

## North East

By Peter Kenyon peterkenyon@yahoo.com

### Anglo-Scottish co-operation

The activities and aspirations of Rail Action Group East Scotland (RAGES) were explained to branch members in September by Alison Cosgrove and Tom Thorburn. Life has been different in Scotland with its single franchise and national government. Railfuture North East shares the group's concerns over East Coast main line and CrossCountry services together with stopping trains north of Newcastle.

### Making the case for investment in rail

Despite uncertainties resulting from the national spending review and attitudes to transport policy of the Department for Transport under the Coalition Government, the branch continues to prepare and submit documents and evidence. The drafting skills of committee member and Tyne Valley line activist Malcolm Chainey helped in preparing the Railfuture national submission to the DfT consultation in October on reforming rail franchising. The branch has also prepared its response to the Network Rail consultation on the East Coast main line 2016 capacity review. The future reopening of the Leamside line looks increasingly relevant. The Network Rail invitation to comment on its Northern route utilisation strategy is also engaging attention. Delays in the production of the promised draft of the East Coast weekday and weekend timetable have produced further frustration for all concerned.

### Steam service to Stanhope

A special steam excursion organised by the Railway Touring Company saw a 10-coach 8F locomotive-hauled train from Newcastle to Ashington returning southwards to Darlington, then on to Bishop Auckland and Stanhope. The train was full. The community service trains from Bishop Auckland to Stanhope carried almost 18,000 passengers in the summer, a survey confirming that most of these were tourists. Since then numbers have dropped and local traffic is sparse. Better signs and publicity might improve winter patronage by local people. In time it is intended to bring the Bishop Auckland termini of the Weardale Railway and Northern trains closer together. At present the walk between the two is a disincentive to would-be travellers in bad weather.

### Coastal campaign wins more trains

Thanks to persistence on their part and cooperation by Northern Rail, Coastliners look forward to extra Sunday services to and from the MetroCentre, made possible by the extension of two existing Darlington-Hartlepool workings. At long last, the struggle for later trains to cater for evening-class traffic from Sunderland and Teesside universities will result, on weekdays, in a 21.18 from Newcastle to Middlesbrough, and a 21.01 from Middlesbrough to Newcastle, with onward connections. In addition Grand Central has been able to accelerate its first Monday to Friday train from King's Cross, which resumed its 08.04 departure at the end of September. The operator will be adding a fourth Sunday train each way by May. [www.necoastliners.com/](http://www.necoastliners.com/)

### Log on for a better public transport experience

Local transport minister Norman Baker, pictured near right, visited Darlington in October to launch a web-based service making it easier to use public transport. He said: "The Government is committed to getting more people using public transport." Jonathan Spruce (pictured right) of Tees Valley Unlimited said the Connect Tees Valley website has been extensively upgraded. Passengers can create a personal profile containing favourite journeys and stations. More info: [www.connectteesvalley.com](http://www.connectteesvalley.com)



# Bringing new life to old railways

I had the privilege of presenting the annual Community Rail Awards in September.

I was impressed by the value and diversity of the work now being tackled by the movement led by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.

In this issue, I highlight just a few of the winners who have helped bring new life to local railways.

Many of the awards were presented to people who had made a special contribution to community railways. But the value of the projects was also recognised.

In 14 categories, 77 schemes were shortlisted, so there are plenty of good ideas out there.

Overall winner was First Great Western and its four community rail partnerships which have had a very successful year, both in terms of winning awards and attracting more passengers.

### Young people

Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership won the award for involving young people with their Vinspired project, now involving over 40 students from the University of Plymouth, who, despite their disabilities, have been able to carry out a number of landscaping, gardening and



**PARTY TIME:** Winners celebrate at the Community Rail awards organised by ACoRP

decorating projects at stations around Plymouth.

Sevenside CRP won the public art award for murals at Redland and Clifton Down stations, both carried out by local schools.

### Adopted stations

Sevenside also scooped the station environment award for the garden centre at Stapleton Road station in Bristol. Not only has this improved the station environment, but has produced a dramatic reduction in crime figures at this inner city station.

A similar community project at Patchway station has seen ridership figures there rise by 50%, and has been followed up with the achievement of secure station accreditation. The newly formed Friends of Wemyss Bay

**COMMUNITY RAIL**  
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station won the award for the best station adoption group.

Friends of Poulton le Fylde won the best station garden award, while colleagues from Lancashire County Council won an award for Ormskirk station development.

### Passenger awards

It was back to Devon and Cornwall for the integrated transport award for the summer bus link between Gunnislake and the Tamar Valley Mining Heritage Project at Morwellham Quay. They also won the award for the best marketing publication with a brilliant series of leaflets for days out by train.

Congratulations are due to Wrexham & Shropshire whose train buffet was voted best retail outlet, and to Southern Railway whose priority seat card scheme won the "passengers matter" award from the Department for Transport.

### Other developments

The community stations initiative has notched up a couple of recent successes with the opening of a micro art gallery at Worcester Foregate Street in premises formerly

occupied by the Gents lavatory! The initiative was supported by the Arts Council, the Railway Heritage Trust, as well as London Midland, Network Rail and ACoRP itself.

Two stations down the line, at Great Malvern, the Whistlestop Stores has opened, where craft items are produced and sold by people with learning difficulties with support from council staff.

### Guide

Copies of the popular *Scenic Britain by Train* guide for 2010-11 are still available from ACoRP or can be downloaded from their website ([www.acorp.uk.com](http://www.acorp.uk.com)).

The attractions of each community rail line, as well as other scenic routes and some heritage railways are listed, and it is great for planning days out or weekend breaks.

A handy pocket version of the guide, packed with useful information and pictures, can be obtained by sending a stamped and addressed A5 envelope to ACoRP at Rail & River Centre, Canal Side, Civic Hall, 15A New Road, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield, HD7 5AB.



**AWARD-WINNING ART:** Clifton Down station, for Bristol Zoo

Picture: SEVENSIDe COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

Picture: PAUL BIGLAND

## London and South East

By Roger Blake roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

### Marshlink calling

After years of pressure from the Railfuture-affiliated Marsh Link Action Group and the branch's Coastway division, Southern is at last delivering on one of the proposals in their earlier East Coastway consultation, otherwise withdrawn after adverse stakeholder feedback. The December timetable will see some services restored to Three Oaks and Winchelsea stations, with alternate two-hourly stops in the Monday-Saturday Ashford-Brighton services. The service is still not frequent enough. The extra trains are at least some reward for Winchelsea Station Adoption Group and the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, both members of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships. Marsh Link Action Group: [www.mlag.org.uk](http://www.mlag.org.uk)



### What's under the RUG?

There are 75 rail user groups listed in our branch area of the Railfuture website but over 60 of them have yet to affiliate to Railfuture. There are probably others. If you know of any, please email: [londonsoutheast@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:londonsoutheast@railfuture.org.uk). The branch committee is in the early stages of planning a regional conference in the New Year for London & South East rail user groups, not just for existing affiliates. We need to contact all the others. Our mission is to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users. With rising passenger demand and static or declining resources, rail advocates will need to stand together. There is likely to be a national rail users conference in the Railfuture calendar later in 2011.

### Train company that is a 'beacon of hope'

More than half a million people in Britain are estimated to suffer from an auto-immune disease triggered by gluten which is found in wheat, rye and barley. They need to eat gluten-free food. So it is good to report that the Wrexham & Shropshire Railway which operates from London Marylebone has been recognised in the 2010 Coeliac Awards eating-out category. Coeliac UK said: "We often hear from members who find travelling difficult and choices limited. We were therefore very impressed by the efforts of this company which is committed to having gluten-free options for breakfast, lunch and dinner." The W&SR "should be congratulated and held up as a beacon of hope and a shining example of what can be done". The service and courtesy of the onboard staff was highly commended.

### Coastway trains may face overcrowding

Railfuture members from Coastway division attended Southern's stakeholder forum in Brighton in September, writes Dick Tyler. The December timetable changes were highlighted including an increase to four fast off-peak trains an hour for Brighton-London Victoria services. There are already four Thameslink services, so this gives eight trains an hour between Brighton and London. While this is good for Brighton, and will attract more custom, fears were expressed at the effect on East-West Coastway services. None of the four Victoria services will call at Clapham Junction or Haywards Heath southbound or Haywards Heath northbound. This is bound to put more passengers on the two (only) Coastway services, which divide at Haywards Heath to go east and west, and are already crowded off-peak. Local MP Norman Baker, who is also a transport minister, spoke and was surprisingly optimistic. He announced that a new Sustainable Transport Fund had just been agreed and would fund small projects that local councils and others can bid for.

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