



February 2018

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

Feel free to forward it to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). For further detail of any of the stories mentioned, consult the relevant website, or come back to [me](#) for the source material. Please say if you no longer wish to receive Rail User Express, or if you know of anyone or any Rail User Group (RUG) who would like to be added to the circulation list.

Bated breath everyone: next week should see the May timetable unveiled, although the Northern is unable to confirm its timetable until 8 March. In the South, no Midland Main Line services will call at either Bedford or Luton in the peak, and the Thameslink network is greatly expanded, although the timetable is much changed from last July's draft for consultation.

Roger Smith

We continue with the usual roundup of news items from groups around the UK. Please keep your contributions coming: they are all gratefully received.

Friends of the Far North Line

The achievement of the Far North Express winning gold at the 2017 Railfuture RUG Awards was recognised in the Scottish Parliament with a Motion congratulating both FoFNL and its editor, Ian Budd!

FoFNL awaits confirmation of the schemes to go forward in Control Period 6 (2019-2024) - the Lentrans Loop between Inverness and Beaulieu is a must! - and the outcome of a Line Review team meeting on 16 February. It is dismayed by the lack of progress in upgrading the Highland Main Line between Perth and Inverness, the more so as the A9 is being dualled the whole way at vast expense. Levelling the playing field for freight between road and rail would greatly strengthen the business case (*see MSRS in Other News below – Ed.*)

The gradients on the HML cry out for electrification, but the DfT prefers bi-mode diesel/electric sets. FoFNL's fears were borne out by a test run of a Class 800 Azuma train on 15 December. Between Perth and Kingussie, excluding the stop at Pitlochry, it had a total running time of 99mins against a booked 76mins – over 30% longer than planned! Reinstating the direct line between Inverkeithing and Perth would save a further 30mins, but that's for the future.

FoFNL Convener Mike Lunan advocates a simpler fare structure based solely on mileage: X pence per mile for the first 100 miles; 0.85X ppm for the next 300 miles, and 0.75X ppm thereafter. Transport Scotland would set X at whatever value made the scheme cost neutral. It would not apply to sleeper trains; there would be no Advance fare, and Returns would cost twice the single fare, although promotions would be allowed. Seat reservations, where available, would be at a nominal cost of up to £1.

St Andrews Rail Link Campaign

Mark Ruskell MSP, David Prescott of Allan Rail Solutions, the St Andrews, Levenmouth and Newburgh campaigns, and Alloa Community Council, have jointly produced a [Rail Enhancement Strategy](#) for Fife entitled "Breaking the Circle". It calls for funding for feasibility studies into re-opening the Levenmouth, Dunfermline-Alloa and St Andrews lines, and new stations at Newburgh and Halbeath. Copies have been passed to Fife Council and the Scottish Government. StARLink is commissioning a STAG pre-assessment from Peter Brett Associates, who have already conducted a very positive Policy Review.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

With Fife Council, Transport Scotland has commissioned consultants Peter Brett Associates to complete the transport appraisal, including stakeholder engagement, the wider economic impact and socio-economic and environmental benefits. LMRC welcomes this assignment as a critical step forward, and will seek to assist and expedite it. On 27 April, LMRC is holding a free Conference to update current progress and seek to develop an action plan to ensure final approval. For details and to register your interest, see [here](#).

Campaign for Borders Rail

CBR is now looking south from Tweedbank, through Hawick to Carlisle. Building on the success of the Borders Railway, and with wide support throughout the community, business and government, it is focussed on recreating the historic Waverley line. CBR Chair Simon Walton reflects on the winter of 1963: what a vital resource the railways were in the Borders, and just how much that service is missed now.

Copeland Rail User Group

CRUG has had confirmation that the timetable upgrade cannot now happen in May because of the delay in transferring diesel units to Northern due to delays on electrification in the Bolton area and elsewhere. Nevertheless, pending the arrival of more DMUs at the end of 2019, two pairs of Class 68 locos should arrive to replace the unreliable Class 37s although, to clear level crossings at stations, this will entail the loss of one coach from the set.

The footfall at Seascale justifies only a single ticket machine; Chris Cutts, Northern's Station Manager, Cumbria, will visit the station to decide on its location. However, Seascale Parish Council is calling for one on every platform, ideally next to the information posts. It would rather have none at all than just one, as that would encourage people across the tracks.

Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

SELRAP was delighted when, on a visit to Colne Station on 3 February, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced a joint DfT and Transport for the North (TfN) feasibility study into the case for reopening the "vital link" between Skipton and Colne. If the case is confirmed later this year, as expected, the scheme would be taken forward in CP6. SELRAP is looking forward to working closely with both bodies.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines

TfN's long-awaited [Strategic Transport Plan](#) embraces Northern Powerhouse Rail, a network connecting the north's six largest cities from Hull to Liverpool. A new line between Liverpool and Manchester via its HS2 spur could cut the journey time from 50mins to 28. There will also be a new Trans Pennine line between Manchester and Leeds via Bradford, upgrades to the Hope Valley line from Sheffield to Manchester via Stockport (see Other News), and increased line speeds in the northeast. A consultation on the plan runs until 17 April; the link above lists consultation events for each area.

However, the [Bolton News](#) reports that the town won't see electric trains until December. Manchester - Preston electrification was put back from the end of 2017 to May 2018, and now to late summer. RSG reports that Manchester Victoria station will close completely at Easter, whilst tracks serving platforms 5 and 6 are lowered to install overhead wiring under the Cheetham Hill road bridge.

[Rail magazine](#) reports that the first complete four-car Class 331 EMU for Northern is undergoing testing at the CAF factory Zaragoza before moving to Velim in the Czech Republic for further tests. Northern should take delivery of the first three-car Class 195 DMU in May, and plans to introduce them from December, initially between the North West and Manchester Airport, and between Chester and Leeds.

Holders of Greater Manchester travel cards travelling to, say, Hebden Bridge have been using the card to Littleborough, and then a ticket from there to Hebden Bridge. Latterly, some guards have claimed that this is acceptable only if the train they are travelling on stops at Littleborough. That would be so if two tickets were used, but not if a concessionary pass, ranger or rover is used together with a ticket. (*Around London, you could (can?) buy a ticket to/from the Zone 6 boundary for use in conjunction with a Travelcard - Ed.*)

Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group

Six express trains an hour on the TransPennine route would cost Greenfield all of its peak services direct to Victoria; and only one of the two trains per hour (tph) from Stalybridge to Victoria via Ashton would run via Salford Central, which is important for workers in Spinningfields. It should be possible for some other service to call. Members of Greenfield Rail Action Group (GRAG), the Friends of Mossley Station (FOMS) and Slaithwaite and Marsden Action on Rail Transport (SMART) relayed the fears of thousands of local rail passengers to Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Manchester. People working in Salford and Swinton will lose their jobs if it takes three trains to get to work. Also, many people have to be in Manchester to start work on the hour, so the arrival of trains at Piccadilly very close to the hour will create many problems.

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group

NCRUG continues to lobby for improved facilities and services, including timetable improvements, passenger information relevant to the area, greater provision for cyclists, and more and better rolling stock. Passenger services over the Halton Curve from December will put additional strain on station facilities, the more so since ticket machines force travellers to arrive at the station earlier than had they been buying on board. NCRUG has met the bidders for the Wales and Borders franchise, which will take in the Halton Curve service. However, rather than an Invitation to Tender, the Welsh Government/Transport for Wales have issued an 'Invitation to submit Final Tenders', which may be less prescriptive. Fares and rolling stock issues are still to be resolved, as delivery of the bi-mode Class 769 is way behind schedule.

A Helsby - Ellesmere Port - Hooton service is needed to link new development around Ince and Elton with places of employment and education. A new Ellesmere Port - Leeds service, and better timetabling as part of Northern Connect are coming, but service frequency is still an issue. Parking charges at Helsby and Frodsham will act as a disincentive to a modal shift from car to train, despite a key road junction in Frodsham being designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) due to vehicle emissions.

Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users Association

Arriva Trains Wales has withdrawn its bid to continue running services in Wales and the Borders, leaving Abellio Rail Cymru, Keolis/Amey and MTR Corporation (Cymru) Ltd in the frame. The winner should be announced in the spring, and take up the new franchise in October. SCRUA does not have a preference, as too little is known of the bidders' plans, or of Transport for Wales' priorities, but will seek to build a relationship with the new franchisee. It has regional groups focused on Shrewsbury and Liverpool, the latter with links to North Wales via Bidston and the Wirral and, later this year, to Runcorn, Frodsham, Helsby and Chester via the reopened Halton curve.

Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association

From May, MCRUA expects many trains from the east to run through Manchester Victoria to the Airport via the Ordsall Chord and Piccadilly. The plan for Mid Cheshire is for two tph between Piccadilly and Greenbank on Monday to Saturday until the evening peak, a new hourly Sunday service between Piccadilly and Chester, and the Chester - Stockport peak service again running to and from Piccadilly. MCRUA has sought to mitigate the impact, particularly at stations where not every train calls. Replacing Pacers, even with Class 150 Sprinters, will ease peak hour overcrowding. However, the effect on the Mid Cheshire Line of retaining diesel trains between Manchester and Preston is still unclear.

The Welsh Government's "Moving North Wales forward – our Vision for North Wales and the North East Wales Metro" includes £10 million to turn Wrexham General into an integrated transport hub with a Park and Ride facility, a revised bus network, and improved connectivity to the town centre bus station, although adjacent land may be needed to improve access and create turning space for buses. However, it makes no mention of the previously mooted Wrexham North and South stations. SCRUA has been invited to join the 'Transport Innovation Network', part of the Community Transport Association's 'Connecting Communities in Wales' project, supported by the Welsh Government's Rural Communities Development Fund, which aims to bring together stakeholders to identify transport gaps in rural communities, and develop new transport solutions for people with limited connectivity.

At Shrewsbury, the remaining canopies and the Dana footbridge will be refurbished later this year. Plans are being developed with the Local Authority, as both are listed and form part of the historic fabric of the station. SCRUA also supports the campaign to reopen the second passenger exit.

At Gobowen, the station buildings are being developed as a community asset in conjunction with the Local Authority Conservation Officer. Work on the northbound platform may be extensive if damp is present. On the southbound platform, Severn Dee Travel, the Chester-Shrewsbury Rail Partnership and the Hilton Jones Trust plan to enhance the Derwen College work experience café and coffee bar, and expand its menu.

Friends of the Barton Line

FastCat's 1935 service from Hull and 2110 service from Scunthorpe were withdrawn from 2 January following the loss of local authority subsidy. Fares from Barton line stations to Lincoln have been reinstated. Poster frames for RUGs at all Northern stations were mostly empty; ideas are being sought for material to boost patronage of the line, such as publicising Lions and Rotary groups events.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group

On 12 January, following the fire at Nottingham station, very few Liverpool-Norwich trains ran anywhere on the line, so PENRUG hails all whose efforts enabled a normal Manchester and Norwich service the next day. It would have been Liverpool-Norwich but for infrastructure failures further west. There are temporary toilets next to Platform 7, with step-free exit to Queens Road, and lifts on Platforms 1 to 6. A slower Kings Lynn - Kings Cross service from December may affect connections to and from this line at Ely. However, the final GN/Thameslink timetable is still pending.

Few people travel simply from one railway station to another, so transport planners, app developers and service providers are increasingly looking at the "final mile," the "total journey," and "mobility as a service." Most passengers arrive and depart on foot. The PENRUG Secretary commends <http://walkit.com/>, which often gives a shorter and quicker route with less traffic. Robert Griffiths' 1993 booklet *The Trek to the Train* is currently out of print, but is still listed on the Railfuture/RDS Pamphlets web page.

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

The Greater Cambridge Partnership's pilot Rural Transport Hub scheme is taking Sawston, Oakington and Whittlesford forward, rather than Meldreth nor Shepreth. Additional parking is planned at the latter stations, but in each case on land that has live planning applications for housing on them. The inaccessibility of Meldreth Station for people with mobility needs, including prams and pushchairs is still an issue. Great Northern does provide a free taxi for whichever leg of your journey you can't manage due to the impediment of the steps over the tracks. You do need to book ahead, but this should be routine: contact [Govia Thameslink Railway Assisted Travel](#) for assistance.

English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

ERTA wants local authorities to be pro-active in reopening the Great Central line between Leicester/East Midlands and the East-West Rail at Calvert, with reclamation over 20-years, and deviations as required. There is an ERTA Forum in Rugby on 28 April for interested parties (see Events).

ERTA is seeking a new volunteer position as 'Kempston Area Rep', to pursue the provision of a station/halt on the Bedford-Bletchley line, to serve both the town and the Retail Park, with a footbridge connecting the latter to Southfields Park.

Association of Public Transport Users (Thameslink North)

APTU is still in dialogue with East Midlands Trains: withdrawing peak services from Luton and Bedford would inconvenience London commuters, but cause hardship to passengers from the north who need to arrive in Bedford or Luton in the am peak, or return in the pm peak and vice versa. One evening, the Bedford Commuters Association counted 1,701 people alighting from EMT services at Bedford. DfT figures are 1500 at Bedford and 500 at Luton, but fewer in the morning due to difficulty of getting a seat. The extra load will absorb most of the much-trumpeted Thameslink capacity from May, and adversely affect almost every Thameslink North station in some way or other.

Hitchin Rail User Group

In July 2017, the Rail Delivery Group announced a new train performance metric, so HRUG wondered why the GTR were still using the Public Performance Measure (PPM). GTR responded as follows: "PPM is still the current performance measure which NR uses, and is held to account on, during Control Period 5 (2014–19).

However, across many of the routes (including South East) Right Time arrivals at destination is one of the scorecard measures, as the industry attempts to move towards a RT mentality. In future, one of the measures in CP6 will be 'on time' which measures actual v planned arrival time at each station, average passenger lateness, cancellations and some other factors. PPM will still sit in the background, but won't be reflected as a measure of how the industry is performing."

HRUG welcomes the enhanced Thameslink service from May, with through trains to Horsham and Brighton via Gatwick Airport, but is dismayed by the loss of its half-hourly non-stop service in the evening peak from 1710 to 1910 (except 1840), and in its place an hourly one- or two-stop service between 1854 and 2154 - starting just 6mins before the peak ends!

Slipping a fifth platform at Stevenage from CP5 to CP6 made the full Thameslink service of 24 tph through the core incompatible with the Moorgate-Stevenage Metro service via Hertford North, so the latter will be replaced by a bus service. However, DfT's remit to phase in the full Thameslink service over 18 months rather than 6 took out one of the two tph to Brighton until December 2018, so GTR has managed to retain an hourly Metro service to Stevenage until then. Platform 5 remains an imperative, though, and the DfT is pressing NR to complete the work as soon as possible. In a letter to a local MP, transport minister Jo Johnson states that, provided an existing contractor can be used, work could start as early as May 2020.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

The Federation of Met Line User Committees (FOMLUC) January meeting was briefed on TfL's ambitious [Four Lines Modernisation \(4LM\) programme](#) to resignal the Hammersmith & City, Circle, District, and Metropolitan Lines, and have a single control centre at Hammersmith. It will be interoperable with London Overground, Chiltern and Southwest Trains. Eventually there will be 32 tph on the north and south sections of the Circle Line and out to Barking. Ballasted track between Baker Street and Finchley Road is also being replaced with concrete track and new drainage. Installation of step-free access at Amersham should begin soon, and be brought into use in Autumn 2019.

The [Watford Observer](#) reports that the saga of the Metropolitan Line Extension (MLX) to Watford Junction has taken another twist. Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, was reported to have vetoed the scheme, even though the DfT and the Department for Housing, Community and Local Government agreed to put up the balance of £73 million needed to complete the project, and cushion "risks and overspends". But Khan is now demanding yet another £40 million "to fully cover the risk". Hertfordshire County Council's budget council has tabled an emergency cross-party motion to express its dismay, and demonstrate the political support for the project. Meanwhile, Watford MP Richard Harrington has started a [petition](#).

Tonbridge Line Commuters

Southern plans to axe direct train services to London from Tonbridge via Redhill will reduce the line to a shuttle. Moreover, connections will be fewer and slower, resulting in a much poorer service. Passengers who use the route say that they are having to leave their jobs, move house or drive to a different station. TLC maintains that the line has the potential to act as a gateway to Gatwick Airport, relieving congestion on the M25 and M23, but the current service is too infrequent and unreliable to support this aim. Accordingly, it wants the line transferred from GTR to the South Eastern franchise.

Bexhill Rail Action Group

To address concerns about peak-hour overcrowding on the 2-car Brighton to Ashford diesel service, GTR proposed a 4-car electric service between Brighton and Hastings/Ore. However, changing at Hastings would add time and discomfort, particularly in the peak; stations west of Hastings would lose direct access to Ashford, and the local economy would lose strategic connectivity along the East Sussex Coast. It now seems that GTR has adopted BRAG's suggestion for an Ashford-Eastbourne diesel service, maintaining the through service to Ashford, and increasing the frequency between Hastings and Eastbourne from 3 tph to 4.

It would also build confidence and boost passenger numbers on the most likely route of the possible High Speed Javelin service to St Pancras via Ashford. This offers a return of 3:1 on a comparatively modest investment of about £200m. East Sussex County Council and Hastings Borough Council now include Eastbourne in their business plans. On visit to Ashford International, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling supported modification of the track layout to allow Eastbourne trains to travel direct to St Pancras.

A BRAG sub-group is looking into issues that deter physically and sensory disabled travelers, those who lack confidence, or have heavy suitcases or buggies from using the rail network. The stealthy extension of services with a single member of crew is unhelpful in this context. Do [contact](#) BRAG if you or your group would like to share your experiences or offer suggestions.

In August, BRAG signed a Station Partnership Agreement with the Sussex CRP, which looks after Marshlink, the local Community Rail Line. Bexhill ticket office should be staffed more regularly, with the proposal for station hosts currently on hold. With three possible routes into London, passengers need more from the new TVMs than simply purchasing a journey. These leave much to be desired operationally, although they are useful to collect pre-paid tickets bought on the Internet.

West Sussex Rail Users Association

From December, some Southern trains have become Thameslink, another GTR brand. As a result, the 0557 from Littlehampton to London Bridge was withdrawn south of Horsham, badly affecting those who used it for local journeys, or to reach Gatwick, either for flights or to connect with the 0704 Gatwick Express. Regrettably, there was no prior notice of this change, although Southern has subsequently arranged for posters on the stations affected to explain the reason for it.

Subject to confirmation, from May, there will be an extra London Bridge service on weekdays, with services from Portsmouth and Bognor joining at Horsham. The 0636 from Victoria should run to Chichester as originally planned, rather than Bognor, as it conveys students and workers from Arun Valley stations to Chichester arriving 0846. Forcing up to 200 passengers onto an already crowded 3-car Brighton train at Barnham, adding 10 minutes to their journey, is unacceptable. Saturday services mirror the weekday off-peak service, but on Sunday, Portsmouth - Victoria services via Hove will see 4 cars attached to the Bognor service at Barnham, and run via Horsham with just one stop between Gatwick and East Croydon.

RAILFUTURE

Railfuture welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join Railfuture [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Railfuture and its Campaign updates by clicking on [News and views](#), , [Press releases](#), [Raifuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture submissions](#).

RAIL USER GROUPS

A recently updated Railfuture [web page](#) lists all affiliated RUGs, and has links to: all known RUGs, either alphabetically or by Region/Branch; reopening campaign groups (RoCs), and national and regional passenger bodies. Please check your entry, and pass any comments, corrections or additions to my predecessor, [Tony Smale](#).

RAILACTION

Also on the Railfuture website, the latest [Rail Action](#) features new and refurbished rolling stock that will enter service shortly: Hitachi Class 385 for Scotrail; Bombardier Caledonian sleepers from CAF, plus a new factory in Wales; Class 710 Aventura for Barking – Gospel Oak, and Pendolinos for Virgin Trains West Coast. In May, Maghull North station between Liverpool and Ormskirk will open, and Custom House station on the Docklands Light Railway will reopen after upgrading for the Elizabeth Line from December.

EUROPEAN ADVISORY GROUP

EAG conducted a mystery shopper exercise into rail ticketing at Heathrow: travellers should be able to buy a ticket to their final destination, not just to London. Three members attended a Brussels conference on night trains; others are gathering comments on Eurostar. The fourth Bulletin of European Rail Travel, a free electronic quarterly, will be published later this month. Contact [Trevor Garrod](#) to go on the mailing list.

RAILFUTURE NORTH WEST

Since last November 2017, the Preston to Blackpool North line has been re-modelled, with a new track layout featuring a double lead junction for the Blackpool South branch, another platform at Kirkham station, and upgraded carriage sidings. However, NR missed the opportunity to build the much-needed passing loop on the South Fylde line - much cheaper than having to start from scratch in the future.

Railfuture North West supports the campaign to reinstate Oxenholme – Windermere electrification. As noted elsewhere, the Government’s claim that the “intrusive wires and masts” were unnecessary, as bi-mode trains could deliver the benefits of electrification, is patent nonsense. And whereas re-signalling the trans-Pennine route may marginally increase its capacity, electrification would bring the step change in performance needed to retain travellers and attract new ones.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

RFEA has produced a 13-page illustrated report on Seamless Public Transport in East Anglia. It details members' own experience of good and not so good practice, and make 5 general recommendations:

- Some modest extension of PlusBus
- Investigate the potential for other longer links to larger settlements not served by rail and perhaps to tourist attractions
- Improve staff awareness
- Real-time bus information at rail stations
- Investigate improved bus links, shelters and bays at stations which do not have these at present.

RAILFUTURE LONDON AND SOUTH EAST

RFLSE broadly agrees with the challenges identified in the Mayor of London’s draft Transport Strategy, and supports its central aim of 80% of trips on foot/cycle/public transport by 2041. It advocated both the devolution of more mainline rail to the Mayor/TfL, and the case for Crossrail 2 to have an arm via Stratford International and Barking to the East London Riverside Opportunity Area. However, direct rail access to Heathrow from the south and west should not have to wait upon its expansion – they’re needed now!

The AGM on 28 April (details below) will have a Light Rail theme, and include speakers on the potential for lines under the Thames between Ebbsfleet and Grays, and another under Cambridge.

RAILFUTURE WESSEX

In the new Great Western franchise, Stewart Palmer would like more capacity on the Cardiff-Portsmouth service. The Trans Wilts line should run at least at the present frequency, but be extended to Salisbury to ease pressure on the Cardiff-Portsmouth services beyond Trowbridge. On weekdays, an hourly service to Yeovil should provide a half-hourly service with the Cardiff trains between Bristol and Westbury. Bristol-Weymouth should be a discrete two-hourly, seven days/week service, with an earlier Sunday service, and be formed of 3 cars rather than 2; “excursions” to the Malverns are unwieldy and import delays. Stuart George suggests that down trains through Yeovil Pen Mill use the up line to give passengers level access to the station exit, but the island platform is specified.

SWR has mooted an Exeter-Brighton service via Southampton and Salisbury. RF Wessex would support such a service, but thinks it would suffer line capacity constraints. Could it split/join the main Exeter service at Salisbury, or run via Weymouth instead? It could be introduced with new rolling stock, replacing Class 159, and conjoin with the Portsmouth-Bristol service, which could transfer to SWR. Southampton-Swindon also has much potential, whilst the GWR Weymouth-Bristol service suffers from overcrowding and poor timing. It would benefit from additional semi-fast services, linking to the other services mentioned above. Services in the Reading-Guildford area would also benefit from rationalisation and consolidation.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

EAST HAMPSHIRE CRP

In the DfT rail station usage figures for April 2016 - March 2017, growth at all four of its stations should provide the evidence that the CRP needs to bid for additional investment. However, the 2017/18 figures could be hit by ongoing industrial action, so it hopes that a resolution to the dispute will soon be found.

FELIXSTOWE TRAVEL WATCH

FTW hopes to see work start on doubling 1.4km of the Felixstowe line between Trimley station and Grimston Lane, to increase reliability and allow more container trains. However, it is the new rolling stock in 2019 that will really transform the service. Meanwhile, from December the Elizabeth line (Crossrail) between Paddington and Abbey Wood will cut the journey time from Liverpool Street to Paddington via the West End from 19mins on the Circle line to just 8mins.

TRAVELWATCH SOUTHWEST

The General Meeting in Taunton on 3 March (see Events) has the theme, “Capacity, Capacity, Capacity”. Refreshments and a light buffet lunch are free to all delegates. Acceptances should be sent by email to the Company Secretary, [Bryony Chetwode](#) before 23 February.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

TF’s Autumn 2017 National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) is based on the views of 25,618 passengers across the whole of Great Britain. The summary - [Rail passenger satisfaction at a glance](#) – includes links to [the full survey](#) and [the results in more depth](#).

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

The DfT has updated [structure charts and organisational data](#) for itself and non-departmental public bodies (NDPB), as well as its [Mode Shift Revenue Support \(MSRS\) Scheme](#). MSRS assists companies with the costs of transporting freight by rail rather than by road, where rail would be more expensive.

The DfT has also published guidance notes for its [Secure Station Scheme](#): what is involved in gaining accreditation, and how to apply. Sections 5 and 6 emphasise the need to gauge how passengers feel not only on the station, but also as they approach and leave it.

STOP PRESS: the Transport Secretary has made an order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 authorising NR to construct, operate and maintain new passing facilities and associated railway infrastructure on the Manchester to Sheffield Hope Valley route between Bamford and Hathersage and at Dore. The Bamford Loop will be 1,062 metres long and adjacent to the existing railway. Associated works include replacing the Hathersage West foot crossing with a footbridge. The Dore Package includes an extension of the Dore South curve and a second track through Dore & Totley Station.

On 28 February 2017, part of a wall at the top of a cutting 20 metres above the four-track line between Liverpool Lime Street and Edge Hill stations collapsed. Around 170 tonnes of masonry and other debris fell into the cutting. No trains were struck, nor were there any injuries, but all lines were blocked until 8 March. The RAIB recommended that NR:

- Be aware of walls which have a potentially high safety consequence in the event of failure
- Then, review its assessment procedures for such walls, and the use of open source data to identify changes in land use, and to provide structures examiners with information on property boundaries.

[The Daily Telegraph](#) reports that Rail Minister Jo Johnson wants every diesel train in Britain scrapped by 2040 in a bid to cut pollution. However, MPs and trade bodies warned that customers would bear the costs of the overhaul through higher ticket prices. To realise such an ambitious target, the Government would need to provide the proper incentives and support to firms at a time of growing concern over the long-term sustainability of the franchise system.

[The Daily Telegraph](#) also reports that Lord Winston has been accused of “internet bullying” for tweeting photos of a woman on a train he criticised for speaking loudly on her mobile phone. However, some argued that sharing photos of the unidentified woman with his 40,000 followers was an invasion of her privacy. “You have no idea why she might need to be taking that call,” wrote Charlotte Hood. “If she’s annoying you, tell her. No need to post her picture online.” In response to the criticism, Lord Winston deleted the tweets, but suggests that invasion of privacy can work both ways.

According to The Times (February 14), the German government is considering plans to make public transport free in cities suffering from poor air quality. The measures would be tested in Bonn, Essen, Herrenberg, Reutlingen and Mannheim before being rolled out to other affected areas.

Richard Ardern takes issue with my description of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) in last month's editorial as "discredited". He claims that it gives a far more accurate measure of inflation, but it suits the Government to use the Consumer Prices Index for inflation proofed benefit increases etc, whilst aligning rail fares and other income sources to the RPI. Thus they get 3% more in, but only have to shell out 2% more. So it is not the metric that is discredited by such sleight of hand but HMG.

[The Swanage Railway](#) regrets that further trials of passenger train services to the mainline at Wareham will not be possible this summer. The 90-day trial last year used West Coast Railways rolling stock and drivers, but although it carried over 13,000 passengers against 12,000 in the business plan, it operated at a loss that cannot be repeated. The two DMU's being refurbished and fitted out for mainline work should be delivered in the spring, but will then need extensive testing and the Swanage drivers training; the trials could resume in September. Mark Woolley, of Swanage Railway, said: "The trial is not just about getting the maximum income at the busiest time of the year. We are committed to running trains when we can. We want a sustainable long-term development of a service."

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

Stephen Joseph, CBT Chief Executive, called for a freeze on rail fares in the budget, but the Government chose to snub rail passengers and freeze only fuel duty; season ticket holders will have to fork out almost as much as drivers will save: "That doesn't seem fair to us or the millions of people who commute by train, especially as wages continue to stagnate. What's good enough for motorists should be good enough for rail passengers". Accordingly, CBT has launched a [Fair Fares Now campaign](#) to fight the ever-rising rail fares.

CONSULTATIONS

- DfT: [Great Western rail franchise](#), closes 21 February.
- Mayor of London: [New London Plan](#), closes Friday 2 March.
- TfN: [Strategic Transport Plan](#), closes 17 April.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a County Council or Unitary Authority.

...and finally

NR has had to confirm as genuine the letter regarding a barn owl survey that landscape and property consultants Bruton Knowles sent to residents living near the Western section of East West Rail.

Friends of the Barton Line cite Which? magazine, February 2018, for the following gems. The cost per mile of the standard rail fare on the Heathrow Express is 71% higher than on the Trans Siberian Express, with its excursions and a lavish private compartment. A luxury journey across Europe on the Orient Express costs only 7% more per minute than a standard walk-up single fare on Virgin West Coast trains from Manchester to London.

The last scheduled steam hauled passenger train through Rochdale was the 0208 York to Manchester Victoria mail and passenger train on 18 May 1968, worked by Black Five 45310, so the 50th anniversary is pending. Oddly, this had been the first local passenger service to go over to scheduled diesel locomotive operation, but by 1968 it had reverted to steam.

For anyone who missed it, there is still time to catch Michael Portillo's series of programmes on [Railways of the Great War](#) on iPlayer.

EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains the [List of Events](#) on the Railfuture website. A Calendar of Events embedded in a pdf document can get discarded, and this is a problem if the venue changes from month to month. A copy of your Calendar as a separate document in Word format would therefore be much appreciated.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

February

- Saturday 17. East Suffolk Travellers' Association, St Marks Church Centre, **Oulton Broad** (next to South station), 14.00
- Monday 19. Railfuture Thames Valley, Jericho Community Centre, 33a Canal St, **Oxford**, 1830.
- Tuesday 20. Chesham and District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (also 3 April, 22 May, 19 June, 7 August, 18 September (followed by the AGM), 23 October, 11 December.)
- Friday 23. St Andrews Rail Link campaign, Rusacks Hotel, Pilmour Links, **St Andrews**, 1930.
- Saturday 24. Railfuture North West AGM, Southport Community Centre, 93-101, Norwood Road, **Southport**, PR8 6HQ, 1315.
- Tuesday 27. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also 27 March, 24 April, 29 May, 26 June.)

March

- Friday 2. Pontefract Civic Society Rail Sub-Group, **Pontefract** Squash Club, 1900 (and on the 1st Friday of each month).
- Saturday 3. TravelWatch SouthWest, The Long Room, Somerset County Cricket Club, **Taunton**, TA1 1JT, 1030 for 1100
- Saturday 3. Railfuture Wessex AGM, Above Bar Church Centre, **Southampton**, 1300 (NB. Change of date).
- Saturday 10. Railfuture Lincolnshire AGM, Croft Street Community Centre, Baggholme Road, **Lincoln**, 1100.
- Saturday 17. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045 (Also 13 June, 20 October).
- Saturday 17. Railfuture North East AGM, Newcastle Arts Centre, Westgate Road, **Newcastle**, 1400.
- Wednesday 21. Friends of the Barton Line, The Sloop, **Barton**, 1800 (also 21 March at No 1 Inn, **Cleethorpes**; 16 May, 18 July (AGM), 19 September, 21 November).
- Thursday 22. Magor Action Group On Rail, Golden Lion, **Magor**, 1930 (and the 3rd Thursday every month).
- Saturday 24. Copeland Rail Users' Group AGM, Methodist Church hall, **Seascale**, 1350

Further Ahead

- 27 April. Levenmouth Rail Campaign Conference, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Methil Docks, 1100.
- 28 April. Railfuture London & South East AGM, Wesley's Chapel, 49 City Road, **London**, EC1Y 1AU, 1030 for 1100.
- 28 April. English Regional Transport Association (ERTA) Forum, 'Rupert Brooke', 8 - 10 Castle Street, **Rugby**, CV21 2TP, 1400.
- 12 May. East Suffolk Travellers' Association AGM, Quay St Church, **Woodbridge**.

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