

President: Alan Whitehouse: Vice-Presidents: Mike Crowhurst, Alan Williams & Chris Hyomes

Trans-Pennine Upgrade Under Threat!

By Mark Parry



Transpennine Express new rolling stock at Manchester Piccadilly—Photo by Robert Pritchard

With the proposed trans-Pennine high speed line being supported, we feared the upgrade of the existing line had been quietly forgotten.

The following is a joint press release from our branch and HADRAG: The Halifax & District Rail Action Group; SHRUG: Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail Users Group; UCVRSTG: Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group.

CAMPAIGNERS in West Yorkshire are extremely concerned about lack of progress by the Government and Network Rail on infrastructure proposals that should deliver improvements for travellers in the next few years, including the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU). Three rail user groups and the Yorkshire Branch of Railfuture have written to Andrew Haines, Chief Executive of Network Rail, who was recently been quoted as casting doubt on TRU. In a magazine interview (*RAIL* 897, 29 Jan'2020) Haines had said the scope of TRU could depend on the high-speed rail proposal "Northern Powerhouse Rail" (NPR). The campaigners say NPR is decades away and will not benefit stations on regional routes that desperately need investment now. *Continued overleaf...*

Railfuture, Yorkshire & North West Joint Branch Meeting

This meeting has been postponed because of concerns about the Coronavirus.

We will contact members later about alternative arrangements.

The campaigners have also written to Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps MP, and to the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, calling for urgent, overdue projects to go ahead without further delay.

Last August Network Rail opened consultation on proposals to upgrade the railway between Huddersfield and Dewsbury to four tracks (<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/railway-upgrade-plan/key-projects/transpennine-route-upgrade/huddersfield-to-westtown-dewsbury/>) with separate lines for fast expresses and local services and grade separated junctions (flyovers) to reduce conflicts in the timetable. These proposals would not only allow for faster journeys along the TransPennine route via Huddersfield, but also enable:

- A 30-minute (2 trains per hour) service throughout the day at the four busy stations between Huddersfield and Stalybridge which currently only have an hourly service, and better services at local stations between Huddersfield and Leeds/Wakefield.
- Improved services along the linked Calder Valley Line through Brighouse using the extra tracks TRU should provide towards Huddersfield and Leeds. In effect Brighouse at present only has an hourly service (though on two routes). But the station saw high growth in footfall over ten years, and serves a population of significantly more than 20,000, comparable with many stations with a minimum of two trains per hour. A new station planned at Elland (next to Brighouse) will serve a similar population.

Despite last week's prime-ministerial announcement on high speed rail, it is still unclear when NPR will be complete. It seems very unlikely to be before 2035 and probably considerably later. In the meantime, the need for more capacity on classic rail routes is urgent but progress on planned schemes seems to be at a halt.

The campaigners' letters to Haines, Shapps and Sunak ask for TRU and other schemes to go ahead, without being scaled back, leading to much earlier benefits for communities that will not directly benefit from NPR when it comes, and in any case cannot wait that long to have their service improved.

The call is for significantly improving regional connectivity in the next five years, making train travel more attractive for more people as an alternative to congested roads, and part of the transition towards low-pollution, zero-carbon transport.

Along with TRU, the groups are calling for:

- **enhancements around Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road stations (Castlefield corridor)** that were planned more than five years ago, essential to provide additional capacity reducing delays to existing services, and allowing additional services. A new hourly service from Bradford and the Calder Valley Line to Manchester Airport should have started last December but has yet to be delivered. The January 2020 Transport for the North board meeting again called on the government to give this work the go ahead (<https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Item-5-Central-Manchester-Report.pdf>).
- **a rolling programme of electrification across the North**, based on the recommendations of the still-current 2015 Northern Electrification Task Force report (https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/EFT_Report_FINAL_web.pdf), which gave the Calder Valley Line top ranking.

Nina Smith, Chair of Railfuture Yorkshire Branch and the Upper Calder Valley Group said: "The Trans Pennine upgrade and work to improve capacity across central Manchester – including the Castlefield corridor – must be started as a matter of urgency now. They are complementary to the longer-term Northern Powerhouse Rail, which is years away and will not directly benefit local commuters. It is not an 'either-or'. Until these essential works are completed, passengers using local stations on the Leeds to Manchester via Huddersfield route will continue to have a poor service, as will Brighouse passengers. The poor connectivity from the upper Calder Valley to Huddersfield will continue, and the Calder Valley line will not see the promised services to Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport.

Stephen Waring, Chair of HADRAG and joint coordinator of the Electric Railway Charter (www.electriccharter.wordpress.com) said "We need the trans-Pennine Route Upgrade to restore a four track railway into Huddersfield so we can have a better service through Brighouse and the planned new station at Elland. Twenty years ago, Brighouse succeeded in getting its station reopened, but the town is still waiting for a decent service, prevented by track capacity through Huddersfield and Mirfield. The trans-Pennine Route Upgrade opens up massive possibilities but now we are worried the Chief Executive of Network Rail is questioning the amount of 4-tracking. We need that full scheme. "And we need full electrification. It's just about 5 years since the Northern Electrification Task Force effectively proposed a rolling programme of electrification across the North. Strategic routes across the Pennines including our Calder Valley Line need to be wired if we are to create a modern, reliable, zero-carbon transport system. The Electric Railway Charter will keep up the campaign."

Mark Ashmore, Chair of SHRUG said "With the banning of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in 2035/40, and the government's commitment to the UK becoming carbon neutral by 2050 the need for full electrification of the trans-Pennine route from Manchester to Huddersfield, Leeds and York, along with more four-tracking, has never been more necessary."

The Branch Annual General Meeting was addressed by Steve Hopkinson, Northern's Regional Director East, and his deputy, Pete Myers. Northern has suffered much criticism for their unreliable services, but many of us at Railfuture, recognise the issues they have, are not completely within their control. Nonetheless, at the time of the meeting, the future of the franchise was to be decided imminently.

The highlights in 2019 were their 10p ticket sale, the new service to Gainsborough, the Hull to Halifax new service and the launch of the class 195 trains to Lincoln, reported on in the last edition of the Yorkshire Rail Campaigner. But in contrast there were performance problems with only 81% of trains being on time. Their challenges were poor performance, too little capacity and customer relations. Despite there being an extra 500 trains per week and most new trains now being in service, they have capacity issues. There are staffing issues, they have plenty of train crew, but their training on the new trains has been delayed, this delay stems back to the North West electrification project delay.

Their staff survey showed that communications between management and staff have improved, however, it is more difficult to get the railway expertise that they need. Up to 25 January, there had been 3 signals passed at danger in 2020, industry wide these incidents are increasing. The ticket machines are proving difficult to use. Growth is an industry leading 9% for Northern. Steve is keen to handle hidden disabilities appropriately.

In the near future, the York to Scarborough service will start in May 2020, but there will be engineering affecting services at Leeds and Blackpool during the year. Soon the class 195 trains will dominate with class 153s retained and Pacers finally being scrapped by May 2020. Northern has agreed a new deal with the union ASLEF so the Sunday rostering problem in the North West has been resolved. The rail infrastructure is at full capacity and further increases in seats will only come through running longer trains.

Railfuture members' questions raised some issues. Overcrowding on the Leeds to Harrogate evening service was raised and Steve said they would review the level of service. Further capacity through lengthening trains is being considered to enhance capacity. The lack of paths for Northern trains along the Ordsall curve in Manchester is being reviewed by the Department for Transport. The Northern Connect branding has given way while performance priorities are sorted. They are working towards running the same level of service on Sundays as on other days in the week. Northern cannot train drivers fast enough as many leave for other franchises, such as Cross Country, who undertake little training. Concerns were expressed about Northern introducing seat reservations.

Connectivity Crisis ?**by Toby Hart**

I have experience of working in a number of timetabling roles in the rail industry and have been monitoring connectivity between operators in recent years and found that the situation is getting gradually worse for a variety of reasons.

First and foremost, there is no requirement on anyone in the rail industry – operators or Network Rail - to co-ordinate the timetable to ensure that good connections are provided between operators or, once established, maintained through each timetable change.

For connections to be valid and advertised, they have to meet a criterion – a minimum amount of time between any two schedule services - that is set out in the industry's timetable planning rules that are agreed between partners and for which Network Rail is owner and guardian. These minimum times vary from station depending on its size, layout and the number of services that serve each station. At Leeds, for example, the minimum time required is 10 minutes, whereas York, being a slightly smaller hub, the required time is slightly less – 8 minutes. Where there is no specific rule, the default connectional time between services is 5 minutes.

Operators bid for their timetable aspirations twice yearly to Network Rail who then allocate capacity - specific timetable slots - to each operator. Although operator First Trans-Pennine Express make sure there is a reasonable level of connections with other operator's services once the timetable has been finalised between partners, there has been some erosion over the last 2 years when the level of change timetables generally has been greater.

When loss of connectivity has occurred and subsequently been highlighted to operators, the response has been fairly hit and miss: some operators respond selectively – as "LNER" have done – and others – such as Northern – not at all. Unfortunately, on the few occasions when operators do respond positively by restoring connections, those same connections can be lost again with the next timetable change. This has particularly been the case at Leeds and York with "LNER" and Northern services., often as a result of train times being altered by as little as a minute.

Therefore, there is clearly a need for someone within the industry to have some obligation for ensuring that a reasonable level of connections is provided. Whilst it would seem logical for Network Rail to be that body, the fragmented structure and contractual nature of the railway make this difficult.

From studying the wider timetable and talking to certain operators, it is clear that one of the contributory factors to losses that compound the difficulty to coordinate the timetable are alterations that are being made during Network Rail's Timetable process. In particular, there appears to be a failure to take a coordinated approach throughout the day that ensures consistency of departure times from stations and that pathing – or “padding” - time between stations is kept to a minimum.

Nonetheless, I feel that operators could still do more in terms of working together than they are doing. Whilst it is generally acknowledged there has been a lot of timetable changes in recent times, there does appear to be a reduced focus on connections. Although Network Rail's current Chief Executive Officer has recognised the loss of expertise in parts of their organisation, timetable people within the Train Operating community who have experience dating back to the days when we had unified system are also diminishing over time.

I am continuing to monitor the situation and to take up loss of connections and related timetable issues with operators and Network Rail and would be interested to hear from any members of such examples or instances of existing poor connectivity across the Yorkshire region.

Diary

23 Mar 2020 @ 19:30	Action for Yorkshire Transport Rail Group Meeting at “Editor’s Draft” Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4LT. Check their website http://actionforyorkshiretransport.org.uk/ for cancellations.
3 Apr 2020 @ 19:00	Pontefract Civic Society Rail Group, venue unknown.
4 April 2020: 13:00–16:00	Railfuture Yorkshire and North West joint Branch Meeting at the Yorkshire Children’s Centre in Huddersfield. This has been postponed because of the Coronavirus.
18 Apr 2020 @ 14:30	Institute of Mechanical Engineers: <i>Behind the Scenes at the National Railway Museum.</i> National Railway Museum, Leeman Road, York YO26 4XJ. Free.
21 Apr 2020 @ 17:30 for 18:00	Permanent Way Institution: <i>Overhead Traction Electrification: Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Delivered.</i> The Pullman Room, The Cosmopolitan Hotel, 2 Lower Briggate, Leeds LS1 4AE. Free.
27 Apr 2020 @ 19:30	Action for Yorkshire Transport Rail Group Meeting at “Editor’s Draft” Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4LT. Check their website http://actionforyorkshiretransport.org.uk/ for cancellations.
1 May 2020 @ 19:00	Pontefract Civic Society Rail Group, venue unknown.
6 May 2020 @ 16:30 for 18:00	Institute of Mechanical Engineers: <i>Investigating the Sandilands Tram Accident.</i> Room PL001, Dept of Electronics & Physics, York University, Heslington, York YO10 5DD. Free.
11 May 2020 @ 19:00	SELRAP meetings, members and their guests only , Conference Room downstairs, Herriots Hotel, Skipton.
27 June 2020	Railfuture Annual General Meeting. The Priory Rooms, Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF. More details to follow.
Want to advertise your meeting here? Contact Mark Parry: Mark.Parry294@gmail.com 07941 642349.	



The Campaign for Better Transport announced before Christmas that it would no longer support local groups. So, our local west and north Yorkshire group has renamed itself **Action for Yorkshire Transport**. The group can now be contacted by email ActionforYorkshireTransport@gmail.com. It is not affiliated to Railfuture but works closely with the Yorkshire Branch. Their website is: <http://actionforyorkshiretransport.org.uk/>

Over the last two months, Nina has made several appearances on radio and television putting our case across. Meanwhile our Rail User Groups have also been busy.

Leeds-Settle-Carlisle Integrated Transport

The Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Line have produced an excellent report on the transport links to the line and how they can be enhanced. This mainly involves bus services linking to the Line's stations. They suggest a Community Rail Partnership could help create an integrated transport system. Travel options have been lost, in recent years, as rural bus subsidies have been cut. This integrated approach would be a valuable boost for tourism and businesses along this line.

Harrogate to London Service

On 3 December 2019, the Harrogate Line Supporters Group welcomed the introduction of 6 Azuma trains a day between Harrogate and London after 12 years of campaigning.

The Woodhead Line

The Sheffield Star quoted our member, Andrew Oldfield, on 5 January 2020. Transport for the North have said that re-opening the Woodhead Line would be too costly and they intend to use the Hope Valley Line to transport passengers from Sheffield to Manchester in just 40 minutes using diesel trains. Andrew, from the Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users Association, pointed out that the Woodhead Line had been a key electrified link for Sheffield and that the demand for this re-instatement will increase as the Upper Don Valley is developed. Much of the infrastructure, including tunnelling, still exists.

Bradford Developments Delayed by Leeds Platform 0

This story was run by the Bradford Telegraph and Argus on 6 January 2020. Trains from Bradford cannot be lengthened or new services introduced until Leeds Station can cope with them by the building of the new Platform 0. Other improvements will also need to be made such as lengthening platform 3 at Bradford's Forster Square station. Our member, James Vasey, was quoted. He pointed out that the delayed extra capacity is because Network Rail has not yet provided the infrastructure to enable 6 trains an hour leaving Bradford. Other members have commented on the extra-ordinary amount of time needed to build platform 0 at Leeds.

HADRAG Letter to Grant Shapps

The Halifax Group "HADRAG" wrote to Grant Shapps on 14 January 2020, opposing the suggestion to split the Northern Franchise into East and West franchises. As they are on the Calder Valley Line, they would potentially have been greatly affected by this, had it gone ahead. They also asked for the Castlefield Corridor improvements to proceed to unblock the congestion at the Manchester end of the Line; as well as other improvements to improve the reliability of the service.

Flooding

On 18 January 2020, Rail User Express reported that three members from "STORM", the Rochdale Oldham rail user group, meeting with Network Rail and Northern in December. They discussed the flooding at Walsden that had caused cancellations along the Calder Valley Line. Network Rail was to work with the Environment Agency and Calderdale Council. This, of course, was before the flooding in February at Mytholmroyd and Hebden Bridge.

Reinstating the Beeching Cuts

On 27 January 2020, the Yorkshire Post produced an excellent article listing all the possible reinstatements that could be made, following the announcement of the £500 million fund to enable this work. The long list of cases in the article made it clear that this nationwide fund would not even cover all the cases in Yorkshire. Skipton to Colne, Cross Gates to Wetherby, Harrogate to Ripon and Northallerton, Ilkley to Otley and Skipton, York to Beverley, Scarborough to Whitby, and finally, a link to Richmond were all mentioned. Our member, Adrian Morgan was quoted who has long campaigned to get Ripon back on the railway map.

Investment on the Barton Line under Threat

Friends of the Barton Line are concerned about the non-collection of fares between Cleethorpes and Grimsby Town on both the Barton and Manchester services. They suspect it could impact on the passenger figures weakening the case for investment. The Chairman and Secretary have also contacted both the Grimsby and Cleethorpes MPs over the possible loss of improvements to the Barton line as a result of the deferral in transferring the franchise from Northern to East Midlands Railway.

Lack of Capacity on the Airedale Line

Our member, Tim Callow, expressed his concern about the level of service on his line in Bradford's Telegraph and Argos on 29 January 2020.

Our Annual General Meeting was held, for our branch, in Leeds on 25 January. It was agreed that Chris Hyomes should become a Vice President given the length of time he had been a member of the Branch, and his work for Railfuture nationally. A new committee was elected as follows with changes in red:

Chair: Nina Smith was re-elected.

Vice Chair (Parliamentary): Graham Collett was re-elected.

Vice Chair (South Yorkshire): Mike Wrose replaces Chris Hyomes.

Secretary: Stephen Waring was re-elected.

Treasurer: Ian Wood was re-elected.

Membership Secretary: Andrew Dyson was re-elected.

Newsletter Editor: Mark Parry was re-elected.

Freight: Mike Wrose replaces Mike Troke.

Assistant Treasurer: Geoff Wood was re-elected.

Without portfolio: Mark Ashmore and Mike Troke.

David Leigh was appointed as the Auditor.

Happy 150th Birthday Sheffield Station**by Mike Wrose**

A ceremony was held at Sheffield station on 31st January to mark 150 years of Sheffield station.

The City was originally served by a branch from Rotherham - the gradient from Chesterfield would have been too steep for early locomotives. George Stephenson was cautious, and was known for not building railways with gradients steeper than 1 in 130. When building the North Midland Railway, he took the line up the Rother Valley from Chesterfield to Rotherham, bypassing Sheffield, despite representations from Sheffield. This route is now known as the old road. The Sheffield and Rotherham Railway, a branch from Rotherham was opened in 1838 to a terminus at Wicker.

In 1870, the Midland Railway opened the direct line from Chesterfield via Bradway tunnel, linking to the branch from Rotherham – the new road. Sheffield station was on this new line and opened on 1st February 1870. This was unusually late for the main station of an important city.

The station was built over the river Sheaf, as by then the City Centre was developed and there were no other suitable sites for a station. As a result, the station is further from the city centre than one would like, and it is effectively impossible to build new platforms beneath the current station. The plans to run HS2 trains into the station would benefit from being able to introduce lower level platforms.

An introduction was given by new Managing Director, Will Rogers, followed by Peter Kennan, from the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce who is also member of the board of Transport for the North. A spectacular cake was then cut by members of East Midlands Railway staff, see picture - and shared by all. It is good to see that East Midlands Railway recognise the importance of Sheffield, as they can sometimes seem to be very Derby focused.



Photograph by Graham Collett.



Photograph provided by Mike Penney

On Sunday 2nd February the Friends of Dronfield Station (FoDS) and members of the public gathered to mark the 150 years since the station opened in 1870. Two specially commissioned brushed steel plaques were unveiled by local MP Lee Rowley and town mayor Cllr Lilian Deighton. Music was provided by the locally based Genquip Brass Band and the bells of St John's Parish Church were rung.

Dr Peter Hayward, Chair of the FoDS gave a short speech outlining the history of the station since it was opened by the Midlands Railway in 1870 to provide transport for the locally based industries. He went on to explain that following privatisation of the railways the service to Dronfield slowly declined but, after a campaign led by the FoDS, an hourly service was

introduced in 2010. Since then Dronfield Station has gone from strength to strength with annual passenger numbers up to a quarter of a million.

Lee Rowley went on to congratulate all the FoDS volunteers who have devoted their time to improve the rail service to Dronfield and to make the station a welcoming and attractive part of the town. The Anniversary will be continued on Sunday 19th July with a full day of events at the station including a vintage car display, a pop-up bar supported by a local brewery, a photographic display, a miniature railway and a station to station walk.

Chair's Column

by Nina Smith

This is a big news edition! So much has happened since I penned my last column in early December. We now have a Government that, for political reasons, is prioritising the North of England, and a can-do Secretary of State.

Northern Trains Limited

Arriva's loss of the Northern franchise, announced on 29th January, came as no surprise, as it had been forecast for weeks in the media. Although passengers had received a very poor service on several routes since May 2018, I think Arriva was unlucky, in that most of the problems with Northern's services since May 2018 have been the fault of others:

- The Department for Transport themselves, for specifying a franchise dependent on infrastructure improvements that were not in place.
- Network Rail for delays in electrification, both in the South West and the North West, which had knock-on effects both for the rolling stock cascade and for the catastrophic loss of confidence in electrification by the previous Secretary of State, Chris Grayling.
- Successive governments over most of the past 50 years for failing to invest properly in the railways, especially those in the North and other areas of England that are a distance from London.
- The Department for Transport again for failing to fully fund the Castlefield Corridor/Piccadilly station improvements in Manchester; this failure has had a direct effect on a number of Northern services.
- The train builder "CAF" for failing to deliver Northern's new trains on time.
- Network Rail again for their hash-up of the May 2018 timetable.

The responsibility for the Northern network has passed to the Department for Transport owned Directly Operated Trains Limited under a new subsidiary, Northern Trains Limited (NTL) – nationalisation. Is that a good thing? It will be if there are demonstrable improvements in train services. Of course, Northern's services will become more reliable this year as the teething problems with the new CAF class 195/331 units are resolved, the remainder of the CAF order is delivered, and all existing staff have completed their training. That would also have happened under Arriva. The Secretary of State, Grant Shapps, has given NTL one hundred days to come up with an improvement plan. Here's what I think should be in it:

Very Short Term (This Year):

- Sort out reliability – reduce cancellations and late running to an unavoidable minimum.
- Remove inconsistencies in the timetable that disadvantage passengers, especially regarding stations with long gaps between services.
- Finalise negotiations with the trade unions, so that all staff can be rostered over a seven-day week, typically working 4 days on and 3 off. Also, to discuss with the unions, rapid movement towards services on all lines on Boxing Day.
- Bring in-carriage visual information displays in class 150 units up to the standard of refurbished 158s.
- Ensure the windows of carriages are cleaned daily. In this way, there is less chance of the ingrained grime that so spoils window views.
- Lengthen platforms to accommodate longer trains (The Secretary of State has already suggested 30 stations)
- Work with other Train Operating Companies and bus operators to improve connectivity
- Sort-out overcrowding – NTL to bid to acquire suitable multiple units, surplus to other Train Operating Companies requirements, especially class 170 and 185 Diesel trains.
- Sort out overcrowding - place an order for an extra carriage for all 3-car class 195 and 331 units, and for one or two extra carriages for the two car units. One extra carriage per train to have a second lavatory and to be fitted with more obvious litter bins.
- Persuade the Department for Transport to immediately provide funding for an early start on the complete trans-Pennine Route Upgrade, and for the central Manchester corridor and station improvements.

Short Term (1 to 3 Years):

- When rolling stock is available, to make improvements in the timetables aiming to provide a twice hourly service on most routes; and an hourly service on all routes including Leeds-Goole, Sheffield-Pontefract-York, and, Leeds-Settle-Carlisle.
- Persuade the Department for Transport to announce an ongoing programme of electrification in the north of England, starting with the Calder Valley lines, followed by the whole Huddersfield main line from Colton Junction to Manchester as part of the trans-Pennine Upgrade.
- Place orders for proven types of electric trains for the newly electrified routes. (Scotrail's class 385s are the most reliable, and would seem ideal for Northern's longer distance electrified routes).
- Proactively work with the Department for Transport and local transport bodies to secure funding to reopen/open stations in places with sufficient population (e.g. Haxby, Strensall, Elland, Crosshills; to open/reopen lines to bring towns back onto the railway network (e.g. Ashington/Blyth, Fleetwood, Ripon, Wetherby, Market Weighton, Garstang, Skelmersdale, Keswick); and to improve connectivity (e.g. Colne to Skipton)
- Accelerate the "Access for All" programme for stations.

Trans-Pennine Express

Of course, Northern is not the only franchise beset by recent problems. Trans-Pennine Express is another. Like Northern, they have suffered from unreliable new trains. They have also suffered from delays on the Castlefield Corridor. There is pressure for First to lose the Trans Pennine franchise, but the real issue is how many of their recent reliability problems are the fault of their management, and how many are beyond their control? I don't know the answer, but they should only lose the franchise if they deserve to.

High Speed North

This is the new term being used by the Prime Minister for the northern sections of HS2 and for Northern Powerhouse rail (NPR/HS3). The Government's approval of HS2 Phase 1 is most welcome, although as a passionate environmentalist, I really do wish that they had chosen to build it along the M40 corridor, which would have been much less environmentally destructive. You cannot replace ancient woodland! The problem is the chosen running speed of 360kph; the European norm of 300kph (186 mph) should have been quite fast enough, and also would have used less electricity. But it's too late now, the route is a done deal. I also bitterly regret that HS2 does not join up with HS1/Eurostar. Those of us living in the Midlands and North should have easy access to the continental mainland, which would also have the advantage of reducing the number of flights to the near continent.

It seems the Northern route is not, after all, a done deal. That's good. The route through Yorkshire needs re-examining. A route west of Barnsley would enable shared track with a Northern Powerhouse Rail route across Woodhead. That would serve Sheffield – Manchester, as well as Leeds - Manchester. Bradford could be served by a spur. All this needs thought, but I think High Speed UK have already planned it out. Let's hope construction starts sooner rather than later.

Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade

When is the go-ahead going to be announced? The Government has allocated £2.9billion. There is worry that it will be abandoned in favour of Northern Powerhouse Rail but they are not either/or. They are complementary. Not only can the trans-Pennine Upgrade be achieved much quicker (and the starting date needs to be brought forward from 2023 to 2021), but after Northern Powerhouse Rail is in operation, the Huddersfield line can be exclusively the route for semi fast services, and for stoppers, plus freight trains. As and when the trans-Pennine Upgrade is completed, assuming it is four tracked where possible and, ideally fully electrified, it will enable more stopping services (Manchester- Leeds,

Huddersfield-Leeds and Bradford-Huddersfield –Manchester), but also a second Leeds-Brighouse-Manchester service, and room for a direct service from the Upper Calder valley to Huddersfield.

Castlefield Corridor and Piccadilly Station Platforms 15 and 16

The other urgent infrastructure need is to complete the necessary work on the central Manchester corridor to enable a more intensive service on this route so that, for example, Calder Valley trains can run to Oxford Road, Piccadilly and Manchester Airport.

New Rail Minister

As we close for press comes news that a new Minister of State/Rail Minister has been appointed. Andrew Stephenson is the MP for Pendle, and I hope that this means he will now be able to fast track the reopening of the line from Skipton to Colne, and doubling the route (“a long siding”) from Colne to Gannow Junction (for Rose Grove). SELRAP have been campaigning 20 years for this. The “left-behind” boroughs of Pendle and Burnley need this badly, and it will also provide a new cross Pennine route for freight, hopefully to W12 gauge. It should, ideally, be electrified from the start. Let’s hope that this Government really is serious about reversing the worse decisions of Beeching, Marples, Wilson and Castle.

Our next issue (**Yorkshire Rail Campaigner 49**) will be out in late May 2020. Please email photos, news and feedback to: Mark.Parry294@gmail.com to arrive by **Saturday 25 April 2020**. Alternatively, text or call 07941 642349. **Having your Yorkshire Rail Campaigner sent by email saves us time and money. Contact Andrew Dyson to request this.**

Railfuture subscriptions start from £14 a year. See: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> or contact our membership secretary Andrew Dyson, : andrew.dyson@platform5.com. *Let him know if you join online.*

Rail User Groups affiliated to Railfuture within the Yorkshire Branch

Aire Valley Rail Users’ Group	www.avrug.org.uk
Askern Station, Friends of	Contact Graham Moss on graz.moss@sky.com or 07510 555722
Bradford Rail Users’ Group	www.bradfordrail.com
Esk Valley	http://www.eskvalleyrailway.co.uk/evrdc.html
Halifax and District Rail Action Group	www.hadrag.com
Harrogate Line Rail Users’ Group	Email: hlrug@live.co.uk
Harrogate Line Supporters’ Group	www.harrogateline.org
Hope Valley Rail Users’ Group	www.hopevalleyrailway.org.uk
Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users’ Association	Email: hpsrua@btinternet.com
Hull and East Riding Rail Users’ Association	
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users’ Group	www.lasrug.btck.co.uk
Minster Rail Campaign	http://www.minstersrail.com/
Pontefract Civic Society Rail Group	https://en-gb.facebook.com/PontefractRail/
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
Stalybridge to Huddersfield	Email: markashmore@yahoo.com
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: Nina.Smith@railfuture.org.uk
Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership (Yorkshire Coast Wolds Coast Line)	www.yccrp.co.uk

Branch Committee and the small print

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Transpennine Express new rolling stock at Manchester Piccadilly—Photo by Robert Pritchard

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