

From: [Tony Smale](#) **Sent:** Wednesday, September 02, 2009 4:45 PM **Subject:** Railfuture Rail User Express, 2 Sept 09, copy #1

Welcome to this shorter edition of Rail User Express.

I normally begin with a roundup of news from rail user groups around the UK. However, I've been busy during August updating my national list of rail user groups, so the "roundup" will have to wait for a little while.

The August 2009 version of the national list of rail user groups, with over 250 entries, is now available on the Railfuture website. Go to www.railfuture.org.uk select "Links" then "Rail User Groups". Please take a look and make sure your group is listed correctly (and maybe check other groups that you know about). The main difference since the August 08 version is that many more rail user groups now have their own website.

You will see that rail user groups on the national list are each coded according to the Railfuture Branch area in which they operate. If you would like me to send you a sub-list of groups just for your area, please ask.

In fact, a regional sub-list of rail user groups appears for each Railfuture Branch on our website. My next task is to correlate these sub-lists to the national list, so for a while the two may not be in agreement.

Please note that I've also uploaded the July edition of Rail User Express onto the Railfuture website. To see this, go to www.railfuture.org.uk select "Members" then "Railfuture contributors".

Many of you will be reading this Rail User Express bulletin for the first time. This is because, while checking and validating the national list of rail user groups, I've discovered many more email addresses - and I've taken the liberty of adding them to my RUEX contact list. I hope you find the bulletins useful, but if you would rather not receive them, please let me know.

As always, feel free to forward this message to a colleague, or to reproduce news items in your own newsletter (quoting sources).

...more on the subject of websites...

RUGs IN CYBERSPACE

Railfuture intends to maintain the definitive list of Rail User Groups in the UK on its website, but there are other internet sites with links to rail user groups.

- Check out the websites of Train Operating Companies; most TOCs maintain a list of "stakeholders" on their

websites. Find the stakeholder page for each TOC in your area and make sure your contact details are shown correctly. Clearly, there's a much better chance you will be consulted about forthcoming service changes if you're easy to reach.

- Next, search local authority websites for your area, from county council down to parish level. Many of them have a list of local voluntary clubs and societies. Is your group listed? Potential members will find you by looking for groups in their neighbourhood, and local authority officers often refer to these lists when issuing news briefings or consultation documents.

- There are other organisations that maintain lists – so send them your details if you want to be included. Be aware that, in some cases, appearing on the list implies that you support the aims of the organisation! Check out these websites:

http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/local_campaigning

<http://www.railwaybritain.co.uk/community%20railways.html>

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/>

<http://www.mylinkspace.com/rail.html#Clu>

<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/links/> (and TravelWatch in other regions)

- Finally, please look at you own group's website and see if there's a link to Railfuture. If not, we would be very grateful if you could include one – thanks!

USEFUL STUFF ON RAILFUTURE'S WEBSITE

Information on www.railfuture.org.uk is continually being updated, so you would do well to add the site to your list of "Favourites". Here are some useful places on our website...

- Keep abreast of forthcoming events by selecting "Links", then "Events". You can ask for your own event to be included here.

- Find out if your group is eligible for grants from Railfuture's Fighting Fund by selecting "Campaigns", then click on "Fighting Fund".

- Read the latest edition of our journal *Railwatch* by following links to the magazine title.

- Discover the benefits of Railfuture membership and find out how to affiliate by clicking on "Join Railfuture".

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

PASSENGER FOCUS TO CHAIR DEBATES AT PARTY CONFERENCES

Passenger Focus will be hosting a debate at each of the three main party conferences (Lib Dems at Bournemouth, Labour at Brighton and the Tories in Manchester). The theme for the PF debate is "Weighing it up: Do Passengers need government to be more or less involved in bus and rail services?". MPs with transport portfolios and senior rail professionals will man the top table while PF Chairman, Colin Foxall, keeps order. Members of Railfuture and rail user groups are welcome to participate. The dates and venues are:

Tue 22 Sep Trouville Hotel, Bournemouth from 18:00 to 19:00.

Tue 29 Sep Old Ship Hotel, Brighton from 18:00 to 19:00.

Tue 6 Oct The Town Hall, Manchester from 18:00 to 19:00.

For further information, contact Sharon.Hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk

OTHER FRINGE TRANSPORT DEBATES AT PARTY CONFERENCES

Three further transport-related fringe debates will take place at each of the three conferences. All meetings are free to attend and will feature senior politicians and key industry figures. They are:

A) Making the best of the rail network - what future tramtrain?

Sun 20 Sep Bay View 2, Bournemouth International Centre from 13:00 to 14:00

Mon 28 Sep, Kings East, Grand Hotel, Brighton from 17:45 to 19:00

Mon 5 Oct Manchester Town Hall from 13:00 to 14:00

B) The future of rail in the north

Mon 21 Sep, Deauville Suite, Trouville Hotel, Bournemouth from 13:00 to 14:00

Tue 29 Sep, Bar 106, Hilton Metropole Hotel, Brighton from 19:00 to 20:00

Mon 5 Oct, Manchester Town Hall from 17:45 to 19:00

C) Public transport and the environment

Tue 22 Sep, Purbeck Suite, Marriott Hotel, Bournemouth from 13:00 to 14:00

Tue 29 Sep, Regent Room, Grand Hotel, Brighton from 13:00 to 14:00

Tue 6 Oct, Richter Room, Radisson Hotel, Manchester from 13:00 to 14:00

Thanks to H Trevor Jones for forwarding the above info, gleaned from Passenger Focus and New Transit magazine.

A GOOD TIME TO LOBBY YOUR MP

Chris Hyomes, Chairman of Railfuture Yorkshire, reminds us that the General Election is less than a year away. "After the recent expenses scandal, I'm sure our sitting and prospective MPs will be only too keen to listen to their constituents' views, so I urge you all to write to them or speak to them personally, to make them aware of the importance of your local rail service. If you have any issues with your local rail station, ask them to accompany you and make sure they see the problems at first hand."

COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS RAILWAY INVESTMENT

The Parliamentary Transport Select Committee has announced a New Inquiry and Call for Evidence into priorities for investment in the railway; see: http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/transport_committee.cfm . Norman Bradbury is preparing the Railfuture evidence to the Committee and any comments should be sent to him (or email to ruglink@railfuture.org.uk and I will pass them on).

Meanwhile, Railfuture Board member, H Trevor Jones, is preparing Railfuture's response to the Department for Transport's consultation on widening the remit of Passenger Focus to include bus and tram travel – this consultation ends shortly.

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON RAIL PASSENGERS' RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

The Department for Transport has just issued a consultation document on draft regulations. These regulations will be necessary to implement the requirements of a European Community Regulation on rail passengers' rights and obligations in Great Britain. **Closing date for comments is 3 Nov 09.** View the document at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/passengerrights/>

AIRTRACK PROJECT NEWS

In July, Heathrow Airport owner BAA submitted an application for an order under the Transport and Works Act that would allow construction of the Airtrack rail project. The detailed plans, submitted to Secretary of State for Transport Andrew Adonis, are for a new rail link that would connect Heathrow with the National Rail network to the south and west of the airport. The T&WA order is needed to authorise the works required and the acquisition of any land that is needed, either temporarily or permanently, to deliver the scheme. Construction work could begin early in 2011. –
Transport Briefing

SOUTH LONDON STATION CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY

South London's first new suburban railway station to open since the Second World War has been used by 133,000 people in the year since it opened. Train operator Southern says more than 78,000 passenger journeys were made to and from Mitcham Eastfields station since it opened while First Capital Connect has reported a further 55,000 trips to or from the station on its trains. The £6m station, situated on the Thameslink Sutton loop between Streatham and Mitcham Junction, is the result of a partnership between Merton Council, Network Rail, Southern, First Capital Connect and Transport for London. It is also the first of Network Rail's modular, pre-fab stations to be installed in London with the two-storey station building manufactured off-site and ready-made sections lifted into place. The station building has 48 sq m of solar panels on the roof to harness energy from the sun to power lighting and other electrical appliances. –
Transport Briefing

THE CASE FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL – *a personal viewpoint*

We've just had the preliminary announcement about a route strategy for a second high speed line in Britain, and the company charged with fleshing out the detail, High Speed Two Limited, is expected to deliver its findings by the end of the year. Rail user groups may wish to consider how they can add to the debate, especially as there are bound to be many detractors arguing that all that expenditure just to reduce journey times is a complete waste of public money. My own personal view is that rail users, especially those close to the routes in question, are uniquely placed to highlight the major spin-off effects of a newly built line, namely: the relief of chronic overcrowding on classic routes and the possibility of much-improved local service stopping patterns. We've all marvelled at the impressive speed of trains on High Speed One, but surely the principal benefit of the new infrastructure was to render rail travel to the Continent reliable. Arguably, we can only achieve acceptable reliability on domestic inter-city services with the added capacity

offered by new high-speed routes north and west of London.

> You can follow the progress of High Speed Two at: www.hs2.org.uk

SNIPPETS FROM *RAIL PROFESSIONAL* MAGAZINE

· Four out of five railway professionals (responding to the magazine's readership survey) believe that the government's policy of making passengers pay proportionally more towards the cost of running the railways has gone too far and is forcing fares to unacceptably high levels.

· Passengers can now follow their local rail service on the social networking website, Twitter. The National Rail initiative will allow passengers to access real-time information 24 hours a day on service updates and disruptions across the network. See www.nationalrail.co.uk/twitter

And congratulations to the Dornoch Rail Link Action Group for getting the magazine's editor to print a 1/3 page story about their campaign for a rail short-cut across the Dornoch Firth under the heading: Dornoch rail link 'vital for economy'. The lesson for us all is: correspond with magazine editors and keep pushing out those press releases!

RAILFUTURE MEMBERS CONTRIBUTE TO ACADEMIC TEXTBOOK

Two Railfuture members, Trevor Garrod and ... er ... yours truly, have contributed to an academic textbook about passenger representation on public transport across Europe. "Public Transport and its Users" was published in Germany recently by the Nexus Institute of Berlin. An English language version has also been produced by Ashgate Publishing Limited, priced at £65. In the book, Trevor writes about the formation and work of the European Passengers' Federation, while I focus on Britain's passenger representation at a local, regional and national level. Another British contributor was John Cartledge of the official public transport watchdog, London TravelWatch. The book publishers are keen to have recommendations for libraries or specialist bookshops that might wish to hold the book in stock – please let me have your suggestions at: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk Further details of the book can be found at: http://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=637&calcTitle=1&title_id=10016&edition_id=11450.

REPORT FROM RAILFUTURE'S OFFICER FOR DISABLED TRAVELLERS

In her latest report, Clara Zilahi writes that she remains very concerned about flat-screen tickets machines which, she says, are useless for anyone with a visual handicap, and difficult to use for many others with limited computer literacy. She also warns about the tendency to reduce staffing at stations as this can exacerbate problems for disabled people – and of course for all rail users who benefit from having staff at stations. Elsewhere, Clara mentions a local problem with a barrow crossing which Network Rail want to close but which is used by disabled passengers who cannot cross via the footbridge. Finally, we're told that Transport for London is trialling a new card which people with hidden disabilities can show to staff if they need help; TfL is recruiting volunteers to act as mystery shoppers.

A NATIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN FOR WALES – *from the newsletter of the Welsh branches of Railfuture*

In July, the Welsh Assembly Government released its draft National Transport Plan. Newsletter correspondent, Paul Jeffries, writes: "From a passenger's point of view, perhaps one of the most significant items in the Plan is a commitment to introduce, by 2014, integrated through ticketing between public transport operators, both road and rail. There is also a welcome commitment to improve access to rail services for the mobility impaired and for 'vulnerable users', and there is the intention to enhance provision for cyclists." Paul goes on to summarise the various infrastructure and service enhancements promised in the document before concluding: "There is much we can applaud in this Plan, although in reality little of the rail-related content is new. ... In truth, we have seen enough of plans and strategies, enough consultation documents, enough statement of intents, enough promises. It is high time now for the railway

industry and the public authorities to put down the pens, pick up the shovels, and *please* just get on with the serious work of delivery.” *Well, I’m sure rail campaigners around Britain will concur with that sentiment!*

SCOTRAIL CLUB 55 - *thanks to Russell Darling of RAGES for this item*

ScotRail’s Club 55 is re-opening on 1 Sept 09 and will run until 13 Dec 09, giving customers more time for great value rail travel around Scotland. Club 55 is for customers aged 55 and over and provides off-peak rail travel to hundreds of destinations in Scotland - plus Carlisle, and now Berwick. Standard Class travel is only £15 return or customers can travel First Class for £19 return with Club 55 Premier on selected routes. Senior Railcard holders and Disabled Persons Railcard holders over 55 get the additional bonus of a further £2 discount on both fares. Club 55 tickets are valid on all train operators’ services that run in Scotland, apart from the Jacobite Steam and Caledonian Sleeper services. Tickets can be purchased online, via telesales on 08457 55 00 33, at staffed stations, or from all Rail Appointed Travel Agents. If boarding at a station without ticketing facilities, purchases can be made on-train. Full details are available at www.scotrail.co.uk/club55.

CALLING ALL TREASURERS – *recommendations for an interest-bearing savings account.*

Five years ago, I wrote to the editor of the “Questions of Cash” page in The Independent with a query about savings accounts for treasurers of voluntary groups. My letter was duly published with a useful recommendation, so I reproduced the correspondence in an ancient and long-forgotten “Rail User Express” bulletin for the benefit of RUG treasurers around Britain. Some time in 2008, the editor’s recommended savings account stopped providing any useful rate of return. Shortly after I noticed this, I wrote again to the paper’s editor with a follow-up query. Bizarrely, my second letter wasn’t published until a few weeks ago. So here, for your information, is my latest question and the editor’s reply:

Q: Four years ago, you suggested an interest-bearing account that could be used by treasurers of small voluntary organisations. You recommended Alliance & Leicester’s Community Instant Reserve deposit account. I followed this advice and our modest funds earned a reasonable 4% gross. From August last year, A&L reduced the interest payable and it is now a maximum of just 0.15%. Can you recommend a savings account which will give voluntary groups a decent rate of return? - *AS, Fareham [my former address!]*

A: Kevin Curley, chief executive of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action – which supports voluntary bodies – recommends that small charities use CCLA. The CCLA COIF Charities Deposit Fund earns 1% interest. For further information go to www.ccla.co.uk

From their website, I note that even the CCLA rate has dropped to 0.86% gross, but I guess that’s still pretty good these days. The next question we need to ask is: does the CCLA deal with organisations that are not registered charities?

ERRATA – *apologies all round for two geographical errors in the July edition of Rail User Express...*

1) I mentioned an idea from the “South Cheshire Rail Users” about converting files to PDF format. I meant to say the “Shrewsbury-Chester Rail Users Association”. My SCRUA contact responded immediately to point out that there’s no such group as the “South Cheshire” (although spookily there are both Mid Cheshire and North Cheshire rail user groups).

2) There was a news item derived from Transport Briefing about Smitham Station “in Surrey”. The Chairman of the

Kingston Area Travellers' Association wrote in to tell me it's actually in the London Borough of Croydon. Now hang on a minute ... I was born in Norbury Surrey and Smitham is several stations to the south! Has someone been moving the borders?

RAILFUTURE RAIL REOPENINGS CONFERENCE IN CORBY, 14 NOV – *the affordable conference you can't afford to miss!*

In addition to the top-line speakers listed on the booking form that was despatched with Railwatch, Tim Shoveller, Managing Director for East Midlands Trains, has agreed to speak at the conference. See below for further conference details.

EVENTS +++ EVENTS +++ EVENTS

Sat 5 Sep Peterboro-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group (PENRUG) meet at 1100 in Ely Methodist Church with speakers: Heather Bolt, former Chairman of Norfolk Rail Policy Group and Alan Neville, who manages March and Ely stations.

Thu 17 Sep National Transport Conference 2009 entitled "Connections Through Investment" at QEII Conference Centre, London. Details: www.govnet.co.uk/transport/transportmedia

Thu 17 Sep Talk entitled: "North by Great Western: Reflections on the 160th Anniversary of the Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton Railway" presented by the Shrewsbury Railway Heritage Trust in the Shirehall at 19:30. A related exhibition opens from 16:00. Admission free. Details from mansel.williams@shrewsbury.gov.uk

Sat 19 Sep Railfuture Yorkshire autumn meeting at the Wesleyan Chapel, Oxford St, Harrogate from 13:00. All are welcome.

Sat 19 Sep Local Transport Activist Day in Manchester. Workshop organised by the Campaign for Better Transport in conjunction with Friends of the Earth, CTC, Sustrans, and the CPRE. Free event but places are limited. Details and booking form at: http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/take_action/local-activist-days-2009

Mon 21 Sep Meeting to launch the Baschurch Station Reopening Group at Baschurch Village Hall chaired by Owen Paterson, MP for North Shropshire. All rail supporters who live in Shropshire will be most welcome. Details from: sb648@btinternet.com

Wed 23 Sep Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Conference 2009 "Delivering Achievable Transport Plans" in Bridgewater Hall. Details at: <http://www.publicserviceevents.co.uk/>

Sat 26 Sep Local Transport Activist Day in London (as Manchester event – see above).

Fri/Sat 25/26 Sep ACoRP Community Rail Awards & Festival, Carlisle - details: www.acorp.uk.com

Sat 24 Oct East Suffolk Travellers' Association autumn meeting in St Marks Church Centre nr Oulton Broad South station from 14:30. Guest speaker from Suffolk County Council.

Wed 4 Nov ACoRP conference "Sustainable Transport & Tourism" at Cardiff Parc Hotel.

Sat 14 Nov Railfuture Rail Reopenings Conference "Building on Success", at St John the Baptist Church Hall in Corby from 11:00 to 16:30. Speakers: Jim Bamford of Notts CC & E Mids Rail Forum, Stephen Abbott from TravelWatch E Mids and Colin Elliff from the Woodhead project, plus speakers from Corby Borough Council and ACoRP. Fee only £20 (includes buffet lunch). Details and booking form on the Railfuture website.

... and in 2010...

Sat 20 Mar European Passengers' Federation AGM and Conference at Malmo, Sweden.

+++ More events on www.railfuture.org.uk - Select "Links" then "Events" +++

This bulletin has been sent by Tony Smale, Railfuture Rail User Group Liaison Officer

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