

## North East

By Peter Kenyon  
peterkenyon@yahoo.com

### ■ ■ Railfuture team ready for business

A well-attended branch annual general meeting was held in Newcastle on 15 January. Martin Murphy was re-elected chairman. Gordon Barclay, who was responsible for arrangements for the national AGM in Newcastle in 2004, the Railfuture stand at the 2006 Railfest in Darlington and the branch display at the Heaton Works Open Day last year, stood down as vice-chairman. Lee Davies, who contributed much to the life of the committee, in particular in the field of railfreight, also retired.

### ■ ■ Wide horizons for Network Rail

The new season began with a talk by Warwick Dent, area general manager of the North East Region of Network Rail. His responsibilities extend from the West Riding to Wetheral via the Doncaster Berwick section of the East Coast main line. His address was equally wide-ranging. Despite appearances to the contrary, a "seven day railway" is the aim of Network Rail. Cable theft is a serious problem, but might be curtailed by a change to Spanish cable which can be identified when stolen. Strengthening the overhead power network to avoid further failures is a priority. Reopening the Leamside Line is recognised as a future project, but there are no plans for early action.

### ■ ■ Excellence on the Tyne and Wear Metro

For the second year running, having achieved almost 96% punctuality, the best in the UK, Metro was nominated for consideration as Train Operator of the Year in the HSBC Rail Business Awards, held in February.

### ■ ■ £1,085 penalty for railway offender

A male passenger who swore at ticket inspectors, jumped from the platform at Seaburn station and ran off, was fined in his absence by Sunderland magistrates in January 2009. He must pay £600 for trespass, £350 for fare evasion, £50 for using offensive language and £85 costs, a total of £1,085. This court case is in addition to the regular court appearances of fare dodgers featured on posters on the system and the Metro web site. Ticket barriers are to be installed at 13 key stations next year, and should considerably reduce the problem of fare evasion.

### ■ ■ Coastliners campaigning combats neglect

This active rail users' group continues to press the case for rail on the neglected Durham Coast line. Members are heartened by the vast improvements in the performance of Grand Central. They are working with local authorities to bring forward plans for a new station on the 13-mile stretch between Hartlepool and Seaham to serve Peterlee. The long-standing campaign to delay the departure of the last train south from Sunderland (21.05) so that students at the university can use it (classes finish at 21.00) hinges on the revised ECML timetable. When this is decided, Northern Rail may be able to adjust its local timetable.

### ■ ■ A community rail partnership gets on the bus

Coastliners have begun to discuss with the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit the formation of a Middlesbrough partnership which will include bus as well as rail operators. The aim will be to encourage reliable bus connections at stations, in place of the present haphazard arrangements.

### ■ ■ Bidders line up for Tyne and Wear Metro contract

The nine bids for the contract to operate the Tyne and Wear Metro system have been reduced to four: DB Region Tyne & Wear Ltd, MTR Corporation Ltd, Nexus (an in-house bid) and Serco-Ned Railways Metro Ltd. The preferred bidder will be named in November. Nexus will continue to own the infrastructure, stations and trains, set fares and specify the service to be run, including frequency and first and last trains. The contract will start in 2010 and run for seven to nine years.

## Paris? Do you mean Paisley?

By Trevor Garrod  
trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

It should be easy to buy a ticket to Paris now, with some 10 train operating companies offering through ticketing from about 100 stations.

This facility has been gradually developed since the diversion of Eurostar services into St Pancras International in November 2007.

The Railfuture international committee therefore undertook a Mystery Shopper exercise.

Members of the committee, and others, checked during December and early January how well train operators were promoting Eurostar.

We visited the websites of 18 train operators to see if it was possible to book a ticket, or at least find a link to a booking facility, and how many clicks were involved.

Then we looked at the train operators' publicity, to check if Eurostar services were mentioned.

Members then phoned the operator to find out information about connections and fares from their local station to Paris. Finally, it was necessary to check if the operating company offered a "London International" or "London CIV" ticket, which would include the Underground fare to St Pancras and offer some safeguards if a connection

was missed. Our team of members sent in responses from and about train operators which were being analysed by Trevor Garrod. A report was being produced in February.

Please send an SAE to Trevor at 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ, if you would like a copy.

Meanwhile, here is a sample of some of our members' findings:

*"This TOC website has no information for anywhere outside its area, let alone Paris."*

**"It took ten clicks to purchase a Eurostar ticket and the information is in the Leisure section."**

*"When I input 'Paris' the website merely suggested possible alternatives, such as Paisley, Penistone, Pontarddulais and Princes Risborough. Clearly not Euro-friendly."*

**"The TOC's phone service transfers you to National Rail Enquiries who in turn give you the phone number for Eurostar."**

*"The ticket clerk seemed to be just about aware of the existence of the London International tickets."*

**"The TOC's number was always engaged or on answerphone."**

We hope some train operators will take note of our findings and make improvements when they receive our report.

## Celebrations on rescued rail line

By Trevor Garrod

The East Suffolk line from Ipswich to Lowestoft will be 150 years old on 1 June and the East Suffolk Travellers' Association is organising events to mark the anniversary. There would be no anniversary to celebrate if local people (including members of Railfuture) had not fought the proposed closure of the line in 1965. ESTA was formed as a result of this campaign.

A series of exhibitions is being mounted by ESTA at Saxmundham Museum (16 May to 13 June), Beccles and Woodbridge Libraries (25 May to 5 June) and Halesworth library (8-20 June). The exhibitions

will focus on the history of the line, the campaign to save it, its present operation and future prospects.

On Saturday 30 May, there will be a celebration lunch at the Bell Hotel, Saxmundham, followed at 14.00 by a public meeting and ESTA annual general meeting at the adjacent Market Hall.

A quiz linked to the East Suffolk line station-to-station walks is also in preparation. Full details of the anniversary events will be on the ESTA website [www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk](http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk) or available on a leaflet from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ

## You can win with Railfuture lottery

Why not join the growing Railfuture Lottery – the more entrants, the higher the prizes!

There are currently six prizes each month and half of the money raised is returned in prizes while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds to help our campaigns.

Help us and help yourself by joining the lottery. It costs just £1 per entry per month and you can get more details by writing to

Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND, or email [lottery@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:lottery@railfuture.org.uk).

Recent winners are: December 2008 Roger White, Mark Edgell, David P Riley, A T Hill, Roger Lucas and Roger Blake; January 2009 Hugh Freeman, Ray King, Edward John Partington, John Ward, David Andrew Stocks and P D R and J Gardiner.

## Bikes on trains campaign appeal

Members of Railfuture with an interest in the issue of bikes and trains are invited to join the cycling sub-committee. Ideally we need a member from each branch and/or someone who can keep in contact with each train operator. Please contact Chris Hyomes at 12 Monument Lane, Pontefract WF8 2BE. Email: [chrishyomes@supanet.com](mailto:chrishyomes@supanet.com)