



July 2021

### Welcome to the Rail User Express

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Wearing masks on public transport in England may no longer be obligatory, but is still expected. And the fact that most people would like to see the restriction continue suggests that there is still some way to go to convince the public that trains are safe. However, masks are a nuisance, especially if you wear glasses, and one that you don't suffer in a private car. So getting people to switch back to trains for the good of the environment will be a real challenge.

Roger Smith

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

### Friends of the West Highland Lines

With the easing of travel restrictions, Scotrail is now running a full WHL service, but train capacity depends on the rules for social distancing: 40% for one metre separation; just 15% for two metres.

A National Transport Trust plaque at the Falls of Cruachan station will mark the system of bi-directional semaphore signals on the line through the Pass of Brandon that fall to danger if a rock fall breaks the fence line. The sound of the wind blowing through the fence wires has led to it being dubbed 'Anderson's Piano' after its mentor.

A Campaign for North East Rail Group has been set up to restore the Buchan lines from Dyce to Ellon and on to Fraserburgh and to Peterhead, as well as the Deeside line to Banchory. It also wants new stations at Cove Bay and Newtonhill on the East Coast Main Line (ECML), with a spur to the new Aberdeen South Harbour, both for freight and for cruise passengers.

Electrification of the Barrhead and East Kilbride routes is underway, with parts of the Fife Circle, the Borders Railway and lines from the Central Belt to Aberdeen and Inverness to follow, operated by battery-electric MUs.

The Scottish government has signed a memorandum of understanding with the private sector for a timber loading facility north of Rannoch station. It could take up to 4,000 lorry trips a year off the single access road, saving around 650 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. A planning application will follow final discussions on the commercial aspects and the design of the siding.

## **Rail Action Group East of Scotland**

The ECML May 2022 Timetable Consultations pose a real threat to services in the RAGES area. If not addressed, they will indeed become a reality! This [link](#) sets out the problem, and includes the RAGES responses to the TransPennine Express, LNER and Cross Country consultations.

## **Campaign for Borders Rail**

CBR has taken its message to key decision makers on both sides of the border. In a meeting convened by John Lamont, MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, the Campaign met Transport Minister Chris Heaton-Harris MP, who related particularly to housing, employment, economic regeneration, tourism, timber and freight.

The Campaign's [newsletter](#) covers the deterioration of Whitrope Tunnel, arguably the biggest civil engineering work on the 66-miles of the former Waverley Route, which the Campaign seeks to have re-established as a through route, serving the Borderlands as a new cross-border arm of the national rail network. Meetings are taking place with Forestry & Land Scotland seeking better safeguarding of the tunnel ahead of its eventual re-engineering for the reopened line.

## **Lakes Line Rail User Group**

NR has cleared the track bed of litter at Windermere station; the job took place at night after the last train. Contractors ISS tidy the station platforms, but are not allowed onto the track. At the start of July, another night raid on litter saw Kendal, Burneside and Staveley cleared, and a return visit to tidy up at Windermere.

The Group and CRP have been asking Northern to show at Staveley station that assistance is available for those who cannot manage the steps. The rail companies have a duty to enable the mobility-impaired to travel by train, if necessary by arranging for an accessible taxi to and from the nearest accessible station. A new Northern sign with the phone number for assistance is a welcome move, but the Group would like more detail as many would-be passengers will not know what help is available. It would also be useful to show anyone intending to use the assistance how far in advance they should contact the train company.

Over the May bank holidays Group members were at Oxenholme to see how crowded peak time trains were. Northern put on three car trains when they had several out of action, but even so some trains were, for current conditions, uncomfortably full. Loads of over 100 passengers on some mid-week Airport – Windermere trains suggests that tourist traffic is returning to the Lakes Line in significant numbers. Since the May timetable change, alone of the three train operators at Oxenholme, Northern has reinstated almost a full service. Several staff members are self-isolating due to Covid, and the restrictions have also disrupted the training programme for new staff.

Our last Bulletin covered the proposals for cutting the number of trains using the Castlefield corridor in Manchester. The public consultation of the three variants has now been assessed, and the result apparently is that much more research and discussion is needed. While trains to/from South Cumbria would continue hourly as at present, some places such as Southport would lose direct trains to Piccadilly and the Airport. It's pretty certain now that no major developments will be ready in time for the May 2022 timetable change, so we must hope that the recent better performance of our Manchester Airport services can be maintained.

## **Furness Line Action Group**

As we come out of the pandemic restrictions the staycation market beckons. With Cumbria at the forefront of a potential boom in leisure travel, it needs services to be maintained at or above pre-pandemic levels. Line re-openings, Rover/Ranger tickets and rail offers in conjunction with tourist attractions are a positive way forward.

A Community Rail Cumbria paper sets out a series of potential rail investments both to generate a modal shift from car to public transport. As overhead electrification of the Furness line is unlikely for many years, the paper argues for bi-mode overhead electric/battery-powered trains. With a lay-over at Barrow of around 45mins, charging could be achieved in the platform or sidings, or when running along the electrified main line. Class 331 trains on both Furness and Lakes Lines would result in all services through Manchester being of the same type, offering the potential for joining trains to different destinations, saving precious train paths in the Manchester area.

Electrification of the two miles of track into Morecambe from the West Coast Main Line (WCML) would enable battery-powered trains on the branch that interwork from Barrow and, with through trains from further afield, meet the aspirations of the Eden North Project. The 2-track bottleneck on the WCML between Lancaster and Carnforth would benefit from an additional running line for local and freight trains, and clear paths for the express services.

There is a planning application with Eden District Council (EDC) to develop land in the Red Hills area of Penrith over the trackbed of the line to Keswick at its junction with the WCML. Numerous individuals, councils and NR have objected, as the plan is at odds with the policy of protecting trackbeds subject to a reopening proposal. An Allerdale Borough Council and CKP Railway Plc bid to re-open the line has the support of four Cumbrian MPs.

### **South East Northumberland Rail User Group**

All four May 2022 ECML timetables proposed by train companies serving Northumberland would be a disaster. SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett said: “every single station in Northumberland will receive a worse service than it does today. Morpeth and Berwick will be particularly hard hit.” A briefing paper on its [website](#) details the key changes SENRUG wants to protect its services. It urges the County Council, local MPs, the North of Tyne Mayor and other stakeholders to make urgent representations to the DfT and LNER to ensure they are adopted. See Consultations.

Rf also objects to the poor service between Darlington and Durham, and the lack of any at all between Newark and Retford: passengers between these stations would have to ‘double-back’ from Doncaster!

### **English Regional Transport Association**

Led by 14-year-old Harry Burr, Sustainable Transport Midlands replaced Sustainable Transport Northamptonshire in April. It is campaigning for two proposals:

- Daventry Parkway: a new station at Weedon Bec on the WCML to serve Daventry
- South Northants Link: A new rail link connecting Northampton, Banbury, and Leamington Spa, via towns such as Daventry, Brackley, and Towcester.

Owen O’Neill suggests a Rugby - Leicester rail link, with a new station at Lutterworth, and serving rail freight interchanges at Hinckley and Magna Park. The old ‘Great Central’ alignment between Lutterworth and Narborough that runs alongside the M1 for 8 miles enters Rugby through a largely residential area. An alternative route further west, a section of the old ‘Midland Counties’ line, would reach Rugby station through a mostly industrial area with much lower social impact. To connect these two routes, a new section of line would be needed near the A426.

ERTA supports the campaign for East West Rail to complete the Aylesbury – Milton Keynes section, and also wants new stations at Calvert and Claydon to take traffic off local roads.

### **Tunbridge Wells and District Rail Travellers' Association**

Priced at £286.40 from Tunbridge Wells to London Terminals, the new Flexi Season tickets will save 12% for passengers making two return journeys per week and 15% for those making three. Peter Hudson, committee member for timetables and planning, said:

“these discounts may seem at little low, but we acknowledge the positive step of introducing these fares at all at the present time.” The group has also suggested that Southeastern introduce discounted advance purchase tickets on morning peak trains.

### **Dartmoor Railway Association**

NR has acquired the whole Coleford Junction to Meldon line from Aggregate Industries, with passenger services between Okehampton and Exeter currently planned for December. Okehampton will become the railhead for a large part of West Devon and North Cornwall. A Parkway station near the A30 at Stockley Hamlet is expected to open within two years to serve the several hundred new houses being built on the eastern side of the town.

The Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association, renamed the Dartmoor Railway Association, rents the downside building on Platforms 1 and 2 at Okehampton from Devon CC, and uses the rooms as a museum, shop, stores and mess facilities for volunteers. As a 'Station Friend', it will also continue its gardening activities on Platform 3 that the trains will use.

### **Avocet Line Rail Users' Group**

There aren't enough units to provide the promised 3 or 4-car services on the Avocet line, but 2-car trains have been crush loaded, particularly at weekends, sunny bank holidays and half term week; even 3 and 4-car trains have seen standing passengers. GWR has been shuffling trains between Exeter and Bristol to provide as many seats as possible. The line might even see a 4-carriage Castle Class HST. A test was run in the early hours of 12 June, both for gauge clearance (it was a tight fit on some platforms) and to prove it could maintain the timetable of the more nimble DMUs.

South Western Railway (SWR) told an ALRUG meeting in April that it was waiting to progress the next stage of the West of England Strategy. This includes passing loops at Whimple/Cranbrook (subject to confirmation) and other locations on the Waterloo line, as well as extending the Honiton loop.

## **RAILFUTURE**

***Rf welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more weight to 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 on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Consultation responses](#).***

On 13 July, Rf director Neil Middleton gave evidence to the House of Lords Built Environment Committee on the Williams Shapps Review and the future of rail fares. He called for a simple change to the Flexi-Season ticket from 8 days in 28 days to 8 days in 31: “Someone who wants to use these tickets twice a week will really struggle to make effective use of them, as there are so many reasons why travel twice a week for four consecutive weeks doesn't happen. Allowing some of the tickets to be used in a fifth week will be a significant improvement in choice, with no major change to the basic economics of the ticket for the rail industry.

“The Flexi-Season adds complexity to the fares system, not the simplicity wanted by Williams-Shapps. It's still hard for Joe Public to know whether or not it makes sense to buy the new Flexi tickets because it depends on so many factors - the journey, the varying amount of discount, and the availability or not of other fare options such as Advance tickets and contactless payment. Flexis...need to be seen as only a tactical improvement, and not the strategic solution”.

Rf promised to write to the Committee with further ideas for improving the Flexi-Season ticket, and is considering what other changes to recommend, including making the most of TfL and other metro services pending the essential more fundamental reform.

[Rf welcomes](#) the action on battery trains: GWR will test a battery train on the Greenford branch, while Stadler's Independently Powered EMU (IPEMU) to extend Merseyrail services off the third rail network to Helsby, Skelmersdale and Wrexham are now being tested on the network during normal service hours. But although they will call at every station, passengers cannot board and should stand well clear. Details regarding their introduction into service are yet to be confirmed.

Rf's consolidated [response](#) to the second NR consultation on Ely Area Capacity Enhancement strongly supports the proposals in principle, but believes that as presented they lack the necessary ambition to deliver the required transformational change to both passenger and freight services. In particular, it advocates four tracks north of Ely station rather than three, on two separate double-track routes.

### **Rf NORTH EAST**

An extra signal has effectively doubled the capacity of the freight line between Ferryhill and Norton West. As the shortest and quickest route between the North East's two conurbations, it should also have passenger services. User group Coastliners is calling for a direct Northern Connect service from Middlesbrough and Stockton.

### **Rf NORTH WEST**

The May timetable was expected to restore a number of Northern services, but did not do so for a number of lines and services including those at Castleton and Smithy Bridge in the Rochdale area, Liverpool Lime Street direct to Warrington Bank Quay, Lancaster – Morecambe, and trains from Manchester to Preston, Blackburn via Darwen, Rose Hill Marple, Glossop and Buxton.

The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to extend the Manchester - Clitheroe service to Hellifield or Garsdale on the Settle - Carlisle line concludes that services could be delivered with little or no need for additional infrastructure, potentially in the May 2023 timetable.

The SOBC into the feasibility of reopening the Fleetwood - Poulton-le-Fylde railway examined three options: extending the existing tram network; a hybrid scheme where light rail vehicles operated on both heavy and light rail systems, and restoration of the heavy rail link. Costs ranged from £121m to £251m. A more detailed analysis will now identify a single preferred option.

Top of the list in Liverpool City Region's objectives for development of the rail network is a line to Skelmersdale, and the first step is a new station at Headbolt Lane, Kirkby. Expanding Merseyrail to Widnes via Hunts Cross and possibly as far as Warrington is under consideration, as is Ellesmere Port – Helsby. However, that route is not high on the priority list - although Merseyrail has the authority to use the line for proof of concept trials of the new battery powered Class 777's on account of its low traffic movements!

### **Rf WALES**

GWR MD Mark Hopwood backs Rf's campaign to reinstate Cardiff – Swansea electrification, but wants the line from the Severn Tunnel improved for higher speed running. It is largely limited to 90mph or lower, whereas most of the Great Western line in England is cleared for 125mph. He also wants the relief lines between Cardiff and the Severn Tunnel used for slower trains.

A rail route linking north, west and south Wales could be a step closer following the recent Senedd elections. Two disused lines would need to be reopened: Bangor - Caernarfon - Afon Wen, and Carmarthen - Aberystwyth. The original alignment would be followed, except in Aberystwyth, where it would entail excessive demolition of housing. Here, an alternative route via a tunnel under Pen-y-Banc would join the line in from Barmouth. Passing loops at or near Pencader and Tregaron would allow an hourly service. A members' meeting on 11 September will focus on the plans. All welcome.

## Rf EAST ANGLIA

Norwich station is becoming increasingly isolated as the city grows away from it. Though well sited for the historic centre, it is much less so for the resident population in its wider catchment area. All services should therefore be at least half hourly, with some linked across the city's station:

- Nottingham - Peterborough - Norwich trains should continue to Yarmouth
- A North Walsham - Thetford stopping service could speed up longer distance services, as they would need to call only at Wymondham, Thetford and Brandon.

Services via Peterborough should be faster and more "Intercity" in character, with longer trains and a better on-board experience on a par with the London service. Underused village stations should become local travel hubs, with a new Long Stratton Parkway station on the Ipswich line to relieve the A140.

GA promotes its environmental credentials, but for around 60,000mls each year its bi-mode trains run on diesel when they could be using electricity, as they can raise and lower their pantograph on the move, and each of the following lines has over a mile of wires to and from the station:

- Ely North Junction to Ely (Peterborough and Norwich services)
- Haughley Junction to Stowmarket (Peterborough and Cambridge services)
- East Suffolk Junction to Ipswich (Lowestoft and Felixstowe services)
- Trowse Lower Junction to Norwich (Liverpool Street and Stansted Airport services)

One could also add the short stretch of wires into Norwich for Sheringham, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft services.

There is a [petition](#) to restore the 23-mile Dereham – Swaffham - King's Lynn line, whilst the Holt, Melton Constable & Fakenham Railway aims to create a Norfolk Orbital Railway by bridging the 22mls from the North Norfolk Railway at Holt to the Mid-Norfolk Railway at County School.

## Rf LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST

The Abbey Line between Watford and St Albans is now served by modern Class 350 stock, and the passing loop at Bricket Wood is making steady progress with the support of Herts CC. However, a combination of deferred maintenance work and the suspension of services during lockdown has allowed the track to deteriorate, leading to speed restrictions and a reduced service.

## COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK

The CRN report '[Community rail: encouraging and enabling modal shift](#)' sponsored by the Rail Delivery Group explores how community rail can support modal shift from private car to rail, along with other public transport and active and shared travel. It highlights the importance of partnership with other agencies, with case studies featuring CRN members.

Taking a lead from wider rail industry promotional plans, CRN's Days Out by Rail PR campaign will now launch on 26 July as a springboard for its members' own tourism and leisure promotions.

Nine university students approaching the end of a 'Year in Industry' placement with Northern came together for a community project with the Leeds - Morecambe CRP. Under their chosen theme 'Get Nature Back on Track', they prepared nine information panels on environmental topics, as well as a short animation for a younger audience based around 'Ed the Environmental Eagle', who appears on all of the panels. These will shortly go on display at stations along the Bentham Line, together with a poster exhibition at venues on or near the line. Details of the project are on the Bentham Line [website](#).

## CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

More people are expected to split their time between home and office: just 39% of workers plan to travel in to their workplace every day in future. However, CBT's celebration of flexible season tickets was muted, as the savings on them don't compare to the discounts for those commuting full time. This may turn out to be a real missed opportunity, so CBT will continue to campaign for more fundamental reform to rail fares and ticketing.

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

A Public Accounts Committee report on the future of rail says that the DfT "has neither the necessary urgency nor appreciates the scale of the challenge ahead". Chair Dame Meg Hillier said: "Decent public transport is crucial to both household and national economies. Rail reform won't work if it doesn't work for tax-payers and fare-paying passengers, and the Government won't achieve its economic and environmental goals without effective rail reform...[It] needs to show it can act with urgency, and put passengers' experience at the centre of its reforms."

However, according to the [Telegraph](#), the Treasury is delaying publication of the IRP, which was due out by March. It is said to want to trim NPR by scrapping a Bradford centre station in favour of a cheaper route through greenfield sites on the city outskirts, or even to cancel the high-speed line between Leeds and Manchester altogether, and upgrade the line via Huddersfield and Dewsbury instead. However, Downing Street insisted that it is committed to building a new line.

According to the Railway Industry Association, with Parliament going into recess on 22 July, three key rail strategies were still outstanding:

- The Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP): not updated in 630 days
- The Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) for the Midlands and North: plans for projects like HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and Midlands Rail Hub
- The Transport Decarbonisation Plan (subsequently published on 14 July).

Its CE Darren Caplan said: "RIA and our members urge the Government to avoid creating a 'Summer of Uncertainty' for rail businesses and to publish these long-awaited strategies. By doing so, the sector will be much better prepared to support the economic recovery from Coronavirus, and boost green jobs, investment and economic growth across the country."

A Rail Environment Policy Statement in the Government's [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#) sets the direction for the rail industry on environment issues, and will inform the forthcoming sustainable rail strategy. The document looks at decarbonising the rail estate including traction, air quality, and a range of other environmental-related rail issues, including biodiversity and waste.

According to Siemens Mobility, Government plans to reduce carbon emissions must focus on decarbonising the railway as a full system. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) Rail Infrastructure and Assets report found that only 251km of electrification were delivered in 2019/2020, but NR's Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy requires 13,000. Major diesel routes identified for replacement and upgrade by 2030 include: the Cross Country line from Aberdeen to Penzance; the Chiltern line to Birmingham; Norwich - Liverpool and Waterloo - Exeter. Using a combination of new electric infrastructure and/or Hydrogen trains on these routes would support the plan to achieve 78% of its Net Zero obligations by 2035.

ORR's [Annual Assessment of NR 2020/21](#) found that, while COVID-19 presented huge challenges, NR played its part in continuing to run a safe railway, keeping freight and those who need to travel moving. NR staff have worked hard, often in very challenging environments, to deliver necessary engineering works and maintain an operational railway. It must now continue to plan effectively and implement its learning and good practice across all areas of delivery, and retain improved train performance where possible, with better informed access and timetabling decisions, while ensuring efficient use of network capacity.

The ORR has launched PR23, its periodic review to determine the funding level for GBR in Control Period 7 (2024-29), and what the more integrated railway should deliver in return. An open letter invites comments by 10 September.

The four main transport unions and rail employers in the [Rail Industry Recovery Group](#) have agreed to seek voluntary redundancies to save the industry up to £2bn a year, and close the funding gap arising from an 80% decline in passenger revenue since the start of the pandemic. Ticket office posts could be cut, as the agreement refers to changes in the way passengers access information and ticketing services. Changes to working practices will include a move to “robust” seven-day working, and more remote monitoring technology in maintenance. Detailed proposals at local level will be drawn up by the end of October.

Contractors have been appointed for the £20m redevelopment of Carlisle Station and its surrounds under the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Partial pedestrianisation of Court Square will enhance the space for passengers entering and exiting the station, and significantly reduce vehicular movements at the Northern Gateway. A new Southern Gateway will accommodate a car park with 423 spaces, coach services, rail replacement services and a pick-up and drop-off point.

East Midlands Railway (EMR) has officially opened a new, indoor £340,000 cycle hub at Kettering station with 170 spaces overseen by CCTV and including electric bike charging points and access to bike maintenance tools. Access to the hub requires a fob that can be obtained from the station. Each fob requires a £10 deposit, which is refundable at the end of its use.

NR has applied for a [Transport and Works Act Order](#) (TWAO) to build Cambridge South station and associated infrastructure on the biomedical campus for a projected £183.6m. Objections and/or representations of support may be made until 2 August. A public inquiry has been provisionally set for 22 November. Subject to consent, work could start in 2022, with a target opening date of 2025.

NR’s [Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study](#) recommends several potential improvements to increase interconnectivity across the county. Subject to future funding and viable business cases, these include increasing capacity through Oxford station, reopening the Cowley branch line, more Hanborough services and additional capacity in and around Didcot, including a new station at Wantage/Grove, subject to additional main line infrastructure. Increased demand for rail services in the medium and long-term could be met with better connections to Oxfordshire’s seven growth hubs, and to Birmingham, Reading and Bristol services.

A £7.5m transformation of Swansea railway station will improve passengers’ journeys. The major task was to rebuild and extend Platform 4 to accommodate GWR’s 10 carriage IETs, a significant operational benefit.

A major scheme to improve accessibility at Finsbury Park station, a key interchange between Thameslink, Great Northern Metro and London Underground services, will start on 31 July. With two new lifts serving Platforms 3/4 and 7/8, the entire station will have step-free access.

Bank station will close from 15 January until mid-May next year for a £700m upgrade, while London Bridge, Elephant & Castle and Borough will have no access to the Northern line. However, there will be more Charing Cross trains and a new bus route between Oval and the City. The project will increase capacity at Bank by 40%, and two new lifts, 12 escalators and two moving walkways will speed up changing between lines.

The first composite railway sleepers on the main line were installed across Sherrington Viaduct between Salisbury and Warminster. Concrete sleepers would be too heavy for the structure, and from July creosoted softwood sleepers will be banned. The new sleepers, manufactured in the UK by Sicut Ltd, use locally sourced plastic waste that might otherwise go to landfill.



Sutton Council has submitted a £32m bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund to reinstate a twin-track rail line between Sutton and Belmont, and rebuild the mile long Belmont Loop Line. Services would increase from 2 to 4-6tph with a direct service from Belmont to London Victoria.

Southeastern's new fleet of air-conditioned Class 707 trains will replace older Class 465 and 466 Networker trains on Metro routes into London from Dartford, Sevenoaks and Hayes. A preview service will start in the autumn, followed by the full service in 2022 when sufficient trains have transferred from SWR.

With the support of its MP Bob Seely, the Isle of Wight Council has submitted a 'Restoring Your Railway' bid for funding to develop the case to reinstate the Newport branch via Blackwater, and so provide a rail service from Ryde Pier Head to the Island's county town.

NR and Highways England have published the first phase of a [Solent to the Midlands Multimodal Freight Strategy](#). The route links the major port of Southampton with the numerous distribution centres and economic hubs of the Midlands, North and Scotland.

In its [Rail Freight: Building a stronger, greener future for Britain](#) report, the Rail Delivery Group proposes a series of Government policies to eliminate congested roads and cities, support its levelling up agenda, and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

NR and distribution firm Orion will soon be making high-speed parcel deliveries by rail. Converted Class 769 bi-mode trains operating in formation of 4, 8 or 12 carriages can run at up to 100mph. Fully re-fitted for logistics use, they can accommodate roll cages, pallets and other customer identified vessels or containers. Services will start later this year between the Midlands and Scotland. More routes could be added in 2022 dependent on demand and available train paths.

Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen has proposed an £11.7million investment to boost road and rail links to the Teesworks site, the UK's largest Freeport. Improving two tunnels and two bridges on the Eaglescliffe to Northallerton line would give larger containers a more direct route to the ECML.

Freightliner has launched a new daily intermodal rail service from the Port of Felixstowe to the recently resurrected Tinsley Marshalling Yard, between Sheffield and Rotherham.

The first train left the HS2 Logistics hub in Willesden with 1,470 tons of spoil from HS2 works in London to a disused quarry at Barrington in Cambridgeshire. Over the lifecycle of the project, up to seven trains per day will take a million lorries off the roads in the London area alone. One train per day will bring construction materials such as concrete tunnel segments into the hub.

*,,,and finally*

LNER is offering enthusiasts the opportunity to own a piece of railway history by auctioning some historic nameplates from its High-Speed Train (HST) fleet. 43208 Lincolnshire Echo, 43257 Bounds Green and 43274 Spirit of Sunderland will be sold in an online [auction](#) on 24 July. Proceeds will go to LNER's partner charity Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM).

Or if your pockets are a little deeper, [Station Halt at Bramford Speke](#) on the old Exe Valley line between Exeter and Tiverton is on the market with Stags for offers in excess of £550,000. Be advised, though, that the three-bedroom home in 6.2 acres of land is accessible only on foot, following a 300yd-long walk, or through a private ford in the summer months.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

- LNER: [May 2022 Timetable](#), closes 5 August.
- Transport for the North, [Draft Decarbonisation Strategy](#), closes 31 August
- ORR: [Periodic Review 2023](#), closes 10 September.

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](#), who maintains lists of [Events](#) and [Key Dates](#). Stand-alone lists are preferred, as newsletters may be discarded.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

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

**NB. Because of Covid-19, events are being cancelled, postponed or conducted online. Webmasters, please update your websites with any changes as soon as they are made.**

### July

- Wednesday 21. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, White Swan inn at **Barton**, 2000 (also the third Wednesday of each odd month alternately at Barton and the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes 1900).
- Saturday 24. Rf London & South East, Herts and Beds Division, **St Albans**, 1930.
- Sunday 25. Rf East Anglia AGM, St Mary's at Stoke, **Ipswich**, 1400.
- Tuesday 27. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, **Online**, 1830 (the last Tuesday of every month, normally at Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Ajax Way, **Methil Docks**, KY8 3RS).

### August

- Tuesday 3. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, 20 Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, 1430 (Also first Tuesday of every month but **meetings cancelled until further notice**).
- Saturday 7. Cotswold Line Promotion Group AGM, Village Hall, **Honeybourne**, 1100.
- Tuesday 10. STORM, Blue Pits Inn, 842 Manchester Road, Castleton, **Rochdale**, OL11 2SP, 1400 (Also the second Tuesday of each month, but **meetings cancelled until further notice**).
- Saturday 21. ERTA Brighton Forum, The Post and Telegraph, 155-158 North Street, **Brighton**, BN1 1EEA, 1500.
- Friday 20. ERTA Brackmills and Northampton Area, **Online**, 1500.
- Thursday 26. ERTA Great Central Rail Projects, **Online**, 1500.

### Further Ahead

- September 11. Rf Wales, **Online**, 1000.
- September 25. Rf Yorkshire, **Sheffield**, 1400, or **Online**, 1300.
- October 1. Friends of the Far North Line AGM, **Dingwall**
- October 12. South East Northumberland RUG, Morpeth.
- October 18. Avocet Line RUG, venue TBA, 1930.
- October 20. England's Economic Heartland annual conference, **Silverstone**
- October 30. East Suffolk Travel Association, **Lowestoft station**, 1400.

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

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