

President: Gerald Egan Vice-President: Alan Whitehouse

Councillor James Lewis Speaks at Branch Meeting

By Mark Parry



Councillor James Lewis – photo by Mark Parry

Many of us will remember James as leading transport concerns across West Yorkshire, more recently as the Chair of the Transport Committee on the Combined Authority. He has been replaced by Councillor Keith Wakefield but is now the Deputy Leader of Leeds City Council. This and other changes formed the main subject of his talk to our branch meeting on 13 June in the Civic Hall in Leeds.

During his time as the lead for West Yorkshire transport there have been key political changes with more decisions being taken locally.

Much of our transport will now be run by Metro, the executive arm of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Rail North, rather than the Department for Transport based in London. These changes are still evolving. James spoke of a possible Yorkshire regional tier rather than a Leeds City region as a future possibility. Then there is the concept of Transport for the North. This started as a partnership of large cities which produced the document “One North” outlining what they hope to achieve. The Government is supportive of this idea but no funding has yet been agreed. Neither is there any firm constitutional structure confirmed. James suspects that Rail North may become a delivery arm of Transport for the North, which will also cover roads, freight and the High Speed 2 and 3 projects and well as the local passenger transport executives.

James has seen significant improvements to the basic requirements listed for the new franchises, for example the replacement of the Pacers. The HS2 project is being reviewed with regard to its connections with the classic network, especially on the siting of stations. The connection between the big cities is vital for our development, with very few commuters currently between Leeds and Manchester. James pointed out the poor Leeds to Birmingham rail service as an example, the two biggest cities outside London.

Recently funding has been devolved for small projects, but the larger projects, such as the South Entrance to Leeds station, Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge new stations needed funding agreed by the Department for Transport. Further devolved funding is on condition of our cities accepting executive mayors to lead them.

Our Next Branch Meeting:
Guest Speaker is to be confirmed
Friends Meeting House
10 St. James Street, Sheffield S1 2EW
Saturday 26 September 2015 13.00 -16.00
See flyer for more details

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In the last issue of the Yorkshire Rail Campaigner I wrote – “So the Conservatives have won. On the 8 May, “Passenger Transport” magazine pointed out the promises the party made leading up to the Election. Such as **freezing commuter fares in real terms** and confirming projects such as **electrification** and **HS2**. Will they do these things?”

One down, two to go. *Mark Parry*

We welcome the newly-elected MPs and hope that they and our existing MPs will continue to press the case for the Trans-Pennine and Midland Main Line electrification schemes to be re-started as soon as possible. There is an urgent need for more capacity and more frequent services on both routes. The diesel units which these schemes (especially the Trans-Pennine scheme) will release are urgently needed to strengthen services on other routes - especially the Calder Valley route. All MPs in the Branch area now receive the Yorkshire Rail Campaigner.

Graham Collett Parliamentary Liaison Officer.

Spotlight on Harrogate Line Rail User Group

by Bill Tymms

As part of our series on Rail User Groups, this quarter we are focussing on the Harrogate Line.

We started our group in 2000 as a result of an article in a Horsforth free paper, written by the Chairman of the Town Council asking for anyone who would be interested in helping to form a group to identify the poor service on the line by “Northern Spirit”.

With the help of Peter Davies (a former Railfuture Chair) and the late Philip Ralph, both Railfuture committee members, and a grant from Horsforth Town Council we started our small group.

Philip managed to get some publicity in the Harrogate Advertiser and as a result we had a letter from a lady from Acomb asking if we could help to get better access at Headingley Station. She had travelled there from York with an elderly relative in a wheel chair and could not use the spiral staircase. This became our first project but in spite of repeat letters and the 2003 Disability Act we still await a development on this cause, after 12 years it keeps getting mentioned at West Yorkshire Combined Authority meetings but nothing comes to fruition.

We lobbied for a number of years to get the early Harrogate to London train to stop at Horsforth which has a large footfall to relieve the pressure on later commuter trains. We were delighted to learn in 2003 this was to happen mainly thanks to West Yorkshire Metro. We were however disappointed when the service started in September it was not being used as expected, it was felt that the then operating company “GNER” had not generally publicised the service. One of our members Susan Barton, also a member of Railfuture, distributed leaflets at Horsforth Station (“saying use it or lose it”) in the early morning peak, and it is now probably one of the busiest trains. We have written to 3 different Train Operating Companies and requested at numerous meetings to get the return service from London to stop at Horsforth with negative replies and excuses why it cannot stop. However it now appears that in 2017 6 extra services will operate and possibly all stop at Horsforth but we won’t hold our breath.

Also in 2003 at a packed meeting in Harrogate we were told that the line would be closed for a month for major work on Bramhope Tunnel. We objected strongly to this and suggested they split the service and run Leeds To Horsforth and Harrogate to Weeton with a bus between Weeton and Horsforth, rather than a full Leeds/Harrogate bus replacement service. Network Rail replied that the Harrogate line to the tunnel was needed for engineering supplies they did however agree to our other suggestion and ran a shuttle from Horsforth to Leeds.

Although we are only a small group the benefits are that it gives access to many rail orientated meetings and a voice on transport issues



The Minsters Rail Campaign has produced an excellent briefing on the reasons to re-introduce the Beverley to York line. The following is a condensed version.

The Minsters Rail Campaign is promoting the reopening of the direct Hull-Beverley-York “Minsters” rail line as a modern railway fit for the 21st century. This will be key to the long-term economic and social future of the East Riding. It will create new travel opportunities and will enhance sustainable development. Without it there will be a direct long-term cost to the local economy. It will also be an alternative link to the rest of the rail network, as suggested in the East Riding of Yorkshire Council’s climate change strategy.

A study by consultants Carl Bro in 2005 commissioned by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council found that the reopening would be feasible, achievable and affordable, and would represent value for money in terms of the Department for Transport’s benefit/cost analysis. Subsequent years have however seen no progress towards reopening the line. (For a brief summary of the main points of the Carl Bro study, see the “Facts and FAQs” page on our website: www.minstersrail.net.)

Why is the Beverley to York rail line needed?

The two main road corridors through the East Riding - A1079 and A166 - are barely adequate to meet current needs. The East Riding Council Local Plan Submission Strategy Document (2014) recognises that the A1079 is already seriously congested at peak times and that “... *the road network cannot be expected to accommodate unconstrained traffic growth*”. Housing development plans for the period up to 2029 will result in more than 7000 new homes being built along the former Beverley to York rail route, adding pressure to this route. The long-term alternative to massive expenditure on road widening is improved public transport.

Bus journeys on the A1079 corridor are slow and at peak times they are caught up in heavy congestion. Rail travel from Hull to the north requires a journey to York. The current rail route between Hull and York via Selby is slow, with irregular and infrequent services, some of which involve changing at Selby. Market Weighton, Pocklington and Stamford Bridge would benefit by having stations on the Minsters line.

The main line to Hull from the west passes along the Humber foreshore, an area at high risk of flooding. The swing bridge at Selby adds vulnerability to this route, as does the bridge at Goole to the line via Doncaster. The reopened Minsters Line would offer an alternative route, ensuring that Hull and the East Riding will not be at future risk of being cut off from the rest of the rail network with disastrous economic consequences.

A future rail service between Hull and York via the Minsters route

The 2005 Carl Bro study found that the reopening of the Beverley to York rail line (closed in 1965) is feasible and that at £239m (2005 figure) the benefit/cost ratio would be favourable. It put forward potential routes round Market Weighton, Pocklington and Stamford Bridge (the original routes through them having been built over many years ago), chosen for sound railway engineering reasons.

The 2005 Carl Bro study indicates that the direct rail link between Hull and York could match the best journey times of 90 years ago (under an hour). It would also allow people in the Western Wolds towns to travel by train to York for an easy connection onto trains to their final destinations.

The 2005 feasibility study by consultants Carl Bro funded by East Riding Council showed that many private car users would switch to a rail service if it was available. Since 2005 conditions on the A1079 have deteriorated considerably, and this response would almost certainly now be higher. A study of Market Weighton in April 2014 by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies showed that better public transport links would be likely to reduce private car use if residents were able to rely on these for work.

Transport needs that would be served by the direct Minsters line

The briefing goes on to point out the potential demand from commuters, students and mentions the hospitals in Cottingham and Hull with their expensive car parking. The retail centres of Hull and York would attract passengers along with those wanting to continue their journeys from York.

East Coast tourism business is valued at £500 million annually. However, the East Riding Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2016 shows "*underdeveloped tourism offer*" as a weakness. Around four million tourists visit York every year, many by rail. Many of these could be encouraged to visit the East Riding towns. If a rail service were available, they would be more likely to travel to the area. Hull's City of Culture status in 2017 will add to its tourism potential. North Sea Ferries bring large numbers of foot and cycle passengers to Hull.

The new investment in manufacturing in Hull by Siemens will add to the pressure on existing routes to the city, both road and rail. Rail freight is increasing but there are limited paths for freight trains. If Hull-York passenger train services use the Minsters route to York via Beverley, this will free up much-needed paths for freight on the main line out of Hull.

The position of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council

The Council was originally very supportive of the reopening of the Beverley to York rail line. It funded the feasibility study by consultants Carl Bro (2005) which identified alternative routes around Market Weighton, Pocklington and Stamford Bridge where the original line has been built over. Safeguarding of the whole route, including the routes needed round the areas built over, was proposed in earlier documents that led up to the 2014 draft East Riding Local Plan.

However, the draft East Riding Local Plan of 2014 does not safeguard the whole route including the alternative routes around the built-over areas. This is because, as it is unlikely that funding will become available for the reopening within the plan period up to 2029, it is not possible for the Council to justify protecting the route.

However, the East Riding Local Plan Submission Strategy Document does contain this commitment: "*the Council recognises the benefit that such a proposal [i.e. the reopening] could bring to the wider area and will work with neighbouring authorities, partners and funding bodies to explore opportunities to promote this course of action*".

A long term aspiration: making it happen

The Minsters Rail Campaign believes that because of the line's wider significance, action towards future reopening should not depend only on the East Riding Council. The Campaign will therefore work with bodies and policy-makers at all levels, seeking support for the long-term reopening and its funding, support for an updated feasibility study with revised costings, and support for the safeguarding of the whole route from any development which will make future reopening more difficult and more expensive.

Friends of Mirfield Railway Station

by Mark Parry

On 11 June the Huddersfield Examiner reported on a campaign wanting to improve facilities at Mirfield Station, especially as passenger numbers have increased. The "Friends of Mirfield Railway Station" are concerned about limited disabled access and a car park that is too small for the demand, leading to parked cars overflowing into the adjacent streets.

Passengers bound for Leeds, Wakefield and London have to negotiate steep steps, although those bound for Huddersfield do have an accessible platform.

The Friends of Mirfield Railway Station, launched themselves in 2014, and have produced a masterplan of what they would like to see. A public meeting was called with James Nutter, of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, for late June. They have also met with Network Rail, Grand Central and Northern Rail along with representatives from Kirklees Council and Mirfield Town Council to investigate what needs to be done. They have the support of the Dewsbury and Mirfield Labour MP, Paula Sherriff and Mirfield's Conservative councillor Marty Bolt.

Friends of Low Moor Station

by Mark Parry

The Friends of Low Moor Station were reported by Bradford's Telegraph and Argus on 23 July, as wanting a Christmas present – their new station.

Completion of Low Moor is expected in spring 2016. However, the Friends want the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to speed things up so they can have it opened for Christmas – that is 50 years after the old station closed. They are not being impatient – the idea of re-opening Low Moor station was raised in 1999! This project has been delayed by problems.

James Vasey is treasurer of the group and chairman of the Bradford Rail Users Forum, the Forum is a member of Railfuture.

Grand Central want to stop their Bradford to London trains at the station. It is hoped that some Manchester trains may stop there in the future too.

Friends of Dronfield Station

Press Release – 28 June 2015

Although the news that the government was ‘pausing’ electrification of the London to Sheffield mainline, Dronfield Station has at last been promised the much needed Customer Information Screens to be installed in November this year. The announcement was made by John O’Grady, Client and Stakeholder Manager for Northern Rail, at the well-attended Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Dronfield Station on Friday 26th June. The meeting also played host to Wayne Kyte, Area Manager from East Midlands Trains, and representatives from the Friends of Dore and Topley Station and from the Hope Valley User Group.

Mr O’Grady gave a fascinating talk about the past, present and future of Northern Rail and explained that when the company won the franchise in 2004, it was expected to run a ‘steady state’ operation with little or no growth anticipated. However due to the subsequent increase in demand for rail travel, and the success of groups like the Friends in campaigning for better services, passenger numbers have doubled, £200 million has been invested by Northern Rail, the train fleet has increased by 20% with new electric trains on some routes, stations have been improved and modernised and there have been significant improvements in both punctuality and in customer satisfaction. He went on to say that as the new franchise was to be awarded from 2016, Northern Rail was determined to build “a Railway the North can be proud of” with better, faster trains, providing services earlier and later during the day, smart ticketing, WiFi, and eventually efficient links with the proposed HS2.

Wayne Kyte added that with the East Midlands franchise being extended for two years, his company was also committed to continue to improve the London to Sheffield route and its other services, with or without the electrification of the mainline.

At the start of the meeting Natascha Engel MP, President of Friends of Dronfield Station, expressed disappointment that the promised electrification of the mainline had been delayed and the negative effect this would have on the government’s proposals for the creation of a ‘Northern Powerhouse’. However she congratulated the Friends on the success they had achieved in bringing a regular train service back to Dronfield, and added that the delay would perhaps give the Friends and other interested bodies in the town the chance to encourage the various funding authorities to give urgent consideration to the well-established need for an extension to the station car park.

Dr Peter Hayward, Chair of Friends of Dronfield Station thanked the speakers and all those who came to the meeting and welcomed the promise of the Customer Information Screens which, the Friends’ surveys had shown, were among a number of improvements demanded by people using Dronfield Station.

Round the Region

By Mark Parry

On 12 May the Ripon Gazette reported on the new Conservative MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, Andrew Jones, saying he will make sure the views of the North will be considered now that he is the **Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Transport**. His boss is of course the Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP who continues his role as Secretary of State for Transport. Andrew Jones used to be a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Department for Transport and he was chair of the Northern Rail Electrification Task Force, which prioritised the Leeds-Harrogate-York line for electrification.

Network Rail announced on 1 June they are to improve the **Hope Valley** railway. To help meet a large forecast in passenger demand they hope to improve the track near Dore and Topley stations and between Bamford and Hathersage stations. The work will allow passenger trains to overtake freight trains. This means there will be 3 instead of 2 Manchester to Sheffield fast trains an hour and the local stopping service will double to an hourly frequency.

The Yorkshire Post reported, on 29 July, that the Chambers of Commerce in Leeds, York and Bradford have asked for a redevelopment of **Leeds City Station** to help with the inexorable increase in passenger numbers but also to include the HS2 high speed trains instead of building a separate HS2 station at New Lane.

According to the York Press on 5 August, the restored **Flying Scotsman** is to travel from Kings Cross to York next February, so launching a season of Scotsmania based at the National Railway Museum.

Councillor Neil Dawson met the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Chair, Keith Wakefield, about the need for disabled access to one platform and extra car parking at **Morley Station**, reported the Yorkshire Evening Post on 8 August.

Rail User Groups affiliated to Railfuture within the Yorkshire Branch

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group	www.avrug.org.uk
Bradford Rail Users' Group	www.bradfordrail.com
Halifax and District Rail Action Group	
Harrogate Line Rail Users' Group	Email: hlrug@live.co.uk
Harrogate Line Supporters' Group	www.harrogatechamber.org/harrogateline.htm
Hope Valley	www.hopevalleyrailway.org.uk
Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association	Email: hpsrua@btinternet.com
Hull and East Riding Rail Users' Association	www.hullrailusers.co.uk
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	www.lasrug.btck.co.uk
Minster Rail Campaign	www.minstersrail.net
Selby and District Rail Users' Group	http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk/useful-links/selby-district-rail-users-group/
Settle-Carlisle Line, Friends of the	www.foscl.org.uk
Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership	www.selrap.org.uk
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: nhrawsons@googlemail.com

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Peter Scott, our technical officer, has retired from our committee because of declining sight. We wish Peter all the best and hope we will still often meet with him. We thank him for his hard work over the years, especially when he was our branch secretary.

This has been the most traumatic period in many years for all those with an interest in the health and expansion of our railway system - whether they are passengers, operators, staff or campaigners.

The election produced a result which surprised most people. In my previous column I said that should the Conservatives win, I hoped Patrick McLaughlin would remain as Transport Secretary. That happened, and two of our Yorkshire MPs have been appointed junior ministers. Robert Goodwill MP for Scarborough has responsibility for high speed rail, whilst the responsibilities of Andrew Jones, MP for Harrogate, include the Northern and Trans-Pennine Express franchises, freight and logistics, local transport, buses, smart ticketing and being the departmental lead regarding the Northern Powerhouse. I am pleased to say that Mr Jones has agreed to speak at the Yorkshire Branch AGM on 23 January.

The period has been dominated by Network Rail admitting its problems, and the consequent 'pausing' of the Trans Pennine and Midland Main Line electrification schemes. To say that people in the North are disappointed would be a serious understatement!

I am enough of an optimistic to believe these genuinely are delays rather than cancellations. Yorkshire and the rest of the north need electrification sooner rather than later. The north has been starved of railway investment by successive governments. So many essentials from service speeds and frequency, to train quality fall well below the standards we should accept in the second decade of the twentieth century. Trans-Pennine electrification is now unlikely to be finished this decade. So when will the recommendations of the Electrification Task Force be implemented? Will key routes such as Hull, the Calder Valley and Harrogate be electrified by the end of Network Rail Control Period 6 (2019-2024)?

The delays in electrification mean that it is more important than ever that the signalling and other line speed improvements planned for routes such as Calder Valley are carried out to schedule, so that these routes can have faster journeys and more trains per hour can be accommodated. The delay also means it is more important than ever that a programme of building new diesel units for the Northern franchise is seen as an absolute priority.

The justification for electrification is the same as the justification for other improvements and expansion. Capacity must be increased. More people need to use trains and those that do should be able to travel in comfort, and on time. Railway expansion is essential both economically and environmentally. But it appears that the Treasury is only interested in the economic benefits.

The Prime Minister has stated this would be the "greenest government ever" - a claim recently repeated by the "fracking minister" Amber Rudd. Yet the Chief Executive Officers of ten major environmental organisations, from the National Trust to the Campaign for Better Transport, found it necessary in July to write to the Prime Minister expressing concern that over the previous three months, ten green policies that could have helped achieve a competitive, energy efficient, low carbon economy have been cancelled or weakened.

It is time for the Prime Minister to follow the lead of President Obama, and announce major policies to ensure the UK exceeds all UN climate change targets. I believe that a modal shift from private to public transport is essential. The future of our planet depends on sensible measures such as this.

Railfuture is also concerned about continuing and drastic cuts to bus services, especially in the shire counties. Buses and trains are key components of public transport. In many areas, they complement each other. Buses are used for the first and/or last part of journeys in which the train is the core component. If people cannot get to or from stations by bus, then one of three things happens. People drive to the station, assuming they can find somewhere to park - something all but impossible at many of our stations. Others decide to drive the whole journey, causing unnecessary emissions, more pressure on congested roads and less income to train operators. Those without cars are faced with an expensive taxi journey - or staying at home. This is disastrous for access to essential services and employment opportunities. It leads to weaker rather than stronger local communities.

Meanwhile, drastic cuts to bus services in rural areas mirrors the folly of the savage train route cuts in the sixties. Significant small towns in Yorkshire, such as Pickering, and in many other shire counties such as Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, have no public transport in the evening. This makes local people dependent on cars. Without a car, people can find it impossible to go further afield for an evening out, or to get home at a reasonable cost from a longer trip.

One of the components of the Chancellor's Emergency Budget is that from 2017, all revenue from vehicle excise duty will be hypothecated for road expenditure. I am not sure whether this will increase the funding available for roads, but if it does, I do hope that the priority will be to increase expenditure on road maintenance and on safety improvements, rather than building or enlarging yet more trunk roads and motorways. Personally, I would prefer that the hypothecation was to all forms of transport expenditure so that the environmentally friendly railway system can receive much greater levels of upgrading and expansion than is currently planned.

The announcement as to which bidder has won the Trans-Pennine Express contract is expected at the end of September, and that for the Northern Rail contract at the end of December. We await these announcements with great interest and hope that the successful bidders for both franchises have included significant enhancements beyond the basic franchise specification. Yorkshire and the rest of the north need these.

Membership News:

Paul Colbeck – Membership Secretary

Please welcome new and returning members: Mr David Walsh of Skipton, Mr David Dodd of Barnsley, Mr John Bibby of York, Mrs Karen Sewell of Knaresborough and Mr Kevin Swift of Wakefield.

Interested in Joining Railfuture for just £18 a year?

You would receive the national magazines as well as this Yorkshire Rail Campaigner and meet like-minded people at our meetings.

You can find out more and join by clicking on <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> or by contacting our membership secretary Paul Colbeck, 14 St Giles Way, Copmanthorpe York YO23 3XT, Paul.colbeck@railfuture.org.uk

If you join online please email Paul to let him know.

Our next issue (**Yorkshire Rail Campaigner 31**) will be out in December 2015. If you would like to have your news included please email material, news and feedback to: Mark.Parry61@Virginmedia.com to arrive by **Saturday 7 November 2015**. Alternatively call or text 07941 642349.

Would you like your Yorkshire Rail Campaigner sent by email? It would save us money and you can enlarge it on your screen to read it more easily. You can always revert back to the post if you decide you don't like it.

Diary

- **26 September 2015:** Yorkshire Branch meeting in Sheffield Qaker Meeting House from 13:00 to 16:00 hours. See flyer for more details.
- **28 September 2015:** Campaign for Better Transport Rail Group: held in the Grove Pub in Leeds, next to Bridgewater Place at 19:30.
- **23–25 October 2015:** Revolving Words Festival of Railway Literature Bedale
www.revolvingwords.com/#!programme/c1cpi
- **7 November 2015:** Railfuture autumn conference and Rail User Group awards at the Mecure Bristol Holland House Hotel, Redcliff Hill, Bristol BS1 6SQ, 10:45 to 17:00. Theme: Rail Resurgence in the West of England. The conference fee is £30, but there's an early bird discount for members booking before 31 Aug 2015.
- **23 January 2016:** Yorkshire Branch Annual General Meeting – Cedar Court Hotel, Harrogate. Speaker will be Andrew Jones MP.

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