

## 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.

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

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advocate for the  
railways and rail users!**

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### GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH

#### Hope Valley Railway Users' Group

[website](#)

HVRUG was reconstituted in 2008 with the aim of improving the service over the Hope Valley line between Manchester and Sheffield. One problem is that too many freight paths are competing for space through the notorious bottleneck at Dore, although in reality not all these paths are being used. Another is the unwillingness of operators to allow express passenger services to call at intermediate stops in the Hope Valley. However, it is hoped that an extra train will run in each direction from Dec 2011.

Earlier this year, 28 volunteers from HVRUG helped the line's Community Rail Partnership with their biennial passenger survey, counting passengers and handing out questionnaires. The results show a moderate level of commuting into the two cities, and a logical next step would be to find out how many more potential users there could be if the timetable were improved to an hourly service. The group has obtained a small grant and which will enable them (with the help of parish councils) to conduct a comprehensive survey of households along the line.

*...and now news from our regular contributors...*

#### Dornoch Rail Link Action Group

[website](#)

One decision taken at the AGM of DORLAG in June was to resign from the HITRANS Rail User and Rail Stakeholder groups, as this was felt to be an unproductive use of resources, esp. in view of the fact that HITRANS is not sympathetic to the concept of the Dornoch Rail Link.

Another important decision was to undertake a survey of residential and business communities to gauge the amount of support for major rail upgrades in Caithness and Sutherland. "The rail survey will help codify the benefits [of rail] and help the funders and decision makers understand the importance of a good rail link on the scale we seek." **If you use the trains on the Far North Line, you are asked to complete DORLAG's survey, which can be found [here](#).**

#### Friends of the West Highland Lines

[website](#)

Congratulations to the FoWHL who have been awarded the "Good Lineside Neighbour" award at Network Rail's Partnership Awards 2011 for their project to restore iconic views on the West Highland Line. The award was received by FoWHL member Norman McNab who spearheaded the tree clearance project. Fiona Logan from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park commented: "We're really proud to have been involved in this great project which opens up such iconic views of the National Park making the experience even more enjoyable. The Friends have worked tirelessly on this project to bring various organisations together and deserve this national recognition."

#### Rail Action Group East of Scotland

[website](#)

The 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the group's newsletter *the Rages Rag* begins with a report, largely complimentary, about the new Class 380 trains, and contains the news that cycling information boards have been installed by Sustrans at three stations in East Lothian.

The Berwick representative reports that the introduction of East Coast's Eureka timetable did not go altogether smoothly in his area – and the overall result is a worse service. He concludes by

announcing his resignation from the “Berwick rep” role, citing a sense of futility in trying to improve a hopelessly fragmented rail system, in the face of an endless stream of publicity from the train operator in which everything is either “exciting” or “fantastic” (*we know the feeling! – Ed*).

The RAGES chairman wrote to local MSPs and finished the e-mail with: “Can I ask for your support in lobbying the Transport Minister such that we can see the investment come to our area in the shape of better rail services.” Several MSPs have since confirmed their support. The secretary also wrote to the Managing Director of First ScotRail, thanking him for the additional Musselburgh and Dunbar services.

### **South East Northumberland Rail User Group** [website](#)

Two committee members of SENRUG had the honour of riding the inaugural relaunch of the Flying Scotsman service on 23 May, complete with cooked breakfast.

In SENRUG’s summer newsletter, we read that consultants continue to progress the “demand studies” for the Ashington, Blyth & Tyne Line, which are required before formal Network Rail studies can be progressed. An interim report is to be submitted to the Dept. for Transport soon.

SENRUG has mixed feelings about two recent petitions in their area: “we want to see more people taking an interest in how to improve train services ... but it’s slightly disappointing that neither organisation sought to work through SENRUG”. The first petition from Morpeth commuters objects to the retiming of a morning service (SENRUG points out that other stations are worse affected and Morpeth has generally done well out of the new East Coast timetable). The second is from a group in Seaton Delaval calling for the Ashington, Blyth & Tyne line to be reopened by extending the Newcastle Metro (not necessarily the best approach, according to SENRUG).

### **Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users Association** [website](#)

After they had criticised parts of the draft Northern Route Utilisation Strategy, HPSRUA is pleased that rolling stock inadequacies have been taken into account in the final document, but is not happy with the proposed solution which involves lengthening trains but locking a vehicle out of use between Penistone and Huddersfield due to short platforms. The group was represented at a meeting with Network Rail in Leeds following publication of the final RUS – although NR has since re-examined their passenger analysis, HPSRUA still takes issue with the number of peak trains that are deemed to be overcrowded.

HPSRUA has written to the Transport Select Committee of the House of Commons to ask what progress is being made on replacing their worn out Pacer trains, pointing out that “these cannot operate beyond 2019, as they will need to be disability compliant, which they currently are not.”

Colin Hill, in his regular column, relates ten recent train journeys undertaken in the North, nine of which were “standing room only” ... then describes the various ambitious schemes in the South (“not proposals – these are work in progress”) aimed at providing more capacity. Another correspondent in the newsletter thinks South Yorkshire authorities have abandoned all ambitions of station reopening and rail expansion, despite the region including England’s fourth largest city.

Penistone line trains often stand locked, awaiting a crew change before they can depart from the bleak Platform 2 at Huddersfield. On behalf of passengers exposed to often inclement weather, HPSRUA is appealing to train operators to either revoke the “lock-out” rule or install a waiting shelter.

### **Furness Line Action Group** [contact](#)

FLAG congratulates Network Rail on their impressive engineering works over a 16-week blockade at both Lindal Tunnel and Kent Viaduct – their Aug 2011 magazine includes pictures illustrating the huge scale of the tasks. At a ceremony to mark the completion of the project, FLAG representatives were surprised and pleased to be presented with a scale model of the rebuilt viaduct as a token of appreciation of their assistance during the planning stage.

In a comprehensive review of the McNulty Report, focusing especially on the suggestions for “low-speed, lightweight, low-frequency” services on rural routes, FLAG concludes that they will need to ensure that the Cumbrian Coast Line is considered, not as a rural route, but as an important inter-urban link so that it continues to justify high-quality (heavy rail) passenger trains together with its freight capabilities.

Future electrification of the Preston-Manchester line brings with it a possible threat to through services between Barrow and Manchester which will involve diesel trains running “under the wires” – FLAG, along with local MPs, councils and tourist bodies, are resolved to fight for retention of their through services.

Looking forward to a new, potentially 20-yr franchise from 2013 covering their lines, FLAG sets out its basic wish list and invites members to submit their own ideas for consideration.

At their AGM, FLAG considered a proposal to alter the boundary between their group and the neighbouring Copeland Rail User Group; the decision was to keep the boundary at Millom, but to work together more closely, perhaps with a joint meeting twice a year. At least FLAG and CRUG can agree on the location of the Cumbrian Coast Line – a reference from the Dept. for Transport (a.k.a. “Daft”) Community Rail website places it in ... **Yorkshire!**

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

Commenting on the idea to split the Northern franchise in two, STORM’s Chairman sees no valid reason for doing this. “If Northern is split into NE and NW, many of the benefits for the Rochdale area envisaged in the Manchester Hub proposals will be reduced or lost altogether. What price a Calder Valley to Manchester Airport service as proposed in the Hub document? The Report on this point is badly thought out and lacking in detail. We in the Rochdale area remember only too well how badly we suffered by being at the country end of a long service from Leeds.”

### **Saltburn Line User Group [website](#)**

The Secretary of SLUG contacted me recently with the news that the group now has a website (see link above). The group exists to promote the Darlington-to-Saltburn branch line and is affiliated to Railfuture. Members meet informally on the first Tuesday in every month at the Conservative Club, Saltburn – new members are always welcome.

### **North Cheshire Rail Users’ Group [website](#)**

The “parliamentary service” on 4th June over the Halton Curve, from Chester to Runcorn and on to Liverpool South Parkway, attracted even greater support than last year. NCRUG is looking at the possibility of a similar event to publicise the inadequate service between Helsby and Ellesmere Port.

The July newsletter notes that there is an increasing number of reports of overcrowding on the Manchester to North Wales route. On summer Saturdays, passengers bound for North Wales are sometimes left behind at Warrington Bank Quay because they simply can’t get on the train. This is in addition to the heavy loadings in the AM and PM peaks, and well-known problems such as Chester Races; “Arriva Trains Wales are often not in a position to respond to these problems as they have very little spare stock under the current franchising system.”

NCRUG recently made a successful bid for £250 to the Association of Community Partnership’s small grants fund to purchase a projector, and they’ve recently had the donation of a laptop computer. This equipment will enable the group to give presentations about their work and hopefully recruit new members. They’ve put together a CD about their activities, and they’ve also booked a 10-min slot at Railfuture’s Rail User Group conference (5 Nov) during which they will be launching their new CD.

### **Stourbridge Line User Group [website](#)**

The first half of SLUG’s summer newsletter is taken up with a report of the group’s successful Public Forum in May, at which guest speakers from Centro, Worcestershire County Council, Chiltern Railways and London Midland outlined developments in the West Midlands and their plans for the future. The “good number of members in attendance” had the opportunity to ask questions of the speakers, although our reporter was left feeling that fears about threats to the service level were not fully allayed, adding that “public perception is a hard nut to crack”. The sincerity of the speakers was not in doubt, but the reality is that some of the hoped-for improvements are being delayed or may not proceed at all for lack of funds.

The Chairman is in nostalgic mood in an article about excursion trains. Coastal destinations seem harder than ever to reach from West Midland stations, with the journey involving a change of trains, engineering works or the vagaries of “Sunday and Bank Holiday” bus services. He thinks the train

operators are too confined within their franchise boundaries to be able to provide innovative journey opportunities at holiday times.

In order to travel with three friends from Stourbridge Jcn to Taunton for a cricket match, SLUG member Roger Davis spent hours online researching the best split-fare option. The basic return fare was £113 but, with a choice of four splitting points en route, he could travel on the same trains using sixteen different split-fare ticket combinations – the best (involving four sets of tickets) giving an overall price of £56.60 per person. A clever matrix of all the fare options is presented in his article. Train delays were experienced on the day of the match, and a knowledge of the delay/repay rules for the various train operators netted the group a welcome refund of £91.12! “My advice is: do your research”.

### **Cotswold Line Promotion Group**

[website](#)

At the May AGM of the CLPG, those present enthusiastically supported the proposition that a contribution be made towards a study into reopening the line between Stratford and Honeybourne, with the result that an astonishing £2250 was raised towards the project. The President opened the AGM by reading out a letter from CLPG Vice President, David Cameron (yes, *the* David Cameron) expressing best wishes and his pleasure that the line redoubling scheme was on schedule.

On 6 June, members joined other dignitaries on an inaugural train journey along the new down line with ribbon-cutting ceremonies on the newly-built platforms at Charlbury and Ascott. All concerned are looking forward to completion of the line redoubling works in September.

History repeats itself: The group’s special train to Portsmouth on 10 Sept was just over 25 years since they ran their “Cotswold to Portsea Special” in 1986.

Last autumn saw the premiere performance of *Soundtracks*, a show charting the history of the Cotswold line in music, poetry, dance and drama – it was commissioned with help from the BBC Performing Arts Fund. After much public acclaim, the show is being repeated this October at venues in Evesham and Charlbury, with funding from First Great Western, Network Rail and the CLPG. More choir members are sought, and **all are welcome to attend the performances** – see CLPG website for details.

### **Mid Anglia Rail Passengers’ Association**

[website](#)

MARPA has joined forces with the Ramblers Assn and a local environmental trust to develop some new walks leaflets, and members are invited on guided walks, devised to launch the publications.

On 29 Sept, MARPA, assisted by Railfuture East Anglia, will undertake a passenger count at Newmarket in order to see how things have changed since their previous count two years ago – **volunteers are needed to assist with this**. At MARPA’s AGM it was reported that passenger numbers in Mid Anglia continue to grow, bucking the national trend which shows a slight decrease.

A report in MARPA’s summer/autumn newsletter welcomes the decision to spend £164k on refurbishing the station at Bury St Edmunds, and to increase staffing levels at the station – both are issues that have long been causes for concern.

MARPA has met two of the preferred bidders for the short-term Anglia franchise and were able to put across the group’s aspirations which include: an hourly service from Ipswich to Peterborough, tangible improvements at Bury and Newmarket stations and flexibility to strengthen services during special events. The group is also renewing its approach to Suffolk County Council with a view to establishing a Community Rail Partnership for their line.

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

[website](#)

When the Passenger Satisfaction Survey, published by Passenger Focus this spring, showed that the Liverpool-Norwich service had scored an impressive 92% overall, PENRUG took the opportunity to write to their local paper congratulating staff, controllers and managers of the service.

PENRUG has met with two of the bidders for the short-term franchise in their area; the group expressed the view that Norwich-Cambridge is a well-run, local train service but that stations east of Ely are poorly managed and under-resourced.

Certain trains from their area divide en route which can cause confusion for passengers, and PENRUG thinks the time has come to restore destination labels for carriages.

In the July edition of Rail User Express, a report from the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth group concluded with this conundrum: "SARPA suspects theirs is the only line in the UK where a train that subsequently splits reverses en route (*does anyone know another example? - Ed*)."

In response to this, John Saunders of PENRUG wrote in to say that "some Liverpool-Norwich trains reverse at Sheffield before splitting at Nottingham ... with many more to come."

### **Bedford Commuters Association**

[website](#)

Analysing the Spring 2011 National Passenger Survey figures, the BCA concludes there is significant room for improvement on their line and, along with neighbouring group APTU, the BCA will be putting much pressure on First Capital Connect and East Midlands Trains to improve on these results over the coming months. Both groups met the Managing Director of FCC in August to hear how the company will be improving its response to service disruptions, and their comprehensive action plan is set out in the BCA's September newsletter. Meanwhile, the BCA is pressing EMT to introduce additional stops at Bedford on northbound trains.

The BCA continues to attend "Steering Group" meetings about the Bedford Station Travel Plan, and reports that their Station Quarter Regeneration Scheme seems to have "hit the buffers", in contrast to the Northampton project which is steaming ahead.

In April, County Councils and unitary authorities produced new Local Transport Plans (LTP 3), and, as a result of comments from stakeholders, there is more commitment to Oxford-Cambridge than before, though not as much as everyone would like. Indeed the BCA have been particularly disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm from Central Beds. The BCA believes that it is vital that SEMLEP (the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership), of which Bedford Borough & Central Beds are members, should rise to the challenge and help in the delivery of the East-West Rail Link. The BCA advises members interested in the EWRL project to check out [www.railfuture.org.uk/Ox-Cam](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Ox-Cam)

The BCA's September newsletter cites a report from Oxford Economics which indicates a strong business case for reinstating track and upgrading the line between Oxford/Aylesbury and Bletchley to enable an East-West rail service to carry passengers from Reading to Bedford via Oxford and from High Wycombe & Aylesbury to Milton Keynes via Winslow.

### **Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group**

[website](#)

BGOLUG has issued a press release reminding passengers that the weekend of 10/11 Sept is the last weekend with a full train service on the Barking - Gospel Oak Line before Autumn engineering works start. The group has used this as an opportunity to publicise the many places of interest that can be reached using the line, such as Walthamstow Reservoirs, Wanstead Flats and Southend-on-Sea.

### **Friends of Homerton Station**

[website](#)

Volunteers are needed to look after wildflower meadows which have been created at Homerton station in Hackney – claimed to be London's first "wildflower station". The Friends of the station are appealing for people with an hour or so to help maintain the wildflower meadows by collecting litter and weeding. The Friends are selling T-shirts and wildflower seeds on Chatsworth Road Market in Hackney on 11 Sept - the aim is to raise cash for the wildflower meadows at the station.

### **Trans Wilts Rail**

[website](#)

After reading the July edition of Rail User Express, Graham Ellis wrote to express disappointment that I had not included the extra summer services to Weymouth via Melksham in my "Events" list, adding: "They're very significant indeed - and a positive story - here in Wiltshire; the first running on 3rd July was busy, and we're anticipating that the through Swindon to Weymouth and return service - operating from 17th July to 28th August, by First Great Western in association with the Chambers of Commerce, Wiltshire Council and the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership - will also be busy."

*I'm sorry I wasn't aware of this in time for my July bulletin ... if anyone has an event they want included, please send me details at the earliest opportunity. – Ed.*

## **Bexhill Rail Action Group**

[website](#)

BRAG notes that the hourly 'down' Victoria–Ore service has an accelerated schedule on Sundays, reaching Bexhill in 1h 48m, which is four minutes faster than during the week. It goes to prove their point: If Southern can do it on Sundays, they can do it the rest of the week.

BRAG is aware that there have been a number of occasions in recent months that Brighton–Ore, and consequently Ore–Victoria services, have been short-formed with 3 car units instead of the usual 4 cars. BRAG has frequently reported its concerns to Southern about overcrowding on Victoria services and the use of 3-car units; members are asked to let them know about further instances. Elsewhere, we read that Southeastern does not appear to be maintaining the stations adequately: "Hastings requires some re-painting and a deep-clean."

Commenting on the McNulty "Value-for-money" report, BRAG recognises that longer franchises could create the conditions for more stable investment plans, but warns that they could also lead to some projects in peripheral areas (such as the Sussex coast) being put on ice indefinitely. There is also the danger that, instead of encouraging greater use of the railway through investment to increase capacity, we could see greater 'demand pricing' to push passengers off trains. The article concludes: "It is therefore incumbent on rail user groups to remain vigilant, and to inform the debate at the appropriate time."

## **No450 (Portsmouth Line Campaign)**

[website](#)

At a meeting at the House of Commons attended by David Habershon, founder of the No450 campaign and Penny Mordaunt MP on 12 July, Transport Minister Norman Baker MP committed to investigate the return of Class 444 coaches to off-peak services on the Portsmouth-London Line, and to report on other key elements of the ongoing attempts of passengers to secure a proper service from South West Trains.

Penny Mordaunt commented: "Today's long overdue meeting at least shows that the DfT has removed its fingers from its ears. By agreeing to investigate SWT's use of its carriage stock during off-peak hours the department accepts that if there is no overcrowding there is no case for the Class 450 Desiro." David added: "Having tried for four-and-a-half years to meet the minister responsible for rail franchises, I am grateful that Penny has been able to bring to the table so quickly. We took our chance and Mr Baker can be in no doubt about the strength of feeling, and soundness of argument, on this issue."

Mr Baker has since contacted Andy Pitt, Managing Director of SWT, asking him to review the allocation of rolling stock.

## **Friends of the Lymington to Brockenhurst Line**

As part of its programme of re-signing stations, South West Trains has removed the heritage-style green station signs from Lymington Town station and replaced them with the corporate blue signs. Now FoLBL is campaigning to have their green signs reinstated.

In May, members of the group were special guests of the Mid Hants Railway, and their next trip is to the Isle of Wight. The autumn event (14 Nov) will be a talk given by Railfuture's David Brace on the "Hill Trains of India".

## **RAILFUTURE NEWS**

### **RAIL USERS CONFERENCE 2011**

Bookings are still being taken on the [email](#) hotline for this year's Rail Users' Conference to be held at the Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD on 5 Nov. A full programme of presentations has been drawn up, with top-line guest speakers from Government and the rail industry. The conference fee of only £25 includes lunch, refreshments and a conference report.

A number of rail user groups have taken advantage of the 10-minute presentation slots on offer. **RUG delegates are also encouraged to bring along publicity material, photographs and newsletters for display at the conference.**

## PASSENGER COMMITTEE

Railfuture's Passenger Committee has been in contact with Passenger Focus regarding the effect of PF's current reorganization; members of the committee also plan to meet with Maria Eagle, the Shadow Transport Secretary. The committee has responded to Network Rail's draft "RUS" document about crowding at stations, with concerns such as lack of platform seating and narrow footbridges being cited; they are also responding to the NR's Rolling Stock RUS. The committee has discovered that NR is planning to issue a new series of documents called "Strategic Route Specifications" with the first drafts to be published later this year.

## LATEST NEWS ON THE WEBSITE

On the Home page of **Railfuture's website**, you will find links to:

- Reports about Railfuture's High Speed Rail conference held at Bletchley Park in July, including a YouTube video of the post-conference "one-minute interviews" with the five guest speakers.
- Railfuture's response to the HS2 consultation, as submitted to the Dept. for Transport.
- A Eurostar passenger survey form, which anyone using the service is asked to complete.
- Further details and a booking form for the Rail Users' Conference on 5 Nov.

*...and now other news...*

## YOUR VIEWS SOUGHT ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Inclusive Design Research Centre at the University of Salford has asked for our help in their "Visions 2030" research project. Visions2030 seeks to assess the potential for achieving substantial increases in walking and cycling, and in improving the quality of the walking, cycling and public transport experience, by 2030.

As part of the research, the University has created an online survey that can be easily accessed through *survey monkey*. By taking part in this research you will be helping them to better understand perceptions and experiences about public transport, particularly in terms of what helps and hinders you in using public transport, and in how the physical environment can be improved to enhance your experience.

**Your views will help the research team to suggest to Government how public transport infrastructure can be improved – the survey can be accessed [here](#).**

## EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE NEEDED

Railfuture has been approached by [Herr Hannes Pries](#) of BAG-SPNV, the German Association of Rail Passenger Authorities, for information about good practice in rail passenger services. This organisation represents urban and regional operators, not the Inter City network.

**Railfuture will be responding to this request, and Rail User Groups may wish to send him examples from their own areas.**

Railfuture Board Member, [Trevor Garrod](#) (who is also Chairman of the European Passengers' Federation) says: "You can reply in English, but should do so BY SEPTEMBER 19TH. I should appreciate it if you can copy me into your reply. I have had useful discussions with colleagues of Herr Pries and can confirm they are a helpful, constructive organisation and keen to learn from our experience in Great Britain."

They need information under three main headings:

1. Good marketing - how operators have increased usage (as has happened on many of the UK's secondary routes this year).
2. Technical innovation, for example for improving access for the disabled.
3. Projects that support the recreational use of trains, for example for walking in the country, cycling and special events; the efforts of some CRPs are also relevant here.

## **FAIR FARES NOW – “month of action” success**

The Campaign for Better Transport says that their Fair Fares Now month of action went better than they could have hoped for. Hundreds of volunteers stepped forward to run events at over 40 stations across the country. In many places, local MPs joined in to show their support. The response from passengers was overwhelmingly supportive, and the events also helped to generate a huge amount of local media coverage, whose importance in shaping political opinion is often forgotten. Together, campaigners gathered thousands of signatures on the petition demanding that the government reverse its plans to raise fares by 28% by 2015. – *from Alexandra Woodsworth's rail blog*

## **STATIONS RUS PUBLISHED**

Network Rail published its analysis of passenger congestion at stations on 31 Aug; it includes a toolkit of potential measures for the industry to address congestion at stations around the network. NR's latest Route Utilisation Strategy documents can be viewed online [here](#).

## **THE CHALLENGE OF GETTING TO THE STATION – new report**

A new report from Passenger Focus looks at passengers' experiences of reaching railway stations by public transport, car, bike and on foot, including the perceptions of non rail users.

Getting to and from the railway station is an integral part of travelling by train; research has indicated that if getting to the rail station proves inconvenient, potential rail passengers will often choose to make their whole journey by car, increasing congestion on the roads and adding to transport's carbon footprint. The railway already has a very good record in terms of the number of passengers accessing the station on foot, but there is much room for improvement in terms of the number of passengers accessing the rail station by other sustainable modes.

The report concludes with some action points that PF considers should be taken into account by the Department for Transport when tendering future rail franchises. Read the full report [here](#).

## **RAIL BEATS COACH FOR VALUE**

In the small print of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review is buried news that concessionary arrangements for long distance coach operators in England such as National Express will be ended by 1 Nov 2011. This means that the over-60s and disabled people will have to pay a good deal more for their coach travel. **Now is a good time to issue a press release aimed at these groups, trumpeting the benefits of rail travel, mentioning railcard discounts and highlighting any cheap fares in your area.** More details [here](#).

## **RAIL UNION HIGHLIGHTS THREAT TO TICKET OFFICES**

**A hit list of 675 station ticket office closures drawn up for Ministers has been revealed by the TSSA rail union.**

Buried in the small print of the McNulty Report, it shows that one in four stations in England and Wales will lose their ticket offices if Transport Secretary Philip Hammond gives the green light to the report this autumn. London and the South East will be the hardest hit with 265 stations being left unmanned with no ticket offices. The North West will be the second worst affected region with a further 114 stations losing their ticket offices, mainly on Merseyside and in Greater Manchester.

Publishing the full list of planned closures, Gerry Doherty, leader of the TSSA, called on the Transport Secretary to reject the controversial cutbacks called for by Sir Roy McNulty in his report on cost savings in the industry. "... Not only are unstaffed stations less secure, tickets bought from machines are usually more expensive..."

The union is launching its "SOS-Save our Station ticket offices" campaign which will tour the party conferences over the next four weeks urging MPs to save local ticket offices in their constituencies. – *TSSA press release*

*The TSSA has set up a project called Together for Transport which it hopes will bring groups and individuals together to campaign against cuts in public transport and increases in fares. The full list of ticket offices which they claim are under threat of closure is shown on the [togetherfortransport.org](http://togetherfortransport.org) website [here](#).*

## **SAMARITANS HELP REDUCE RAILWAY SUICIDES**

The Samaritans are playing their own vital part in helping railway staff to reduce suicides on the railway. There has been an 11% fall from 233 to 207 suicides across Great Britain between 2009/10 and 2010/11. More than 1,000 staff at 220 locations across Britain have received the Samaritans' innovative suicide prevention training over the past year. With £5 million of Network rail investment, the five-year project includes intervention training for staff, support for drivers after a trauma, support for emotionally vulnerable individuals, looking after witnesses, BTP referral process, an awareness campaign targeting those most at risk and guidance to the media in reporting suicides to reduce the likelihood of copycat deaths. Please visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) for further details. – from FLAG's August 2011 Newsletter

## **STOP CABLE THEFT – SIGN THE PETITION!**

Railway cable theft is a huge problem and is causing massive disruption to passengers. Here is a link to an e-petition [<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/406>] asking Parliament to consider introducing legislation aimed at making cash transactions at scrap metal dealers illegal. This would help enormously in the battle against cable and metal theft as it would ensure both a paper and electronic trail on all transactions. The petition requires a minimum of 10,000 signatures before it will be considered by Parliament. - from Paul Salvesson's "Salvo"

## **NEW RAIL USER GROUP FOR SLOUGH**

Slough MP Fiona Mactaggart will chair the inaugural meeting of a new rail user group on Tues 20 Sept, as she fights for better services for the town. The move follows Dept. for Transport figures showing three of the ten most crowded London services call at Slough. The group will meet to discuss overcrowding on trains and ticket prices, plus issues such as timetabling, disability access, oyster card extension to Slough and access by rail from the West to Heathrow.

Ms Mactaggart said: "The Government plans to increase rail fares by an average of 8%, starting from January. This means that rail season tickets for commuter routes between Slough and London will go up by £171.72 in 2012 and by a massive £601.45 in 2012. It's not fair and I hope the rail user group will help me to persuade the DfT to stop punishing the hard pressed commuter."

The meeting will be held at 'The Manor' shed, which is managed by Slough and Windsor Railway Society, from 6.30pm, and is open to all local rail users. – *The Slough Observer*

## **FREE ONLINE ADVICE FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES**

**Get Legal** is a free online reference and decision-making tool for charities, social enterprises and co-operative organisations. The [website](#) aims to help individuals, organisations and advisors to make informed decisions as they set up and develop charities, social enterprises and co-operatives. As well as offering guidance about legal structures, it also explains a range of legal forms in detail.

The Resources section of the site contains information on where to go for further advice and support, a glossary of terms, and case studies to bring the legal forms to life. It also provides standard documentation and explanatory notes, which can be downloaded.

Underpinning all this is a bespoke [decision tool](#), which asks a series of simple questions about your organisation and its aims, providing links to help and resources along the way.

Get Legal has been developed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations to enable organisations to access clear information on the most appropriate legal form and governance structure for delivering their goals.

***Please give some thought as to how you can help the University of Salford and Hannes Pries in Germany with their requests – see first two items of news.***

## EVENTS

National rail events are highlighted in **yellow**. Community/sustainability events are highlighted **green**.

**16-22 Sep** European Mobility Week - an awareness raising campaign encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking.

**Sat 17 Sep** Yorkshire Branch meeting at Priory Place Methodist Church, Doncaster.

**Tue 20 Sept** Inaugural meeting of a new Rail User Group for Slough at The Manor from 18:30.

**Thu 22 Sep** World Car Free Day – proclaim the alternative to cars!

**Sat 24 Sep** ACoRP Community Rail Festival, incl Gala Dinner & Awards Presentation, Sheffield.

**Sat 1 Oct** Railfuture East Anglia branch meeting, Norwich.

**Sat 8 Oct** SARPA AGM, White Lion Hotel, Machynlleth from 11:30.

**Sat 15 Oct** ESTA meet at St Marks Church Hall, Oulton Broad, from 14:45; guest speaker local MP

**Sat 29 Oct** CSV Make a Difference Day – celebrate the achievements of volunteers!

**Mon 31 Oct** Friends of Littleborough Station AGM at the station from 19:30. Guest speaker.

**Tue 1 Nov** “One Day” (1/1/11) with the theme “Think about and do something sustainable today” (a Start initiative inspired by the Prince of Wales to encourage more sustainable lives).

**Wed 2 Nov** ACoRP conference “Radical Approaches to Community Rail”, Cardiff.

**Sat 5 Nov** Railfuture Rail Users’ Conference, Mechanics’ Institute, Manchester.

**Mon 7 Nov** BCA AGM at the RAFA Club, Bedford from 19:30 with guests from FCC, EMT and NR.

**Sat 12 Nov** HPSRUA autumn meeting with guest speaker at Stocksmoor Village Hall from 14:00.

**Mon 14 Nov** FoLBL autumn meeting at Lymington Community Centre from 19:30.

**Sat 17 Nov** [The Way Ahead for UK’s Railways](#): value-for-money conference at the Barbican, London

**Sat 3 Dec** Railfuture East Anglia branch meeting, Cambridge.

2012

**Sat 12 May** Railfuture AGM to be held in the West Midlands.

**More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.**

*This bulletin has been sent by*

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