campaign for a new station at Baguley (Wythenshawe) took a step forwards in June when students from a local Academy put together a PowerPoint presentation on the benefits it would bring, which they presented at a launch event to headteachers and students from other schools across the district as well as a number of dignitaries. This resulted in invites to individual schools to repeat the presentation. On the subject of involving young people, you may like to know that MCRUA offers annual membership to the under 21s at 2/3rds off the normal adult price.

Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

[website](#)

SARPA's summer newsletter kicks off with the interesting thought that, if the Cambrian Lines were built today, they would cost something in the region of £1.5 billion (based on the £9m/mile quoted for the Borders Railway rebuilding in Scotland) ... so "why don't we make better use of this asset?". Later on we read that a scheme for a single carriageway road in Wales is costing £25m/mile, followed by the comment: "in terms of per mile of infrastructure, rail wins every time ... therefore rail infrastructure investment could be spread around Wales more generously than road spend."

The Welsh Government clearly thinks there's more track in mid Wales than there really is: SARPA spotted, in their Capital Infrastructure Plan, the claim that "22 miles of new track have been built [on the Cambrian Line]". The correct figure is "2.2"! But the main disappointment is that the Plan effectively kicks any hope of an hourly service on the line into the long grass. The editor contrasts the situation in mid Wales with the East Suffolk line, where funds have been forthcoming for reinstating a passing loop at Beccles to enable an hourly service – essentially what SARPA proposed for the Cambrian Line back in 1997!

No review of SARPA's newsletter is complete without a quote from "The Brigadier". In this issue, he explains to a foreign visitor the UK's transport policy through the medium of theatre. In Act 5, Marvin the manically-depressed robot from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* laments his time at the Department for Transport: "There isn't a business case – there that surprised you didn't it! I've got a brain the size of a planet you know and they make me do cost benefit analysis. It's all rigged you know the utter meaningless of it all, the things I could tell them but they don't listen no one at the Department listens...."

Cannock Chase Rail Promotion Group

[contact](#)

CCRPG has just issued a press release expressing delight at the announcement that the Chase Line is to be electrified, and expressed thanks to the local MP and Cannock Chase Council for their efforts in securing this important development. The group acknowledges however that the hard work is not over: "Despite welcoming this very positive news, we will continue to campaign to ensure that the

infrastructure improvements planned for the line are reflected in a corresponding improvement in the level of service provision, both in terms of reliability and the frequency of services.”

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail Users' Group [website](#)

The Cambridgeshire user group is doing all it can to spread the word about facets of First Capital Connect policy which train users may not appreciate: firstly, local students can apply for a discount via an online application form; secondly, the restrictions on cycle carriage from the three stations is less prescriptive than it used to be, thanks to lobbying by the group.

Safety improvements are in hand at Foxton level crossing, and the group says it's pleased that Network Rail has been listening to their concerns. Meanwhile, autumn planting sessions have been held at the three stations, assisted by volunteers from local schools – any spare plants were held back for use by the schools' own gardening clubs.

Bedford Commuters' Association [website](#)

Members of the BCA are asked to fill in the membership renewal form attached to the newsletter and take it along to Bedford or Flitwick Station at the appointed date and time when committee members will be manning a desk to accept payments – in between times they will be engaging with commuters and hopefully recruiting some new members.

After consulting its members and meeting with Railfuture, the BCA submitted its response to the Thameslink, Southern & Gt Northern refranching consultation, then received an acknowledgement from the Dept. for Transport. Elsewhere, we read that the BCA's Chairman along with a Passenger Focus officer met with a representative from East Midlands Trains to discuss some specific issues with the train service. The group continues to be involved with consultations about Central Bedfordshire's Development Strategy, and station travel plans for Bedford, Flitwick and Harlington.

Arguing against the expected fares increase in January 2013, the BCA set out the arguments in their September newsletter and urge members to write to their MPs. They fear season ticket holders may have to pay “hundreds of pounds more” if the inflation formula is applied in full.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

The main concern for the Chesham group at the moment is looking into any possible difficulties for travellers when the new Chiltern timetable comes into force in December. Also, the committee is trying to get information about forthcoming engineering works, including sight of the working timetable, under Freedom of Information requests.

Metropolitan line users have noticed problems with the public announcement system on the new S-stock trains, and the group has been asked to collate specific faults with time/date and unit number, and report back to London Underground.

Windsor Lines Passengers Association [website](#)

After a lot of campaigning by both the WLPA and South West Trains to Network Rail (NR), the WLPA is pleased to report that, from December, two late evening trains will be running in their standard timetable slots, thereby providing later departures from London. The group thinks that the new alliance between SWT and NR South West has enabled this to happen.

The WLPA congratulate transport authorities in their area for generally avoiding any hitches during the Olympic period when extra crowds were travelling; SWT ran 8-car trains at the weekends in place of the 4-car units that normally operate. A contributor to the WLPA's newsletter is dismayed to see that units being taken to and from depots for major refurbishment work are being transported by road when it would be perfectly possible to tow them by rail.

A useful meeting with the area manager from SWT was held to address a number of queries and problems, for example: unhelpful information on posters regarding engineering works, on-train toilets being out of use, inconvenient ticket office locations at Clapham Junction, progress on station improvements, and excessive on-train announcements.

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At a recent conference in Taunton organised by TravelWatch South West, a spokesman from First Great Western broke the news to delegates that the company had reviewed its automated on-train announcements and as a result, from next January, most of them would be cut out altogether. A great cheer went up from the audience!

Bedwyn Trains Passengers' Group

[website](#)

After seeking a reassurance from the Department for Transport regarding the train service following Great Western electrification, the Bedwyn group received a reply saying that version 27(!) of the Train Service Requirement has “reinstated a small number of AM and PM peak through services from Kintbury, Bedwyn, Hungerford, Pewsey and Westbury to London Paddington. Bedwyn still gets 1 train/hour to Newbury, a minimum of 12 of which must provide connections onto a London service”. The DfT says that the final TSR will be published very shortly. BTPG considers this is only a small part of what they’re looking for, and they will carry on lobbying for improvements. They have since issued a plea for members to write to Transport Minister, Simon Burns MP, about the impact on Bedwyn’s train service, suggesting a number of important points to include in their letters.

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The Bedwyn group has forwarded an email from a new campaign group in nearby Pewsey called Pewsey Train Watch. The new group has set up a website www.pewseytrainwatch.co.uk and they’re inviting rail users to sign their online petition opposing any loss of the town’s direct rail service to Paddington. I’m impressed with the Home page of the website; it features a photo of Pewsey station with an HST in the platform which gradually fades away and disappears – *very clever!*

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

[website](#)

“It’s been a heady few months for local rail in our region” says FoSBR in an article listing the infrastructure schemes that have been promised in the coming years. However, they warn that the final specifications for the projects “mustn’t be watered down by penny pinching, lack of ambition and ignorance.” They cite the case of four-tracking in the Filton area, where it appears that there’s no plan to build additional platforms at Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill. They also argue for a fourth platform at Bristol Parkway and rebuilding the stations at Ashley Hill and Horfield.

FoSBR note that the Scottish Sleeper service is to be separated off from the main ScotRail franchise, and thinks there’s a case for restoring a Westcountry service, possibly as a portion attaching at Crewe. The group celebrated the start of a new evening service on the Severn Beach Line by giving the train a fitting send-off from Bristol Temple Meads, with refreshments (courtesy of First Great Western), guest speakers and a choir “singing in celebration of train travel”.

Activities for members in recent months include a Sunday Stroll to Bradford-upon-Avon, a day at the seaside and helping to man the FoSBR information stall. A sub-group going by the name of “Fosbeer” promotes pubs near stations on the Severn Beach line – they’ve produced a handy leaflet and enjoy convivial evenings at the various hostelries. In return, the pubs promote the Severn Beach line by holding stocks of timetables and leaflets.

Tarka Rail Association

[website](#)

The TRA met with all the short-listed bidders for the Great Western franchise, and is pleased that the Invitation to Tender document for the franchise appears to have upheld the group's desire to see the existing service pattern between Exeter and Barnstaple maintained as the core from which to go forward.

In the summer edition of the magazine, the Chairman reports on forthcoming improvement works on the line, including the replacement of about 10 miles of jointed track with continuously-welded rail which will allow line speeds to be increased. There's hope that barriers will be fitted at two un-gated crossings, enabling further removal of speed restrictions. The group has also given its support to plans for an expanded parking facility at Eggesford.

Ten stations along the line took part in this year's Station Garden competition, and the impressive photographs in the centre pages of the TRA's magazine shows that the various station adoption teams rose admirably to the challenge. As well as the usual 1st/2nd/3rd prizes, there were prizes for the best containers, best flower beds and best "sustainable/wildlife" entry.

Several pages of the magazine are taken up with the Association's paper entitled "Towards a Faster and More Frequent Service between Exeter and Barnstaple". After a detailed analysis of the current state of the train service and infrastructure, the paper provides a summary of improvements that could be achieved both in the short term, and in the medium to longer term. In the concluding paragraphs, the author acknowledges a useful meeting held between the TRA and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group this summer, at which all agreed that it was "important to have a longer term vision" and to "pursue it at every opportunity with the relevant decision makers".

Avocet Line Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

Earlier this summer, 10 members of the group visited the Exeter Motive Power Depot to see how the staff of 60+ keep the trains maintained, cleaned, re-fuelled and fit for duty. A shed nearby deals with rubbish off the trains, 99% of which is recycled.

ALRUG officers have had "promising discussions" with the County Council and train operator with a view to piloting a half-hourly Sunday service on the Exeter-Exmouth line; they've conducted passenger counts on several Sundays to back up their claim that a more frequent service is warranted. Commenting on the recently-published Invitation to Tender document for the new Great Western franchise, the Chairman is pleased to note that the extra trains added during the current franchise become part of the baseline service for the new franchise – he looks forward to entering discussions with the winning bidder.

A sub-group within ALRUG has been set up to focus on integrated sustainable transport initiatives, and their initial work is to audit current facilities for cyclists and the opportunities for bus-train journeys. The sub-group recently met First Great Western's Integrated Transport manager to hone designs for the extensive new bicycle facilities planned for stations in the Exeter area.

Using their website password, members of the group can now get email alerts about rail service changes, local events & etc, and they're encouraged have the well-illustrated newsletter sent electronically to save printing and postage. A new feature in the newsletter is a "Jargon Buster" page, the one in the Autumn 2012 edition dealing with LEPs (Local Enterprise Partnerships).

...next, news from Railfuture...

RAILFUTURE RAIL USERS CONFERENCE

Places are still available at Railfuture's Rail User Conference at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham on Sat 3 Nov, but hurry before they sell out! Full details and a booking form can be downloaded from [Railfuture's website](#). The fee of only £30 includes lunch and conference report.

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.

RAILFUTURE RECEIVES CLARIFICATION ABOUT ELECTRIFICATION

The secretary of Railfuture's Policy, Lobbying and Campaigns committee, [Norman Bradbury](#), wrote to the Transport Minister in support of schemes announced as part of the High Level Output Specification, and took the opportunity to lobby for some additional routes to be electrified. A reply received from the HLOS Development Manager at the Dept. for Transport contained some interesting points about electrification:

"I anticipate the industry would look at the Hope Valley route via Dore Junction to Manchester as well as Sheffield-Moorthorpe and Sheffield-Doncaster as freight linkages. We have also asked Network Rail to examine the costs of electrification to Middlesbrough, Hull and Scarborough as the industry considers how trans-Pennine services might operate in the future. Overall the Government had already committed to around 324 route miles of electrification in Control Period 5 before the HLOS was published. The HLOS requires around 537 more route miles and in total I estimate we will have electrified a further 11% of the passenger rail network in England and Wales during CP5. Our aim is that, by the end of the decade, around threequarters of passenger miles travelled in England and Wales will be on electric trains."

Norman will be leading Railfuture's response to the European Commission's consultation on charging for the use of road infrastructure – the due date for comments is 4 Nov.

RAILFUTURE'S WELSH BRANCHES

The autumn edition of Rail Wales includes an interesting piece of research into the fares charged on trains in the Bridgend area. It concludes that some short-distance fares are absurdly expensive, especially for stations on the Maesteg line which passes through some of the most deprived parts of Wales. The craziest fare is that for Wildmill to neighbouring Sarn at £2, while the fare between Bridgend and Sarn (passing through Wildmill) is ten pence cheaper!

The front cover of the magazine shows a train at Wales's latest reopened station: Fishguard and Goodwick. The magazine's lead article about electrification proclaims that "Wales is on the way to being able to rid itself of the dubious distinction of being the only European country except Albania to have no electrified railways!" Further on, we read that the Branch has taken the advantage of various consultations to further its aims, including two recent timetable consultations and a draft bill from the Welsh Government which seeks to make public transport a more popular choice.

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

MORE LOCAL DECISIONS FOR TRANSPORT SCHEMES

More of the decisions on the major transport schemes that have a significant impact on people's daily lives will be taken at a local level, Transport Minister Norman Baker confirmed in September.

Local major transport schemes have traditionally been individually approved and funded by Government under a centralised bidding process. In the future funding will be allocated locally according to population, allowing priorities to be decided by newly established Local Transport Bodies which will be made up of local transport authorities, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and others with a key interest. Decisions on the use of the devolved funding will be made by the Local Transport Bodies which will be expected to demonstrate to local stakeholders and central Government that the schemes they will carry forward provide good value for money.

Detailed guidance on how to provide this assurance will be published by the Department for Transport in due course. See: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/baker-20120918a/> – DfT press release

REDUCED CAP ON RAIL FARE RISES

Passengers will benefit from a 2% cut to the planned rises in the cost of nationwide train travel and travel on London buses and tubes following an announcement by the Prime Minister on 7 Oct. The average increase in regulated rail fares and the cost of travel on London's buses and tube network will be limited to 1% above inflation for 2013 and 2014. Fares had been due to increase by RPI+3 per cent.

The Dept. for Transport is planning that from January 2015 onwards the regulated fares cap for franchised train operators will increase by RPI+1%. The decision to reduce the planned increases, funded from savings identified in the DfT's budget, will benefit hard-pressed commuters and passengers. In future years the DfT will look to absorb the costs by reprioritising within existing budgets. – DfT press release

Railfuture and many rail user groups had campaigned against the Government's formula for fare rises ... so we can all take some satisfaction in having achieved a reasonable outcome.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE DfT

The Secretary of State's announcement about the cancellation of the West Coast Main Line franchise competition can be read online [here](#).

The Dept. for Transport has released a publication entitled "Public Attitudes towards Train Services" which summarises experiences of, and attitudes towards, rail travel in the UK using questions asked on the Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey in April 2012. Topics covered include the accessibility of railway stations, whether experiences have met expectations, and opinions on the number and range of train tickets available. Read the full report [here](#).

RAIL PASSENGERS' EXPERIENCES AND PRIORITIES DURING ENGINEERING WORKS

Passenger Focus has carried out new research into passengers' views and experiences of using the railway when engineering work is disrupting the timetable. This refreshes research undertaken in 2004, and at Reading over Christmas 2010. Download the full report [here](#).

MORE PEOPLE TRAVELLING BY TRAIN

An extra 14 million passengers travelled on Britain's rail network in the first part of the 2012-13 year compared to the same period last year. New figures released by the Office of Rail Regulation showed that there were more than 360 million passenger journeys between April 1 and June 30, 2012.

The number of passenger journeys rose by 5.4 per cent on London and South East rail services compared with the same quarter in 2011-12, with over 246 million passenger journeys in the first quarter of 2012-13.

In 2011-12, 1.46 billion passenger journeys took place on Great Britain's railways. – *rail.co*

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY DECREASES

The rail industry has received £3.9bn in public subsidy from the government in the last financial year, data published by the Office of Rail Regulation has revealed. This is the fifth year in a row that government subsidy has decreased since it reached its height in 2006-7 when the rail industry received almost £6.31bn. – *Rail Professional*

COMMUNITY RAIL AWARDS 2012

The Awards for 2012 were presented at the Gala Dinner organised by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships on Fri 28 Sept at The Great Western Museum "STEAM" in Swindon by Mark Hopwood, MD First Great Western.

A number of station adoption groups were among the winners:

Friends of Heaton Chapel Station were awarded 1st prize in the Community Art category for their Olympic-inspired "Running Man" art project. They also took 2nd place in the Best Community Rail Event category for the launch event associated with the art project ... and their founder, Phil Rowbottom, got 2nd place in the Outstanding Volunteer category.

Friends of Dronfield Station received 1st prize in the Station Gardens category with a display that included a coal-mining pit tub; they had also planted a disused station platform with a wild flower meadow. **Friends of Hindley Station** won 2nd prize and **Friends of Cantley Station** were 3rd.

In the Station Development category, the 1st prize went to Glossop, and the special contribution by the **Friends of Glossop Station** was duly recognised; the group's Chairman, Neil Williams, got 3rd place in the Outstanding Volunteer category. The 2nd prize in the Station Development category was for Emsworth Station, with special mention of the work of the **Emsworth Residents' Association**.

Friends of Penmere Station in Cornwall won 2nd prize in the Small Projects category for their work with apprentices from a local shipyard to produce a planter in the form of a railway engine.

Friends of Christchurch Station won 3rd prize in the Best Community Rail Event category for their 150th anniversary celebrations.

Hartlepool Station Friends got a 2nd place in the "Passenger Matters" category for providing "Station Ambassadors" at times when the station is unmanned. The Stranraer-Ayr Line group, **SAYLSA**, were 3rd with their station-specific timetables.

In the Best Station Adoption category, 1st prize went to the **Acorn Centre**, an organisation that empowers volunteers with learning disabilities – they've now enhanced no less than 26 stations on the Southern network with hanging baskets and planters! The 2nd and 3rd places in this category went to the **Friends of Alsager Station** and the **Friends of Hattersley Station**, respectively.

Many other user groups and station adopters had a hand in the other awards, and individual members of groups also received citations. A full list of winners and shortlisted entries, together with details and photos of the winning entries, can be seen on [ACoRP's website](#).

BUS PASS HOLDERS TO GET A THIRD OFF TRAIN TRAVEL

Older and disabled people with bus passes will be able to get a third off train travel as part of a twelve-month First Great Western and Dept. for Transport experiment. The trial means concessionary bus pass holders will be able to claim discounted fares on two test routes without purchasing an annual Senior Railcard, which costs £28. The scheme will apply to standard off-peak fares between Worcester and Swindon via Stroud, and between Westbury and Weymouth.

Campaign groups including the National Pensioner's Convention and Unite have previously lobbied for concessionary bus passes to be used as a senior railcard, and believe it will lead to higher numbers of older and disabled people purchasing rail tickets. The DfT and FGW will examine the commercial viability of the scheme with a final report due in Nov 2013. – *breakingtravelnews.com*

RAIL MAP REVISED TO SHOW CURRENT TRAIN OPERATORS

A revised edition of Barry Doe's *National Rail Passenger Operators* map has just been produced. It shows rail lines throughout Britain, colour coded according to train operator. Anyone may download copies for private or commercial use, including printing at any size, from the 'Rail Operators in the British Isles' section of www.barrydoe.co.uk.

"The continued production and free use of this map is only possible courtesy four sponsors, to whom I am very grateful," says Barry, adding: "it is pleasing to see so many important members of our public transport industry taking my site so seriously. To all of them I express my renewed thanks."

TRAIN DELAY TOOL

A new train delay tool on the website of the Which? consumer organisation claims to “cut through the confusion and show you in seconds what you're entitled to.” See...

<http://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/travel-rights/train-delays/train-delay-tool/>

The facility covers every British train company and length of delay, but doesn't cover monthly and annual season tickets. The introductory notes invite you to “select the train company you were travelling with, then the length of time by which you were delayed, and you'll see what percentage of your train ticket you are entitled to claim back.” – *thanks to STORM for spotting this*

SUPERCAPACITORS - a potential answer to greener public transport

The supercapacitor could be the energy source that holds the key to greener public transportation. Supercapacitors are already allowing trams in Mannheim, Germany, to use 30 per cent less energy than their equivalents in other cities. In China, supercapacitor technology has been embraced so fervently over just the past four years that tens of thousands of 'supercap buses' are now on the roads.

Yuri Gogotsi, professor of materials science and engineering at Drexel University in Philadelphia, explains supercapacitors are power-storage devices that can supply onboard electrical power in hybrid vehicles. Whereas batteries store energy in chemical-form in substances that react to release electricity, energy-capacitors store it by simply piling up electrical charge on two electrodes. The larger the electrodes and the closer they are, the more energy can be stored.

Unlike batteries, supercapacitors can be charged and discharged in seconds and can withstand many hundreds of thousands of charging cycles. This is ideal for energy-saving applications that use opportunities for recharging, such as energy capture during braking. – *Cambridge Network*

IT MAKES COMMERCIAL SENSE TO BE CAUTIOUS

In the last issue of Rail User Express, I quoted Colin Hill of HPSRUA who wrote: “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?”

On reading this, Network Rail's Mike Franklin thought the situation on the railway was not so different from supermarkets. He replied: “Supermarkets do wait for long queues to form before they install more checkouts. And they don't stock more of a particular product unless there is a prolonged increase in sales of that item. It makes perfect sense to me that before the railway spends money on an improved service it needs to see some evidence that worthwhile numbers of people are going to use it. Just like the supermarkets in fact.”

[This is Mike's personal view and is not necessarily that of Network Rail. Colin was writing in Track Record, the magazine of the Huddersfield, Penistone & Sheffield Rail Users' Association, and his views are not necessarily those of HPSRUA - Ed]

EVENTS

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

Wed 17 Oct [SENUG](#) meeting at Morpeth Town Hall from 19:30. Cllr Reed from the County Council will speak about progress in delivering improvements to local rail services. Refreshments provided.

Wed 17 Oct [OPSTA](#) general meeting at Burscough Wharf from 19:30.

Mon 22 Oct [ALRUG](#) AGM at the Manor Hotel, Exmouth from 19:00. Speaker, Neil Buxton of ACoRP

Wed 24 Oct AGM of the [Tarka Rail Assn](#) at Barnstaple Town Station (aka Pathfield School) from 18:30 with guest speaker from Devon County Council.

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.

Mon 29 Oct [Campaign for High Speed Rail](#) briefing at 1 Whitehall Riverside, Leeds from 17:00, attended by HS2 Ltd and Passenger Focus. RSVP to [Nicola Minford](#)

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

Wed 31 Oct [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) conference at Merseytravel's new office, One Mann Island on Liverpool's waterfront from 11:00, preceded by the AGM.

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.

Mon 5 Nov [RVR](#) meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Wed 7 Nov [ACoRP](#) 1-day conference entitled "Realising the Potential of Small Stations" at the Guildhall, Worcester. Book via hazel@acorp.uk.com.

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

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

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.

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 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

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

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

Mar 14-15, 2013 [ACoRP](#) Seminar about Designated Community Rail Lines. Details to be announced.

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

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

Sat 22 Jun, 2013 [Railfuture](#) summer conference in 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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