

# Rail North West



*A Class 331 on the test track in Velim, Czech Republic. Photo courtesy Northern.*

## Delays to New Trains, Services and Timetable

Following on from summer timetable chaos on both Northern and Trans – Pennine services, the Department for Transport stopped all (bar a very few) of the original planned service enhancements and changes due in the December 2018 timetable change on both franchises.

Many of these were those promised enhancements to services that were part of the franchise commitments made when the franchises were renewed in April 2016 and were

expected to come into operation with the December timetable change.

After the summer timetable change in May, Northern in particular weren't able to run a number of services partly because the Manchester to Preston line electrification was not finished and also because other electrification projects elsewhere weren't completed on time meant that stock meant to be heading to Northern for service enhancements, didn't arrive. /cont

Trans – Pennine also suffered from issues with pathing of new services via the Ordsall Chord, where presentation of trains at the right time is critical to the operation. One change that was allowed in the December timetable was where TPE added another unit to the roster of train diagrams such that what was a tight turn round at Manchester Airport on long distance services (late running Middlesbrough – Manchester Airport services were frequently turned round early at Manchester Victoria) was

changed into nearer 40 minutes, leaving much longer recovery time for late running services.

The delivery into service of new trains to both train operators' fleets is also running late, with Northern not now expecting squadron service for either its new class 195 DMU's or 331 EMU's until May 2019, whilst TPE's Nova 3 train fleet, initially expected with the December 2018 timetable change, is on a similar delay.

## No Halton Curve Service Either

*Mark Warren Chair of North Cheshire Rail User Group (NCRUG) writes in their latest newsletter:* The most significant recent news over the summer is the extremely disappointing announcement by Transport for Wales (TfW) that the Halton Curve services won't now commence until May 2019 to coincide with the phasing of a new timetable.

The lack of rolling stock has been cited as the cause of the delay. This problem, which wasn't unforeseen, isn't unique to just our area or TfW but is also an issue with Northern Rail and the broader industry.

Initially the plan was for the Halton Curve route to be served by Class 150 'Sprinter' units formed of 2-cars giving an approximate capacity of 280. NCRUG does not expect the capacity to be adequate at peak times however we note that TfW, who take over the Wales and Borders franchise in October have an ambitious program of rolling stock procurement which will give additional network capabilities above those

currently. NCRUG looks forward to the future connectivity improvements but lament the fact that a full year will transpire from completion of the HC engineering works to the first scheduled service.

In terms of the Halton Curve timetabling, the proposals submitted to the Office of Rail Regulation were for a service leaving Chester at 6.17am, running hourly, and a final service leaving Lime St at 23.16. NCRUG believes the early morning service fails to meet the need of connecting with the first wave of departures from LJLA so will be lobbying for an additional very early morning service to cater for this.

There has been no official announcement on fares yet although the group are putting pressure on the operator to ensure fares are broadly in line with the current Merseyrail fares from Chester to Liverpool so the route is seen as a truly competitive alternative to the car and associated costs such as bridge tolls.

Beyond the Halton Curve, NCRUG continues to lobby Merseyrail to step in and provide an effective rail service on the Ellesmere Port-Helsby line. This ongoing campaign will ramp up as Merseyrail take delivery of new rolling stock that has the capability to extend beyond the limits of 3rd rail electrification (Ellesmere Port).

Locally, the potential to connect with the places of employment and education on this route with a frequent rail service is understood, but additionally the opportunity to have the additional (under-utilised) car-parking resources at stops along the route help relieve the communities of Helsby and Frodsham of town centre congestion and parking pressures must be considered. It is the long-term aspiration of NCRUG to see a frequent Ellesmere Port-Helsby service effectively complete a regular 'rail ring' around the Mersey Estuary connecting Frodsham and Helsby with the economies of both the Liverpool city region and the Wirral.

More locally, news from Helsby is the footbridge refurbishment should have been completed in mid-October and in Frodsham CWaC council have

submitted planning application for the demolition of the community landmark that is the Goods Shed in the station car park. This has been the subject of much local comment and something NCRUG takes a keen interest in.

Rail minister Jo Johnson has announced that, while fare dodgers will continue to receive penalties, those with a genuine reason for not having a valid ticket will now be able to challenge a penalty with an independent committee. Once an appeal is received, the clock will stop on the 21-day deadline for the payment of a penalty fare, until the outcome is resolved. The process will also give greater consideration to circumstances of how and why the penalty was issued to ensure people are not unfairly penalised.

There are questions as to what those with concessionary passes do when the wish to travel beyond the boundary, if the TVM at their starting station does not issue tickets from a different starting point, would buying the extension on the train fall foul of the penalty fare regime? It's thought not if bought within the boundary.

## Age of the Train

The Furness Line Action Group noted in their latest Newsletter that despite claims to the contrary by the Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling, Northern's fleet will not be "replaced by newer and more reliable trains" even after new trains arrive next year.

On 11th October in his reply to Luciana Berger, Labour (Coop) MP for Liverpool Wavertree, Secretary of State for

Transport Chris Grayling said "actually what we will do is replace every train with a newer and more reliable train.

We will get rid of all the old Pacer trains..."

The Secretary of State was being somewhat economical with the truth. All the old Pacer trains are scheduled /cont to be removed from Northern before

2020, but every train will not be replaced by “newer and more reliable” trains.

Withdrawal of the Pacers started in September. Before that Northern had, according to their own figures, 158 Class 142 Pacers and 56 Class 144 Pacers, a total of 214 vehicles.

The new DMU fleet of CAF vehicles will consist of 25 2-car units and 30 3-car units, a total of 140 vehicles. That is 74 fewer units than the Pacer vehicles they are supposed to replace. Northern are also due to lose 18 Class 153 single-car Sprinter units, leaving a total shortfall of 92 vehicles.

This difference will be made up of diesel units cascaded from other Train Operating Companies. Northern's own figures show that the following will be cascaded: - 48 Class 170 vehicles built 2004-05; 16 Class 158 vehicles built

1989-93; 10 Class 156 vehicles built 1987-89; 46 Class 150 vehicles built 1985-87.

This is 120 vehicles in total, almost half of which are as old as the Pacers they are replacing!

According to their own information, by 2020 the Northern fleet should total 572 vehicles, 384 (67%) of which will be at least 30 years old. Of the remaining 33%, only 24% will be new; the rest will be at least 16 years old.

A comparison with other Train Operating companies around the country shows Northern currently have a higher proportion of diesel units over 30 years old (96.7%) than anyone but East Midland Trains (100%). In fact, only Great Western (22%), East Anglia (36%) and Wales & Borders (61%) have any appreciable quantities.

## **From TP upgrade to rolling programme: The Charter writes to Mr Grayling.**

The Electric Railway Charter, which is a campaign group whose aim is to revive electrification plans, has written to the Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling regarding the Trans Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU).

The Government have not yet announced the scope and options of the Trans Pennine route upgrade (TRU) on the line through Huddersfield, but work is supposed to start in a few months' time, so hopefully announcements will come soon,

However recent media reports suggest the Government may be about to limit the scope of TRU, with only about two thirds of the route electrified, with Stalybridge – Huddersfield left unwired.

But that section, crossing the Pennines with gradients requiring high performance to maintain good timings, could be the very section that would benefit most from modern electric traction. Bi-mode electro-diesel trains carrying extra weight of engines are unlikely ever to match the acceleration and hill-climbing of pure electrics, and they will continue to emit pollutants that damage local air quality and add to global warming.

The Group's view (supported by Railfuture) is that North of England needs full electrification right through from York to Manchester, with re-instatement of lost 4 track sections between Huddersfield and Mirfield/Ravensthorpe to get the most benefit.

This is seen as vital if the Calder Valley service via Brighouse towards both Leeds and Huddersfield is to be improved. The physical capacity to be gained by additional tracks can not be replicated in "virtual" form by digital signalling.

The Charter is not dogmatic about electrifying every single metre or even kilometre of route. Gaps through tunnels and other structures that are a challenge to electrify can be bridged by trains using modest amounts of electrical battery storage (being planned for the South Wales

"Valleys" lines). It is more efficient in energy terms – and better economics – than wasteful diesel bi-mode trains that have to use more energy to accelerate more mass.

The Charter says to Mr Grayling, diesels and diesel-bimode trains are just bad business and also calls upon the Government to re-instate plans for a rolling programme of electrification first recommended nearly 4 years ago by the Northern Electrification Task Force, which included the Calder Valley line as one of the top ranked schemes.

## Northern's recovery plan stumbles

Hopes that most of Northern's rail services would be reinstated in October were dashed. Cancellations and delays continued on the Kirkby and Ormskirk lines, and on Blackburn-Southport services. The Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association is worried that Northern and Transport for the North are not getting their acts together.

Tuesday 2nd October was a re-run of the meltdown that occurred in May. On the Southport line, the first Manchester Victoria service was cancelled and the 07.17 to Manchester Piccadilly was reduced to two cars, with standing passengers at Burscough and no one able to board from Appley Bridge onwards. The evening peak was no better, with the 17.19, the busiest service from Piccadilly, formed of a two-car Pacer, so that no one was able to board at Deansgate and beyond. The reasons given for delays and cancellations are "ongoing problems of driver and train shortages."

OPSTA's chair Alan Fantom predicts continuing problems with Northern services and he is worried that TfN's

assessment of the situation is at odds with the still frequent cancellations, station skipping and lengthy delays. He is worried by the implication that two-car trains are accepted as the norm. He questions what TfN agreed with Northern, speculates about the management of the franchise and believes Northern did not have adequate resources in October. Northern announced that it was expecting a cascade of diesel trains from Scotland – but not until December. More class 769 Flex bi-mode units are expected – but not until January.

## Wrexham – Bidston - New Trains & Double Services

*John Allcock, Chairman of Wrexham – Bidston Rail Users Association (WBRUA) reports in their latest newsletter.* On 14 October, The Wales and Borders Franchise transferred from ATW to Keolis Amey under the auspices of Transport for Wales (TfW). I am pleased to report that some of the changes proposed by the WBRUA have been included in the new franchise including class 230 trains from 2019,

and a two trains per hour (2tph) service from 2021.

Unfortunately, when TfW announced details of the franchise in June, it identified that 2tph would involve a limited stop service without identifying the stations it would miss. The WBRUA believes that missing any station will isolate the community it serves, and, as there are no obvious stations to miss from the station usage figures, has provided objective evidence which demonstrates class 230s can operate a robust all stations service.

The WBRUA's view is that it should be possible to have an all stations 2tph service including Deeside Parkway and

this could be facilitated through reducing the end to end journey time. Class 230 trains, which the franchise will use, will out-accelerate the existing class 150 and this, together with modest line speed improvements, should mean an end-to-end journey time sufficiently under an hour to allow for turn-rounds and some recovery time.

WBRUA was also pleased to report significant progress for stations on the Wrexham-Bidston line. The WBRUA's proposal for Deeside Parkway is now being actively developed by the Welsh Government, Flintshire County Council and NR. If sufficient finance can be secured, Deeside Parkway could open as early as 2021!

## SHRUG meet with Transport Secretary



Members of Greenfield Station Rail Action Group, SHRUG and others meet with the Transport Secretary. Photo courtesy Robert Walker

The Stalybridge – Huddersfield Rail User Group (and others) met with the Secretary of State for Transport on December 5<sup>th</sup> in London with the aim of airing their views on the timetable changes that have severely affected services on their line since May 2018. They also met with the Transport Minister Andrew Jones and separately met with

the Shadow Transport Secretary, Andy McDonald.

They informed the Secretary of State first hand of the effect that the poor service was having on people's lives and challenged him to take strong action to rectify the situation.

The meeting was also attended by Debbie Abrahams MP for Saddleworth,

Jonathon Reynolds MP for Mossley, Cllrs Rob Walker & Donna Bellamy (Colne Valley) and Martyn Bolt (Mirfield), Chris Roberts of Rail North Partnership, and had been arranged by Thelma Walker MP for Colne Valley.

When the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, claimed that a recent review of the timetable chaos since May 2018 had shown that services had improved there were looks of disbelief on the faces of the Rail User Group representatives around the table.

Local Rail User Group representatives challenged Mr Grayling and gave examples of how bad the local train services have been since the May 2018 timetable change:

- out of 2611 stations nationally, Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite are in the bottom 10 ranking of stations for service reliability, with Mossley and Slaithwaite in the bottom two places.
- in the 12 weeks to 04/12/18 of trains arriving on time, there were only 8% at Greenfield, Marsden only 9% and Mossley & Slaithwaite only 4%.
- in the 12 weeks to 04/12/18 trains cancelled were: Greenfield 4%, Marsden 4%, Mossley 5% and Slaithwaite 6%. Despite previous promises that when trains were cancelled Special Stop Orders whereby other trains would make

extra stops would be implemented yet this has rarely happened.

- The effect of this poor service on the ability of people to get to and from work, business in general, additional road traffic due to people abandoning rail travel were all hammered home.

- It was also made very clear that some people were considering moving house, having to change jobs, or had been disciplined by employers for lateness.

The Secretary of State for Transport seemed stunned by this evidence.

He stated that it was completely unacceptable on an hourly service for two consecutive services to be cancelled causing a three hour gap.

The lack of disabled access at Marsden and other stations was also discussed.

Chris Grayling also said that the recently announced £3bn. rail investment for the north would help the trans-Pennine route, but he could not say whether the scope of the upgrade would be sufficient to provide two trains per hour and full disabled access at Greenfield, Mossley, Marsden and Slaithwaite.

Chris Grayling promised to arrange for Rail User Group representatives and MPs to meet with Richard George, the Independent Trouble Shooter appointed by the Department for Transport.

### **Future branch meetings.**

After our AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, the next two branch committee meetings, open to members, will be on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2019 which is a joint meeting with the Yorkshire branch and will be at Brian Jackson House, 2 New North Parade Huddersfield, HD1 5JP, then on 8th June at Bromborough. Details of the April meeting will be advised closer to the time, contact the Secretary or Chair for further information.

The June meeting will start around 1300 and is at the Merebrook pub, but for those that want lunch, we will normally be there from 1200.

**Railfuture North West  
 England  
 Annual General Meeting  
 Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019  
 Blackpool Hotel, Conference  
 Centre & Spa  
 North Promenade, Blackpool  
 FY1 2JQ**



Railfuture North West England’s Annual General Meeting will take place in the Blackpool Hotel Conference Centre and Spa as above, meeting in the Neville room.

Members should note that because we have no speaker booked currently and it being likely that the RMT will still be striking, we will run a much-shortened agenda for the day, with a 1230 start, lunch at 1315 for 30 minutes and a finish no later than 1415. If we are able to secure a speaker, we will extend the day by approx. 30 minutes to 1445.

Tea and coffee will be served on arrival and a sandwich lunch is available at £6.95 per head and needs to be pre-booked, we need to have bookings by 16<sup>th</sup> February as we need to confirm numbers before the meeting, please advise Christopher Norton by email, [cjnblackpool@btinternet.com](mailto:cjnblackpool@btinternet.com), or telephone 01253 623338. You can pay on the day to the Treasurer.

**Nomination for Railfuture North West England Branch  
 Committee 2019/20**

Nominations are now invited for the 2019/20 branch committee, these can be made using the form below or via post or email, provided the information requested in the form below is included

Nominee	Proposer	Seconder	Position (if any)	Standing for Officer only Y/N
A.N. Other 1	A.N. Other 2	A.N. Other 3	(e.g. Secretary)	

Please return to Christopher Norton, either by post or email, addresses is 26 Handsworth Road, Blackpool, FY1 2RQ, email [cjnblackpool@btinternet.com](mailto:cjnblackpool@btinternet.com), the closing date is midnight on Sunday February 17th 2019.

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## **Rail User Groups within the North West**

### **area Affiliated to Railfuture**

(for those viewing in pdf format, there are embedded links to most groups websites)

- [Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association](#)
  - [Bolton Rail Users Group](#)
  - [Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group](#)
  - [Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group \(CRUG\)](#)
  - [Friends of Denton Station](#)
  - [Friends of Littleborough Stations \(Lancashire\)](#)
  - [Friends of Reddish South Station](#)
  - [Friends of Rose Hill Station](#)
  - Friends of St Annes Stations email [tonyford19@gmail.com](mailto:tonyford19@gmail.com)
  - [Friends of Settle Carlisle Line](#)
  - [Furness Line Action Group \(FLAG\)](#)
  - [Goyt Valley Rail Users' Association \(Stockport\)](#)
  - [Lakes Line Rail User Group \(LLRUG\)](#)
  - [Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group \(LASRUG\)](#)
  - [Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association \(MCRUA\)](#)
  - [North Cheshire Rail Users' Group \(NCRUG\)](#)
  - [Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers Association \(OPSTA\)](#)
  - [Ribble Valley Rail](#)
  - [Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership \(SELRAP\) \(reopening campaign\)](#)
  - [Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester line \(STORM\)](#)
  - [Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group](#)
  - [Wirral Transport Users' Association \(WTUA\)](#)
  - [Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users Association \(WBRUA\)](#)
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## **Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association**

### **(Incorporating South Fylde Line Users Association)**

**Chairman:** Paul Nettleton  
 8, Balham Avenue,  
 Blackpool,  
 FY4 3QP

**Vice-Chairman:** Malcolm Richardson  
 135, Branstree Road,  
 Blackpool,  
 FY4 4SR,



**Join us; it's only £1/year, £1.50 for family membership.**

**Contact Membership Secretary,  
 "Hamlet" 2B, Meadow Park, Wesham Preston PR4 3DN.**

**Download our online form from:  
<http://www.bafrua.org.uk/> click on "Join Our User Group."**

# LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group  
[www.llmr.co.uk](http://www.llmr.co.uk) [www.lasrug.btck.co.uk](http://www.lasrug.btck.co.uk)

The group was formed in 1989 to support and improve the Lancaster to Skipton railway. This links the towns and cities of West Yorkshire with the city of Lancaster and the seaside resort of Morecambe. It also gives access to the Yorkshire Dales, Forest of Bowland and Furness.

If you would like to help us promote the 'Little North Western' line, please contact our Membership Secretary, Lakeber House, Robin Lane, High Bentham, Lancaster. LA2 7AF.

Membership costs £7-00 annually. You will receive a Newsletter quarterly and we invite a speaker from the Rail Industry to the AGM each September.

## Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group



If you'd like to join a group representing rail users in West Cumbria, and particularly on the Cumbrian Coast line from Carlisle to Barrow, the **Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group** would welcome your membership.

See [www.crug.org.uk](http://www.crug.org.uk) where you will find all the details about us and how to join. It costs £5 for individuals or £10 for organisations.

We can make a difference, and with your help, our voice will be stronger.



### **WIRRAL TRANSPORT USERS ASSOCIATION**

We believe in modern, public transport systems for the Wirral and Merseyside and keep our members up to date with public transport developments

We support the campaign for electrification of the Wrexham Central–Birkenhead–Bidston Line

We support new railway stations at Ledsham, Town Meadow and Deeside industrial Estate

We wish to see more bus/rail and car/rail interchange for the benefit of passengers

We are affiliated to Railfuture, Passenger Focus, Travelwatch North West, Bus users UK & represent Campaign for Better Transport in the area.

We publish a newsletter twice a year and run coach excursions

#### **Why not join us? Join today**

**Annual individual subscription £6.00; Family £8;**

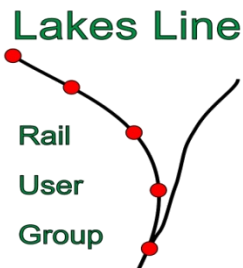
**Corporate Bodies £25.00, representative bodies £12.50**

*Send your subscription to our Membership Secretary today and receive a copy of our latest newsletter*

Brian Grey, 56, Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral, CH61 4US.

# THE LAKES LINE RAIL USER GROUP

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LA9 5DA

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## Railfuture North West Branch Officers

<i>Chairman</i> Trevor Bishop	4 Butterfield Close Cheadle Hulme Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 7AE	trevor.bishop@railfuture.org.uk Tel 0161 485 8426
<i>Vice Chairman &amp; Treasurer</i> Malcolm Conway	58 Greengate Lane, Kenda, Cumbria LA9 5LL.	malcolm.conway@railfuture.org.uk Tel 01539 725995.
<i>Secretary and Freight Officer</i> Mike Breslin	35, Rudston Road Childwall Liverpool L16 4PG	michael.breslin@railfuture.org.uk Tel 0151 737 1061
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Specific further area contacts are:

East Cheshire: Chris Dale: 01625 428379, E-mail: chris-dale@talktalk.net

*Rail North West* is the newsletter of the North West branch of Railfuture. Contributions in the form of articles and letters are welcomed. Please send them to Arthur Thomson at arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk or by post via the chairman as above. Text files e-mailed are particularly welcome. The opinions expressed in *Rail North West* are those of any individual contributors and not necessarily those of Railfuture.

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