



February 2020

### Welcome to the Rail User Express.

RUX is published around the middle of each month. It may be forwarded, or items reproduced in another newsletter (quoting sources). Anyone may request RUX as an email attachment, or opt to be notified when it is posted on the [Railfuture \(Rf\) website](#). There is no charge for either service. Following GDPR, [Railfuture Membership](#) now maintains both lists. Please advise if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter or link, or if you know of anyone who would like to be added. For further details of any of the stories mentioned, please consult the relevant website, or ask [the editor](#) for the source material.

Rail announcements are now coming thick and fast. As well as taking Northern's franchise - and possibly South Western Railway's (SWR) - into public ownership, a £500m fund will "help" restore closed rail lines, though how much will actually be spent on new infrastructure is a moot point: DfT's GRIP process is not just sclerotic; it is also ravenous. Then came two major announcements taking [East West Rail \(EWR\)](#) forward (see below).

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 FNL Review Team Final Report came at the end of November; it was worth the wait. A completely revised service pattern will see an hourly service between Tain and Inverness, and a half-hourly peak service between Dingwall and Inverness. Key to its implementation is the Lentrane Loop, for which FoFNL has campaigned for many years.

Next comes Transport Scotland's Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 - although work on the Highland Main Line, the third most important project out of 29 listed in the original document, has hardly started. STPR2 is the Scottish Government's chance to state publicly that, to address climate change, rail projects have priority over road. This includes reopening the direct route from Perth to Edinburgh that was closed in 1970 to facilitate building the M90.

### Levenmouth Rail Campaign

The River Leven Connectivity Project aims to reinvigorate the surrounding area. Reconnecting people and places is a key focus, so it is important that as many as possible complete the online survey (see below).

Meanwhile, LMRC understands that Atkins has won the tender for the next Levenmouth rail link design stage (GRIP3?) due to be completed by June. It is waiting to hear from NR regarding the appointment of a Liaison Officer, and Fife Council are re-interviewing for the posts of Levenmouth Reconnected Blueprint Manager and a communication post.

## **Campaign for Borders Rail**

The Borders Railway footfall continues to increase, despite problems with overcrowding and cancellations caused by the shortage of available diesel trains, and over-running of crew training on other routes. However, as ScotRail has gradually acquired more trains – its Edinburgh to Glasgow service now has a full fleet – so it has been able to allocate additional carriages for Borders trains.

Now twenty years old, the Campaign to extend to Carlisle has achieved, in the words of Marion Short, “the biggest success since securing reinstatement of the line”. This was in the form of a £10m feasibility study announced as part of the Borderlands Growth Deal, signalling support from both the UK and Scottish Governments. CBR has long argued that it is not just a railway project, but about economic regeneration on a regional scale, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and providing opportunities for future generations.

Celebrating two decades of campaigning, and commemorating fifty years without a railway, while looking forward to further successes, members made it standing room only at the AGM. A year-long programme was announced that will take the Campaign to events throughout Edinburgh, Midlothian and the Borders, and culminate in the 21st AGM in Carlisle this autumn.

## **CKP Railways plc.**

During and after the election campaign, Conservative candidates, MPs and Ministers often spoke of improving railways in the North of England as a goal for the new Government, and of devolving responsibility for infrastructure and public services to more local levels. Cumbria County Council is the Local Transport Authority (LTA) with a remit to identify and promote the solutions needed for the county. However, its leadership takes the view that railways and transport are a Government responsibility, whereas HMG has always stated that re-instating the Keswick and Penrith railway is primarily of local and regional importance, and should be brought forward through local authorities and LEPs.

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), abolished in 2010, commissioned JMP to develop the first business case for this, based on the feasibility and design work done by CKP. Its conclusion, that the project would benefit a wider area beyond the North Lakes, attracted a lot of interest. So when somebody with sufficient political "clout" finally decides that it is time to re-open the Penrith to Keswick line (and maybe on to Cockermouth and Workington), they will have a simple choice: set up a project team from scratch, or use CKP's "oven ready" package to save years and many millions of pounds.

## **Harrogate Line Supporters Group**

Further to the item in December's RUX, the Harrogate Advertiser reports that the project to provide £12.5m for track and signal upgrades at Cattal has passed critical gateways and is proceeding to plan, the LEP having agreed to maintain its key £9.5m contribution. North Yorks CC will now commission NR to design and deliver the scheme, which should complete by late autumn, so the Harrogate-York service could double from December 2020. With the improvements to Harrogate sidings to facilitate turnarounds of Azuma services, and Northern Rail being taken back into public ownership, maybe things are looking up.

Brian Dunsby queried the lack of double-tracking as originally proposed with Andrew Bainbridge, the NYCC Project Manager, who replied: “Ultimately, the more cost effective and affordable method of achieving the necessary time savings did not involve much extra double tracking. There are some very short sections at Cattal and Hammerton, mainly to aid turnout from the points, but the main improvement is actually upgrading the token block signalling to more modern technology”. However, given NR's extended planning period for timetable changes, it is doubtful whether the track and signalling work will meet the deadline for December 2020. Meanwhile, Brian understands that the Planning Inspector's Report on competing housing developments at Cattal and Flaxby Park is due out shortly.

## **Station Adopters at Bare Lane**

While taking nothing away from the excellent efforts of the Lancaster & Skipton RUG to improve the Leeds–Morecambe service, including the introduction of more comfortable Class 158 units, the Lancaster–Morecambe leg remains very unreliable, as Northern makes frequent cancellations, often terminating services at Lancaster as a result of late running and other operating reasons. The unreliability is doing little to increase passenger usage from Bare Lane and Morecambe, and needs to be urgently addressed.

## **Northern Weekly Salvo (Paul Salvesson)**

Travelling around the north-west at the moment: you can't move for new trains. Northern's Class 195s and 331s are common sights around the network, and both are comfortable and speedy. Paul remains critical about poor window visibility, something that train designers seem to care little about, but passengers do. TransPennine Express's (TPE) new trains are even better, particularly the Hitachi 802s, which look stunning and are a very good ride. The push-me-pull-you Nova 3s with Class 68 diesel traction are fun too; there's a real kick hearing one on full chat up the 1 in 47 Platting Bank out of Victoria.

## **Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)**

Rail passengers need to plan ahead while bridge repairs over the Leeds and Liverpool canal take place in East Lancashire. From 15-23 February, one railway bridge near Accrington will be replaced, and another at Rose Grove in Burnley will be strengthened. The Colne - Blackburn line will be closed throughout, while sections of the line between Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley will have bus replacement services.

## **Friends of the Barton Line**

The DfT has confirmed its intention to transfer Barton line services from Northern to East Midlands Railway, although this may be a staged process and no dates have yet been set. The group has mixed views on the merits or otherwise of this decision, but looks forward to working with the new management.

The ORR has stipulated that even rail replacement buses now have to be compliant for disabled persons. The committee considered this totally impractical, as they were mostly old coaches used on school runs.

Some rail customers have been refused reduced travel to Lincoln with a North Lincs travel pass, as the required code is not easy to find on EMR conductors' ticket machines. The Secretary raised the matter with NLC's transport department, and was assured that the complaint would be followed up.

## **Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users**

On 24 November a Class 755 Flirt bi-mode failed to activate one of the unusual level crossings on the Sheringham line, and almost hit a car. Speed restrictions were imposed, and trains did not venture beyond Cromer for some weeks. Then on leaving the electric railway near Stowmarket on 3 December, a Flirt driver was unable to lower his pantograph, which smashed into a gantry and an overbridge. For the next week, Flirts were banned from running between Cambridge and Ely.

Finally, on 5 December a Flirt ran from Trowse swing bridge into Norwich station without being detected by the signalling track circuits. All Flirts were withdrawn for safety checks and remedial action, causing mayhem on 6 December and leading to the cancellation of all services between Peterborough and Ipswich for the next month. Replacement buses served Whittlesea, while Manea passengers were given a number to ring for taxis. However, not all the call handlers were helpful, and not all the taxis turned up. Safety is why some people choose the train. Flirts are not the first fleet of new trains to encounter problems with track circuits during their first leaf fall season. Appropriate action was taken, but evasion and obfuscation in the local media undermine public confidence more than the incident itself.

Penrug would welcome restoration of a through service from Sheffield to Norwich at about 0740, which would serve people from Sheffield and Chesterfield attending business meetings in Peterborough, and also offer daytrip opportunities from March to Norwich. Extending the 1754 and 1857 from Norwich to Sheffield would help students or workers making an early start next morning. The Franchising Director did indicate that he might be prepared to allow some through journeys to Sheffield if the Liverpool-Norwich express service is withdrawn from December 2021. A later evening train from Norwich to Nottingham could usefully run via Stamford if that station loses its late Spalding to Nottingham service.

## **Felixstowe Travel Watch**

On 19 November, a brand new bi-mode train operated the 0636 departure, but sadly it was not to last, as the Norwich incident described above led to the suspension of the new trains. In the 50 days since 1 December, Felixstowe suffered at least 400 cancellations. And prior to this meltdown, most of the old trains had moved to other operators, so there was no cover to maintain any form of reliable service. Slow, inconvenient and unreliable buses were the order of the day. Although the situation has improved to some extent, the service is still somewhat erratic.

FTW is pleased that the 0955 from Ipswich and 1025 return from Felixstowe, hitherto a summer only service, will now run all year round. It is part of a general enhancement of Sunday services, which now provide most lines with an hourly frequency.

As previously reported, the £3/day car parking charge at Trimley station has led to a boycott, so the pitiful amount of revenue raised has been totally outweighed by the loss of patronage and public goodwill.

### **East Surrey Transport Committee**

After pressure from the Committee, GTR has restored the One day Bus and Tram Pass to its ticket machines in the zones. It is also available from Southeastern and Overground ticket machines in the zones, and from newsagent ticket shops. The pass is very useful for those that need to use the bus but do not have an Oystercard or contactless bankcard, and for people travelling to London by rail who only want to use the bus or tram while in London. It costs £5.00 and is valid from 0430 until 0429 the following day.

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

An update on the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study highlights the need for extra capacity. When it opens in 2024, East West Rail should go to Didcot, calling at Culham, and there is a case for extending it to Swindon and Bristol, Northampton and Southampton. A report on four-tracking to Didcot is due later this year. Links to Heathrow via the Western Access are likely to be via connections at Reading. Enhancements to the Cotswold Line are at the Outline Business Case stage.

An initial NR study found that re-opening the Cowley Line to passengers would be feasible, at a capital cost of £29-38m, or £53m with enhancements, excluding land acquisition. A half hourly London Marylebone service with 50mph running would offer a journey time to Oxford of 10mins. Stations at Oxford Business Park and Oxford Science Park would also serve local housing. 2028 is seen as a likely re-opening date.

### **Wanborough Rail Users Group**

Michael Aaronson, who founded WRUG 15 years ago, has a tale of woe. Wanborough is an unstaffed station on the line to Guildford from Aldershot (SWR) and Reading (GWR). It's in poor repair, with no wheelchair access to the 'up' platform, and a car park that floods whenever there is heavy rain. During the recent RMT strikes, it had no SWR trains at all, nor replacement buses, while only four GWR trains a day towards Guildford call at Wanborough: at 0636, 1542, 1642 and 0015. On the return journey there is no GWR service between 0910 and 2256, and no additional services called. SWR suggested the local bus service, but this would entail a 20-30min walk through the village, and another 10mins to Guildford station. Michael wonders who might be able to put some pressure on SWR to look after its customers better.

### **Pilning Station Group**

The [ORR](#) recorded 458 users at Pilning during 2018/19, a ten-fold increase since 2014/15. So having discovered the station, people are continuing to use it despite the disincentive of having just two trains a week on Saturdays, and only towards Bristol. GWR has refused the Group's request for a lunchtime service and one on summer evenings.

*[The least used stations – Denton, between Stockport and Stalybridge, and Stanlow & Thornton on the Ellesmere Port to Warrington Line – each had an annual footfall of just 46 - Ed.]*

The latest figures demonstrate the potential for further growth, but apparently NR cannot conduct a feasibility study and so make an informed decision about the future of the station without a formal request from GWR or South Gloucestershire Council (as opposed to a user group).

However, there is a glimmer of hope with a mention in the latest Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4), and the pledge to "consider [...] new links to Thornbury, Pilning and Bristol Airport" before the year 2036. Group Chair Olga Taylor said: "perhaps the authorities are starting to recognise that the station's location in the vicinity of one of the largest brownfield sites in Northern Europe (which is being developed into an industrial area), might be very useful for bringing in workforce from the areas with a higher unemployment rate, of which there are many, within a 35min rail journey from Pilning." Or linking all the pioneering businesses involved in the new nationally important Digital Engineering Technology & Innovation (DETI) centre, many of which are situated along the line from Pilning, to central Bristol.

## Avocet Line Rail Users Group

The new timetable seems to have settled after a few problems. ALRUG wanted an all day half-hourly clockface timetable every day of the week: 'Every half hour every day' would be a great marketing slogan. However, the times are similar to the old timetable, but with all trains now going to Paignton there are many discrepancies south of St David's. Some through journeys are no longer possible, and some connections at St David's involve a long wait, particularly in the evenings. There is no longer a connection into the London train arriving at around 0900, and early connections to Bristol and Birmingham are more difficult. A few tweaks were possible, but GWR is working on restoring the lost connections in May.

However good refurbished trains look, underneath they are still 35 years old. So how much longer can they last? 10 years perhaps, but then what? Class 165 units could be destined to take over, but they are only five years or so younger, so isn't it time to be looking for new trains for the south west?

ALRUG continues to argue that passengers should always be able to buy a ticket before boarding, or else tickets should be sold on every train, although some are so overcrowded that would be impossible. Many passengers don't fully understand the fine detail of ticket buying and penalty fares, so there should be signs at platform entrances and on ticket machines setting out the policy. If a TVM isn't working, take a photograph of the screen if you can, but ensure that it shows it's not working. TVMs can go from 'not working' to 'working' again in a few minutes, so you need proof.

GWR Commercial Development Director (currently interim MD) Matthew Golton's presentation to the ALRUG AGM focused on the new Exeter depot. It will be able to maintain all types of rolling stock including the new IET's, so curtailing servicing trips to Plymouth or Bristol. Computer-controlled stores will speed up operations and there will be a simulator for crew training. The accommodation block will bring together train crews, fitters and managers, and facilitate access to St David's via a footbridge.

## RAILFUTURE

*Rf welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join [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 Rf and its Campaigns by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture consultation responses](#).*



Inaugurated in 2012 but paused for 2019, the annual RUG Awards return for 2020. The presentations will be made at the National AGM in Birmingham on 27 June.

This is the **final call** for [nominations](#) before they close at 2359 on 1 March. There are no application forms, a single nomination in any category will suffice, and the same person or group can nominate in more than one category. RUGs and individuals may nominate their own or anyone else's credentials – except for self-nominations in Category 6! The six categories open for nominations are:

- 1 – Best website
- 2 – Best social media promotion
- 3 – Best newsletter
- 4 – Best new group - the Oliver Lovell Award
- 5 – Best campaign
- 6 – Best campaigner - the Clara Zilahi Award (for Rf members only).

Let the oxygen of publicity breathe fresh life into your campaign for a bigger better railway!

## EAST WEST RAIL

EWRC, a long-running Rf campaign, has taken two major steps forward – but is still some way off. Following the consultation on its Central section from [Bedford to Cambridge](#), the EWRC Co selected 'Route Option E' via Bedford Midland, St Neots / Tempsford, Cambourne and Cambridge South. Work on the final alignment will now start prior to a statutory consultation in 2021. And there was more good news with the approval of the TWAO application for Phase 2 of the Western section, so work can start on Bicester to Bedford and Milton Keynes to Aylesbury, with a new interchange station at Winslow. Cllr Mark Shaw, Chairman of the EWRC Consortium, said: "This has to go down as one of the most exciting weeks in the history of EWRC".

## THE HUNDRED OF HOO BRANCH

The [Hundred of Hoo branch](#), that last saw passenger services in 1962, is set to see them reinstated by 2024 with a £67m funding award, a victory for this Rf campaign in North Kent. The new service will be justified by a major growth in housing and industry as part of the Medway Unitary Authorities Local Plan (2012-2035).

## NORTHERN RAIL FRANCHISE

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has confirmed the transfer of the Northern Rail franchise to an Operator of Last Resort, effective 1 March. However, as [Ian Brown](#), Rf Director of Policy, points out, all the issues on its network remain, and the DfT must take its share of the blame, being responsible for the decisions (or lack of them) that have caused the problems. Nothing will change until the operator and NR can find an operational solution that is reliable in the short term, and which increases capacity in the long term. A strong client is required to optimise the needs of regional and urban travellers. Choices must be made, and the operational practices improved to provide a 7 day/week reliable railway.

## RAILFUTURE NORTH WEST

The new weekday Cardiff to Holyhead express service calls only at Wrexham between Shrewsbury and Chester, whereas the 0925 service from Shrewsbury that it replaced was the first off peak service, and called at Gobowen, Chirk and Ruabon. In an email to Lee Robinson of TfW, Steve Boulding, Secretary of the Shrewsbury – Chester Rail Users Association said "These change have caused not just inconvenience but severe disruption and hardship - not least to those attending the Orthopaedic Hospital at Gobowen.

"Owen Paterson MP and his colleagues are on the warpath, while Grant Shapps has stated unequivocally that TfW Rail Services are in unlawful breach of contract, and that driving away passengers...from a highly sustainable form of transport by the actions and/or omissions of a Welsh Government agency and/or its contractors is clearly also an offence under the relevant provisions of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015."

The Southport-Manchester Piccadilly service also deteriorated further following the December timetable, as Northern mismanaged its implementation by bringing 19 new trains into full operational use without contingency or back-out plans, and rostering many other classes with the familiarisation and re-training requirements that brings. It was pitiful observing crews trying to work out who was taking which services out of Southport when what Operations were signalling conflicted with the scraps of paper instructions in their hands.

## ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

From April, ACoRP will become the Community Rail Network. Work is ongoing on a logo, which will be previewed at the Community Rail Conference on 2-3 March - an invitation-only event not open to station adoption/friends groups.

Seven more partnerships have gained accredited status, meaning that they have met the DfT's, and where relevant the Welsh Government's, standards for appropriate operation. Congratulations to Community Rail Lancashire, Esk Valley Railway Development Company (Middlesbrough – Whitby), and the following CRPs: Derwent Valley (Nottingham – Derby – Matlock); Abbey Line (Watford Junction – St Albans Abbey); Hereward (Ely – Peterborough), and the Bishop Line (Darlington – Bishop Auckland).

NR has published a [guidance document](#) for voluntary activity in support of local rail projects. There are four schemes: Station Adoption/Friends Groups, Community Licence Scheme, CRPs and Community Building (Re-)Development.

The Bolton and South Lancashire CRP now has funding for a full-time community development officer. Based at Bolton station, the post will extend to Wigan, Preston and Manchester. It will be advertised shortly using the new website [www.communityrailbolton.org.uk](http://www.communityrailbolton.org.uk). Meanwhile, expressions of interest may be emailed to [boltonstncdp@gmail.com](mailto:boltonstncdp@gmail.com). The CRP will apply for funding for a series of self-guided walks from Bolton Station to Preston, Wigan, Blackburn and Manchester, and would like to hear from anyone interested in being involved.

The Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton CRP has won funding to partner GTR for new secure cycle parking at Meldreth Station – GTR's share having come from the DfT's Cycle Rail fund.

The healthy growth at all four of the East Hampshire CRP stations for the year ending March 2019 points up the good work undertaken by stakeholders in running and promoting the line. However, these figures reflect the ending of the Southern strikes, and no major SWR strikes; the next set, to March 2020, will be very different!

## TRANSPORT FOCUS

The latest [National Rail Passenger Survey](#) (NRPS), a network-wide picture of passenger satisfaction, shows some improvement as services became more reliable and new trains were introduced. However, Northern, SWR, West Midland Trains, and Transpennine Express (TPE) passengers face continued disruption and discomfort. Chief executive Anthony Smith said: "Passengers tell us that their biggest priority is rail services they can rely on to get them to work or home on time. Until train companies and NR can consistently deliver on their promises across the country, satisfaction will continue to vary."

TF echoes ALRUG's concerns regarding penalty fares. It has long called for the rail industry to show discretion where passengers haven't intended to evade paying fares, and calls for:

- More and better communication by appeal bodies and train operators about the whole appeals process
- Consistency in the process by which penalty fares are given and when they can be overturned
- Transparency about the numbers of penalty fares given and appealed at each stage, as well as those overturned or upheld.

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

The Transport Secretary has said that SWR's franchise is "not sustainable" in the long term, so the DfT has asked both FirstGroup/MTR and the Operator of Last Resort to propose contingency measures: "Passengers on SWR have already suffered significant disruption from industrial action by the RMT. The railway is a public service. People rely upon it to support their way of life, livelihoods, education and healthcare, and it is why this government has committed to introducing minimum service levels during times of strike action." Even so, on a turnout of 59%, more than four-fifths of SWR staff who voted elected to hold more strikes, although the RMT has yet to announce any strike dates.

RMT General Secretary, Mick Cash said: "RMT members remain in dispute over safety and the role of the guard on SWR trains, and the current uncertainty over the future of the franchise has blocked any chance of serious talks as the company await their fate. That is a ludicrous way to carry on. RMT is happy to sit down with Grant Shapps and discuss a way forward that brings SWR into public ownership, and which guarantees safety on their trains. The current impasse is damaging and unnecessary, and we need to broker a sustainable, lasting solution that involves the staff, who are currently being left in the dark."

ORR has put NR on warning for its poor service in the North West and Central region. The proportion of scheduled train stops made on time by Northern and TPE in the 12 months to 4 January was 55% and 41% respectively, compared to the national average of 65%. Performance deteriorated in 2018, and largely failed to recover during 2019. However, in [Rf's view](#), Northern, TPE and NR were "not solely to blame for the poor performance: they had been dealt a rotten hand of cards" through underestimating the increase

in passenger numbers, and scaling back the Ordsall Chord project by not increasing the Castlefield corridor to accommodate extra services.

NR says it has re-structured its business in the region into three routes aligned to the markets it serves, bringing greater operational focus and attention to detail. In November, it convened a rail industry task force to tackle problems head on and improve train service reliability, and is working with its industry partners to fix longstanding timetable frailties and support operating companies with train crew challenges. At a tactical level, it is committing funds and resources to fix known problems. ORR is monitoring the impact of NR's recovery plan to see if it is doing all it reasonably can to improve its service.

NR has launched two public consultations (see below): on Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth Resilience (the Dawlish line), and a new Cambridge South station - but hurry: they close on 1 and 2 March respectively.

Work has begun on a new £8-million station at Bow Street on the Cambrian Line to Shrewsbury. It will link Aberystwyth University's UK Innovation and Enterprise Campus to the main campus in the town. Funded by the Welsh Government and the DfT, the station will include a P&R facility, cycle storage and a bus interchange, and should open this year. Meanwhile, two schemes to refurbish Grade II listed structures - Hebden Bridge station, and the footbridge at New Mills Newtown station in the Peak District between Manchester and Buxton - are due to complete in late March. In neither case is the train service affected.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Transport Committee has approved £100,000 to progress business cases for the regional arms of the [Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro \(CAM\)](#): St Ives to Alconbury, Cambourne to St Neots, Newmarket Road P&R to Mildenhall, and Granta Park to Haverhill. Building on previous work on the core section under Cambridge city centre, the plans will show how the regional routes will feed into the wider public transport network. Mayor James Palmer has confirmed that routing the EWR via Cambourne will not affect plans for the CAM. Rather, it will complement the new rail link, serving the smaller communities that the heavy rail line will pass without stopping.

The Telegraph Business Supplement (27 January) reports that the Windsor rail link that would connect the GWR Central and SWR Riverside stations is back on track, and that talks with the DfT and NR have resumed. However, the project will face fierce opposition.

A GTR research paper published by the Prince's Trust reveals some of the barriers to young people finding work. Businesses told GTR that young people were very important to driving success, yet half of them think that new ways of recruiting and training them are needed, as current ones are failing. Similarly, half of the young people surveyed thought that recruitment processes did not let them show their true abilities, while 80% wanted more transparency...

GTR's Get Into Railways programme has helped 180 18-25 year olds who had struggled in education or with unemployment gain skills and work experience, and at least 70 more will benefit as the programme is extended over the next two years. And after beating its target of 140 apprentices in 2019, and accreditation by the Education Skills Funding Agency, it is set to provide over 300 apprenticeships in 2020 across 14 different roles ranging from drivers, engineers and operations to business administration and marketing.

In partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, Amey Consulting has launched a fully funded five-year BEng apprenticeship in electrical and mechanical, civil and track, or signalling and telecoms engineering. Students will work at Amey Consulting on live railway projects in parallel with their studies.

*,,,and finally*

Three groups in West Yorkshire have each won a Pacer carriage for community use. Platform 1 will convert theirs into a kitchen to teach cooking skills to Huddersfield men with mental health issues. Airedale NHS Trust in Keighley plans to create a communal space to support patients using the General Hospital. Fagley Primary School in Bradford will set up its Pacer as a new science lab, helping promote STEM learning; it will also be available to the wider community for talks and events. The DfT will work with the winners to start on the installation and conversion of the former carriages.

The Friends of Goostrey Station in Cheshire have received an unusual request. A British Railways sign for the station is displayed in Max and Erma's diner in Middleburg Heights, Ohio, but the current owners are unsure how it got there: it was part of an opening decor package provided to the previous owner by an

outside vendor. Can you help [FOGS](#) solve this mystery? If the sign is an original, the group may retrieve it for display in the newly renovated station building.

## CONSULTATIONS

- Network Rail: [Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth Resilience Project 2020](#), closes 1 March
- Network Rail: [Cambridge South Station](#), closes 2 March
- Mole Valley District Council: [Draft Local Plan](#), closes 16 March.
- Hertfordshire County Council: [Draft Rail Strategy](#), closes 30 March.
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency: [The Leven Programme - Connectivity Project](#), closes 3 April.
- DfT: [Closure of Newhaven Marine Rail Station](#), closes 19 April.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a local transport authority.

## EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains a [List of Events](#) and a [List of Key Dates](#) for consultations, franchise changes, CP6 planning, service alterations for major rail projects etc. As a Calendar of Events embedded in a document may be discarded, a stand-alone list would be very helpful.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

- Rf events (RUGs are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

### February

- Saturday 15. Rf London & South East, Kent Division, venue TBC.
- Saturday 15. East Suffolk Travel Association, Quay Street Church, **Woodbridge**, 1400
- Tuesday 18. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (and 31 March).
- Saturday 22. Rf North West England AGM, Holiday Inn, The Ringway, **Preston**, PR1 3AU, 1200 (Also 13 June in Bromborough and 5 September)..
- Saturday 22. English Regional Transport Ass'n, Unitarian Church Hall, Worthing Road, **Horsham**, RH12 1SL, 1400.
- Tuesday 25. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Ajax Way, **Methil Docks**, KY8 3RS, 1830 (and the last Tuesday of every month).
- Tuesday 25. Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, **Melbourn Hub**, 1930.

### March

- Tuesday 3. Ribble Valley Railway Committee Meeting (open to all), New Inn, **Clitheroe**, 1430.
- Tuesday 3. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers Association, **Shrewsbury Station**, 1745.
- Thursday 5. Rf London & South East, Sussex and Coastway Division, 1800 (also the first Thursday of each month (except August) at various venues).
- Wednesday 11. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London**, E15 1NG, 1830 (and second Wednesday of every alternate month.)
- 14 March. English Regional Transpt Ass'n, The Red Well, 16 Silver St, **Wellingborough**, Northants, NN8 1BD, 1500

### Further Ahead

- 4 April. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers Association, Wharf Station, Talyllyn Rly, **Tywyn**, 1145.
- 18 April. Rf Wessex AGM, Mayflower Village pub, Commercial Rd, **Southampton**, 11:00.
- 25 April. Rf West Midlands AGM, Priory Rooms, Bull Street, **Birmingham**.
- 25 April. Rf North East AGM, Newcastle Arts Centre, Westgate Road, **Newcastle**, 1400.
- 25 April. English Regional Transport Ass'n Conference, The Courthouse, Church Lane, **Berkhamsted**, HP4 2AX, 1400.
- 2 May. Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users AGM, **Thetford**, 1030.
- 19 June. Friends of the Far North Line AGM and Conference, Ross County FC, **Dingwall**.
- 27 June. Rf AGM and RUG Awards, Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, **Birmingham**, B4 6AF.

Disclaimer: unless otherwise stated, views expressed are those of the contributing organization, and not necessarily shared by Rf.

Contact the editor by e-mail: [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk), or phone: 01462 815992.

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*Registered Office: Edinburgh House, 1-5 Bellevue Road, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 7NP (NB. for legal correspondence only)*

*All other correspondence to: 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND*