

Rail North West



Manchester Piccadilly Underground Station as proposed by Weston Williamson, image courtesy Weston Williamson

No Underground Manchester Station in Integrated Rail Plan

The Government published its much-delayed Integrated Rail Plan in late November 2021 and Transport for the North's plans for an integrated HS2/Northern Powerhouse Rail underground station in Manchester with through platforms, (one of the options submitted as part of their statutory advice to Government for the plans for NPR), was severely scaled back to an above ground terminus in the new plans, meaning planned NPR services to/from Leeds will need to reverse and all of the schemes will not be completed until the mid-2040's.

In the original plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail, there were also completely new lines from Liverpool to Leeds/Sheffield via Manchester but these have been cut back to a much more limited section of new route from Warrington to Marsden via central Manchester, while the remainder is on upgraded track, leaving out Bradford from the original route completely.

The HS2 East leg beyond the East Midlands to Leeds is completely scrapped with only a "study" to look at how to get HS2 trains to Leeds, while the

Manchester – Sheffield NPR route is downgraded to the Hope Valley upgrade scheme (which adds an eastbound freight passing loop at Bamford and doubles the single-track section at Dore & Totley) already underway.

There was a backlash from politicians and the public across the north as a whole, in the failure to deliver on previously made promises for new routes and services and in the process, the Department for Transport have taken away Transport for the North's statutory role in the NPR project adding to the feeling that the North has been let down again.

At a board meeting on 24th November, Transport for the North leaders were unanimous in their condemnation of the proposals but went on to suggest options as to how funding for the whole NPR scheme and the eastern leg of HS2 could be restored, looking at local taxation through land value capture as a possible system, (this was one of the funding mechanisms for Crossrail).

Key points raised in the rail press and elsewhere were that the viability of even these plans were questionable, e.g., whether reversing trains in a new Manchester terminus was going to provide the long-term capacity increases needed to get the modal shift for achieving net carbon zero targets, and the Governments use of "example" stations across Europe, where it was stated that reversing termini work successfully, was re-butted by pointing out one of the so called terminal stations (Stuttgart) was currently being rebuilt as through station.

Another point raised repeatedly was that of previous failed promises and one example of this was that as part of the Liverpool – Manchester Chat Moss Route electrification, plans for west facing bay platforms at Manchester Victoria to allow easier reversing of trains (and increase platform capacity) were scrapped in favour of extending the wires to Stalybridge, but the latter scheme was delayed, then dropped, but the bays at Victoria were never reinstated. The electrification to Stalybridge was then transferred to the Trans – Pennine Upgrade scheme, none of which has yet has not been delivered.

There is considerable criticism of the timescales set out in the plans too, with Northern Powerhouse Rail being in the Government's plans since 2014, it now is not expected to be completed until the "early 2040's" a near 30-year timespan.

Even electrification of the short 8 mile section of line from Manchester Victoria to Stalybridge (and the short infill scheme from Guide Bridge to Stalybridge) is not expected to be complete until "some time after mid 2024", having been initially announced as part of the North West triangle electrification schemes in 2009, then transferred to the Trans – Pennine Route electrification scheme a few years later, with that whole project then being "paused" for a few years before being restarted. Even if delivered to the stated timescale, the whole scheme will still have taken 15 years from start to finish.

Manchester Recovery Task Force Consultation

Railfuture branches in the north of England have responded to the further consultation on the proposed timetable of services which was planned to give more reliable services across the “Castlefield” corridor in central Manchester, which is the stretch of track between Deansgate and Manchester Piccadilly station.

Readers may recall that following the introduction of new timetables in May 2018, services suffered a “meltdown” of delays and cancellations which led the Department for Transport to set up a “Manchester Recovery Task Force” consisting of train operators, Network Rail and the Department for Transport, who then published a number of timetable options early in 2021 to reduce the number of services transiting the Castlefield corridor, which was meant to lead to a higher reliability of services. These options were set out for public consultation.

Railfuture branches in the north of England responded to this with a proposal for a modified Option C of those proposals, with the main aim of keeping important services which Railfuture thought would still maintain service reliability and would not have impacted on the aim of reducing the number of trains running along the corridor.

Following the consultation, the Task Force looked through the responses and put forward a modified Option B+ as the choice which they thought best represented public views.

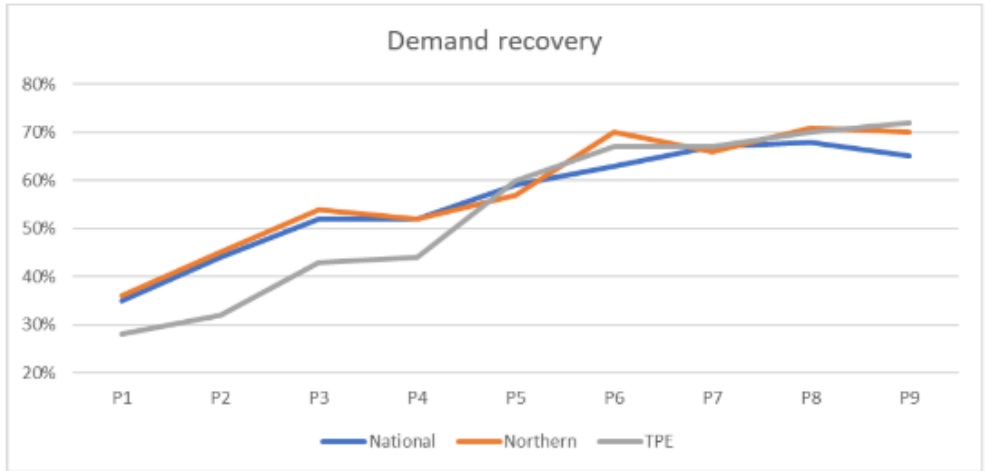
These Option B proposals had the addition of half the Southport – Manchester services running to Manchester Oxford Road instead of Manchester Victoria or Stalybridge.

Railfuture branches saw these proposals as unacceptable as they also saw the ending of all through services on the Stockport – Bolton corridor with the diversion of Blackpool – Hazel Grove services diverted to Manchester Airport and severing of Southport – Alderley Edge services at Manchester Oxford Road as above and separate Alderley Edge – Manchester Piccadilly services created. Railfuture objected to this as it was thought it was a serious deterioration of services and it didn’t reduce the number of services across the Castlefield corridor and would add to the terminal platform capacity needed at Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Oxford Road.

Services from Cleethorpes - Manchester Airport were also diverted to Liverpool under these proposals, removing direct services from Sheffield, Doncaster and beyond, who have no comparable local airport facilities, Railfuture branches have continued to object to these proposals; they set out that these services were “operationally difficult” at Manchester Piccadilly because of the necessary reversal there, but we think that this is overplaying the issue as prior to the introduction of services through the Ordsall chord, services from Manchester Airport to Leeds and the North East all reversed at Piccadilly along with these services so we think there should be capacity for this reversal now the other services run direct.

North of England led return to rail in 2021

The latest figures on rail use obtained by Transport for the North show that, despite infrastructure constraints and reduced levels of service, the North of England has consistently led the return to rail in the second half of 2021.



The chart above shows rail-use by period from 04 April 2021 to 11 December (chart courtesy Transport for the North).

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
National	35%	44%	52%	52%	59%	63%	67%	68%	65%
Northern	36%	45%	54%	52%	57%	70%	66%	71%	70%
TPE	28%	32%	43%	44%	60%	67%	67%	70%	72%

During the Summer (period 5) both Northern and TPE began to overtake the national average figure with the North's leisure sector supporting a sustained recovery into the Autumn (courtesy Transport for the North)

Data provided to Transport for the North's [Rail North Committee](#) by the two main rail operators in the North of England – [Northern](#) and [TransPennine Express](#) (TPE) – confirm that the leisure sector led the charge with weekends often at pre-Covid levels of travel – or sometimes above.

While Northern reported that, up until two weeks ago, it had been seeing revenue at 95% of pre-Covid levels and

demand, for some periods, at 85% of pre-Covid levels, TPE said its leisure services had been operating at 89% of pre-Covid levels. It is the business and commuter figures that have proved more sluggish in terms of the return to rail dragging the overall averages down.

Figures released by the [Department for Transport](#) just before Christmas showed national rail use now at around 60% of pre-Covid levels for the week ending 9

December – significantly below that in the North of England. While recent storms and the Omicron variant of Covid has since depressed demand, both operators have reported to TfN's Rail North Committee that, for months, the North has been bucking the trend with leisure travel – and this pattern had been seen well into the autumn. Even up until Tuesday 14 December, Northern reported that demand was still at 70% of pre-Covid levels

Responding to these findings, Rail North Committee Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson, said: "These figures obtained by TfN show the North is leading the charge on the return to rail, and the Government needs to recognise that now is the time to invest.

"We need more funding for the North of England's railway – not less. If you want to level-up or tackle the climate emergency, it is only made harder if you are cutting investment in the rail network." "There is also a real concern that this reduced December 21 timetable for the North may be seen, by the Government, as the new baseline for timetable planning going forward. But this timetable is a compromise needed to run a railway during a pandemic. It should not be a new normal.

"We want TfN to have influence over what new timetables will look like and to be equal partners in determining what services will look like in the future. This will be a measure of if this Government is serious about devolution in the North."

Future branch meetings.

Members will no doubt be aware that we have been unable to hold regular face-to-face branch committee meetings since the outbreak of corona virus, and in 2020 and 2021, all bar two of our regular branch committee meetings did not go ahead as face-to face meetings.

We are planning to try and resume face to face meetings this year, (that may get over-ridden with the possible re-introduction of restrictions) our first is on 29th January with our AGM on 19th February, venues will be advised on the website or contact the Chair or Secretary.

Further dates/details will be on our website but do please get in touch with your branch committee, (details on the back page) if there are any issues you wish to raise.

Community Rail Awards

North West Community and Rail User Groups were celebrating getting many awards at a hybrid ceremony staged by the Community Rail Network on 9th December 2021.

The **Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail Award** was jointly awarded to: **Friends of Buxton Station** and Southeast Communities Rail Partnership, the former is a volunteer group that has cemented its place at the heart of its community during the pandemic via hugely varied initiatives from arts projects at the station and run digitally, to raising awareness about biodiversity, to improving integrated transport, to supporting local businesses.

The award for **Involving Diverse Groups** was won by **South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership** for their Hate Crime Awareness Project, with second place awarded to **Community Rail Lancashire** for “Bonded Together with Prayer Bead,”

First place for **Community Creative Projects and Station Arts** was **Community Rail Cumbria and Workington Focus Group** for ‘The Rails Which Circled the World’ – Outdoor Art Exhibition at Workington Railway Station while second place went to **Friends of Buxton Station** for “Extinction-threatened Bilberry Bumblebee Legacy Artwork” and **Community Rail Lancashire** got joint third for “Along the Line”

which has transformed the appearance of Ramsgreave and Wilpshire Station,

Best Community Engagement Project was won by **Community Rail Lancashire** for 100 Women, 100 Journeys

Community Rail Lancashire also won third place in the **Influencing Positive Change & Sustainability** award for their Rivington Bus Project which created a partnership to extend an existing Diamond NW bus service to Rivington Country park on Sundays and Bank Holidays during the pandemic which helped get more people visiting the park and helped reduce congestion.

Third place in the **Photo Competition ‘Community Rail in 2020/2021’** was won by **Phil Wallis** for his photo “Making a New Family Home at Morecambe”

Outstanding Volunteer Contribution was won by **Dave Carlisle of Friends of Buxton Station** with **David Wallace** from **Friends of Workington Station** placed third

The Award for **Station Friends and Adopters at the Heart of Communities** went to **Friends of Buxton Station** for “Part of the Community: At the Heart of our Community”

The Community Rail Network details all the work and projects that these awards represent on their website.

<https://communityrail.org.uk/>

Branch Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2021

Please would members note the accounts for our branch in 2021 below (with 2020's accounts shown on the left for reference), members may note these are somewhat different from what would have been normal in previous years primarily because we have not been spending much on room hire because we haven't been meeting face to face because of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The notes are by way of explanation of any issues that may not be clear from the simple numbers

	2020	2021
Income.		
Subvention	450-00	0-00 ¹
Meals	63-60	0-00
Donations	0-00	0-00
Campaigning	<u>110-65</u>	<u>0-00</u>
	624-25	0-00
Expenditure.		
General Administration ²	65-00	77-00
Branch Newsletter	296-27	239-75 ³
Campaigning and lobby	18-35	0-00
Meals	71-55	0-00
AGM meeting	158-00	0-00 ⁴
Travelling	0-00	0-00
Affiliated to TWNW	50-00	0-00
	659-17	316-75
Surplus of income over Expenditure	<u>(34-92)</u>	<u>(316-75)</u>
Current Assets		
Cash in Hand	0-00	324-06
Cash in Bank	<u>640-81</u>	<u>0-00</u>
	640-81	324-06
Accumulated Fund		
Balance at 1 st January	675-73	640-81
Surplus income over Expenditure	<u>(34-92)</u>	<u>(316-75)</u>
Balance at 31 st December	640-81	324-06

Notes

- 1) No subvention received in 2021 due to illness of branch treasurer at key time of submission.
- 2) Room hire for meetings
- 3) Newsletter costs only include one newsletter and 2 lots of postage costs, printing of second newsletter was paid for directly by national accounts and will be deducted from subvention for 2022.
- 4) No AGM was held in 2021 due to Coronavirus pandemic

**Railfuture North West England
 Annual General Meeting
 Saturday 19th February 2022
 Holiday Inn
 The Ringway
 Preston
 PR1 3AU**



Railfuture North West England are still planning to hold our Annual General Meeting at time of publication and if it goes ahead, it will take place in the Holiday Inn Preston, as above, in the Ribblesdale suite (this will be confirmed on the notices in the hotel),

Members should note we are looking to secure a speaker but currently are unable to confirm, so we plan to extend the day to accommodate if necessary. We will have a 1200 start, lunch at 1315 for 30 minutes and a finish no later than 1415. If we are able to secure a speaker, we will still start at 1200 but extend the day to 1500. We will advise by email and on the website.

The outline agenda will be the normal AGM business, we will also have two topics that will no doubt prove talking points, the Government’s recently released Integrated Rail Plan and also the Manchester Recovery Task Force, members are very welcome to bring their views along!

Tea and coffee will be served on arrival and a sandwich lunch including chips and salad is available at £7.95 per head and needs to be pre-booked, we need to have bookings by 12th February as we need to confirm numbers before the meeting, please advise Christopher Norton by email, cjnblackpool@btinternet.com, or telephone 01253 623338 (email preferred). You can pay on the day to the Treasurer.

**Nomination for Railfuture North West England Branch
 Committee 2021/22**

Nominations are now invited for the 2022/23 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, the closing date is midnight on Sunday February 13th 2022.

Please note the email addresses above wont correctly copy from the pdf edition, this is to prevent spam.

Rail User Groups within the North West area

(for those viewing in pdf format, those underlined have embedded links to the group's websites or pages)

- Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association
- Bolton Rail Users Group
- Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group
- Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group (CRUG)
- Friends of Castleton Station
- 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
- 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 (no website currently)
- 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)

Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association

(Incorporating South Fylde Line Users Association)

Chairman; Paul Nettleton
 8, Balham Avenue,
 Blackpool,
 FY4 3QP

Vice – Malcolm Richardson
 Chairman 135, Branstree Road,
 Blackpool,
 FY4 4SR,



Join us, it's only £3/year, £5 for family membership.
 Contact; Membership Secretary, "Hamlet" 2B, Meadow Park,
 Wesham Preston PR4 3DN. Contact through our Facebook page at:
<https://www.facebook.com/Blackpool-Fylde-Rail-Users-Association-1266722540018377/> and click on "Sign Up"

LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group
www.llmr.co.uk 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 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

Formed in 1984 to promote and support Cumbria's only branch line for locals and tourists alike. Travel the lakes line into scenic Lakeland.



Join Today!

Contact: Mr. P Bell 9, Vicars Hill,
Kendal,
Cumbria

Membership: £5.00 Individuals,

£7.00 Family, £13.00 Corporate

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 & 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
<i>Minutes Secretary and Returning Officer</i> Christopher Norton	26 Handsworth Road Blackpool FY1 2RQ	cjnblackpool@btinternet.com 01253 623338

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.

www.railfuture.org.uk

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Newsletter of the North West England Branch of Railfuture