

# Rail North West



Artist's impression of HS2 trains in platform. Graphic courtesy HS2

## HS2 and NPR; Where Now

The cancellation in October by the Government of the last remaining northern leg of HS2 from Birmingham to Crewe and onto Manchester has led many to re-assess priorities, writes *Railfuture North West England* branch Chair Trevor Bishop.

It's true that not all in Railfuture shared the view that HS2 was a necessary expansion of the network and should have been campaigned for, and there were some that suggested that the money would be better spent elsewhere, although such large, planned expenditure is not in the "normal" government spending, and is usually money that is borrowed on the bond markets. This is then paid back over the lifetime of the asset and forms part of the business case such that the benefits of the new line are offset against the costs of repayments and interest on the bonds. We were told that any expenditure

planned to be spent on other schemes would have to have its own business case, though since the Government's original announcement, they seem to have ignored that premise with a succession of announcements.

Railfuture is very disappointed to see that over half of the supposed savings from HS2's northern section being scrapped (£36Billion) will be spent on road schemes, including pothole repairs which at the very least shows the poor state of road maintenance budgets when capital expenditure intended for rail schemes is spent on continuing road maintenance.

The proposals for progressing Northern Powerhouse Rail as a new route now seem to have been left to local authorities to decide, with a budget for the Manchester – Liverpool section of £12 billion but cancelling

the planning powers for the section from Manchester Piccadilly to just beyond Manchester Airport (the section which was planned to share tracks with HS2) along with not having the six extra platforms at Piccadilly, which were for both HS2 and NPR, would severely limit the scope for any boost to capacity in south Manchester.

The Government has since announced some of the funds earmarked for HS2 will be diverted instead to fund £3.9 billion of work for the Trans -Pennine Route Upgrade, and although the government statement was somewhat vague, Rail magazine had managed to find some more detail and that money will include;

- 1) Eliminating bottlenecks east and west of Leeds, Church Fenton and the line between Stalybridge and Huddersfield are mentioned as being improved, though four tracking of the line between Huddersfield and Ravensthorpe (mentioned as part of this funding announcement) is already underway.
- 2) Digital signalling of the entire route which its claimed will allow an increase

in services and 15 additional freight paths. This greater freight capacity is expected to increase intermodal flows between east and west coast ports. The new signalling will also have more bi-directional capacity, increasing the flexibility during disruption.

- 3) Station enhancements and increased depot and stabling facilities.
- 4) Northern's procurement exercise (started in August) for new trains to replace Sprinter DMU's with whatever Bi-modes etc manufacturers could offer, will now be pushed ahead by earlier engagement with manufacturers, though the replacement of only 29 trains are mentioned at this stage, when the original statement stated some 450 new train sets

Transport for the North has welcomed the announcement, which it notes will "lay the foundations for further transformational development from Northern Powerhouse Rail" and should also help in reducing traffic on the M62.



STORM have produced fridge magnets in the old style with the new station name as part of their campaign.

## STORM Wants New Station at Slattocks

Rochdale rail user group STORM (Support The Oldham, Rochdale and Manchester lines) is calling for the opening of a new railway station at Slattocks to serve

thethousands of students and staff who travel to and from Hopwood Hall College's Middleton campus, the present and (/cont.)

future residents of the area and the staff of businesses in Stake Hill Business Park.

The station would become the sixth railway station within the Rochdale borough and is already named within the Transport for Greater Manchester 2040 strategy document and part of the Rochdale Rail Corridor Strategy. Rochdale Borough Council has confirmed that early feasibility work is ongoing for a railway station at Slattocks. A spokesperson added: "We would love to see a railway station at Slattocks and this is part of the council's rail corridor strategy and TfGM's 2040 transport strategy."

The new station would be situated close to the Stake Hill roundabout, near to the A664 (Rochdale Road). This would be between Mills Hill and Castleton stations on the Calder Valley Line which runs from Manchester Victoria via Rochdale to Leeds and Bradford.

STORM chairman Richard Greenwood MBE said, "STORM was formed many years ago to save the Oldham Loop railway line. We were successful in that campaign and later, supported the conversion of the line from 'heavy rail' to Metrolink. We have constantly pressed for better services at all the stations between Moston and Littleborough, as well as improved waiting facilities at these stations.

"STORM was prominent in campaigning for a community rail partnership for the Calder Valley Line, the reopening of the subway at Rochdale Station and the taming of the Miall Street Forest that borders the station. The latter will now become Rochdale Platform Park, a new community hub.

"Both Mills Hill and Smithy Bridge stations were opened in 1985 as 'temporary experimental stations' and have both been huge successes, taking thousands of car journeys off the borough's roads in the last four decades. We are hoping that a station at Slattocks will do the same. A recent STORM survey revealed that there are over 300 cars parked every day at Hopwood Hall College's Middleton campus; over an academic year that means over 100,000 car journeys!"

Richard Greenwood adds, "It has been announced that billions of pounds will now be spent on rail projects in the north of England. A simple station at Slattocks should not prove to be a prohibitive cost."

STORM are hoping to gather the support of local residents, Hopwood Hall College board of governors' members, staff and students and Stake Hill Business Park businesses, as well as local councillors and the local MP. The current renovation of Hopwood Hall will see this historic building become a visitor attraction. Future visitors would then be able to arrive by train or bus.

Stake Hill BID (Business Improvement District) recently posted this on X/ Twitter about STORM's campaign to get a new railway station at Slattocks - "This would be fantastic for the companies and employees on Stakehill and would massively improve the transport links in the area." STORM member Richard Lysons is hoping to meet the Stake Hill BID manager, Alan Johnson, soon and thinks it's fantastic to have their support so early on in their campaign.

***Frustrated with rail travel or want to see better services? Want to do something about it?***

***Join Railfuture's North West Branch Committee and get your views across to industry and government.***

***We are in need of new voices from our members to help in making the case for rail, contact the chair, vice chair or secretary at [northwest@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:northwest@railfuture.org.uk) (combined mailbox) or individually as noted on the back cover of this newsletter. We meet 4/5 times a year in person and use emails etc. to keep up to date the rest of the time. Help us to help all travellers.***

## **Ribble Valley Rail**

The DfT instructed Northern to cancel DalesRail this past summer because of its appalling performance record and improve the service before running it again. But despite Northern agreeing to train more crews, and a promise to look at its operation and revamp, an announcement as to its reintroduction is still awaited.

Working with Community Rail Lancashire, RVR and its CRP, Ribble Valley Borough Council made a Restoring Your Railway bid for a regular service between Clitheroe and Hellifield to re-establish a rail link between Manchester and Lancashire to Skipton, Settle & Carlisle, and North and West Yorkshire. Sponsored by Ribble Valley MP Nigel Evans, it was among the first ten to be accepted, but although DfT

said its business case was valid and acceptable, the scheme could only go ahead with external funding.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement that the money saved by cancelling the HS2 project north of Birmingham would be directed to transport schemes in the North of England, Cllr Stephen Atkinson and Nicola Hopkins (RVBC's Director of Economic Development and Planning) met Transport Minister Huw Merriman's advisor, Nigel Evans MP, and representatives of Lancashire and North Yorkshire CCs to show how re-opening the link could benefit the Ribble Valley and East Lancashire, and support access to the Dales, Manchester and Clitheroe.



Floral displays at St Annes station, photo courtesy Northern

## RHS praise for floral displays at 12 Northern stations across the North West

Twelve railway stations across the North West have been recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) at their prestigious 'Britain in Bloom' awards.

Alderley Edge (Cheshire), Altrincham (Greater Manchester), Croston (Lancashire), Hale (Greater Manchester), Hindley (Greater Manchester), Leyland (Lancashire), Lytham (Lancashire), St Annes on the Sea (Lancashire) and Wilmslow (Cheshire) stations were all recognised as 'Outstanding' by the UK's leading garden charity.

The team at Chorley (Lancashire) was recognised for their display outside the station – which picked up a 'Gold' award in the 'Best Small City' category – while those at Knutsford (Cheshire) and Squires Gate (Lancashire) stations were also recognised with 'Thriving' certifications.

Special recognition went to the team responsible for displays at St Annes on the Sea (Lancashire) station, who picked up a special award for achieving the coveted 'Outstanding' certification for the past five consecutive years.

Craig Harrop, regional director for Northern, said: "All credit to the volunteers across our network that go above and beyond to make the floral displays at our stations truly 'award winning'.

"Their hard work and that of our community teams not only enhances the

aesthetics of our stations but also strengthens community relationships and collaboration.

"This recognition by the RHS is a testament to the power of collective action in addressing local issues and building stronger, united communities."

## **Blackpool Tram Finally Gets Extension to North Station?**

There is a strong rumour that the extension of the Blackpool Tram network to Blackpool North Station from the junction by the North Pier will open on the 15th of March 2024, after a very long wait.

The extension of the tram route has been in progress for six years after Government approval in 2017, and it has suffered considerable delays despite construction starting not long after approval. Although Blackpool

Council purchased the Wilkinsons store (which is on the route) back in 2016, it was not vacated until recently (its understood un-connected with the recent closure of that chain of shops) and with the tram lines in the road almost going up to the old front door of the shop, nothing could be done until it was vacated and the building demolished so that the final section to the terminus could be built.

## **WBRUA welcomes New Timetable**

The WBRUA welcomes the new '45 minute interval' (Monday to Saturday) timetable as an interim measure towards the promised 30 minute interval clock face timetable, having had assurances from Transport for Wales (TfW) management that TfW has both the resources and capability to deliver it.

The '45 minute' frequency sacrifices a clock face timetable in favour of one which will provide more services, but crucially it will allow TfW to lengthen the end-to-end journey time to around 66 minutes and increase turnaround times - this should improve reliability and

provide time for recovery of the timetable should delays occur.

Meanwhile TfW's plans to increase the frequency on the Liverpool – Chester via Halton Curve route to every 45 minutes from the December timetable change, have now been put on hold until the New Year. TfW have stated that following the November storms, some of their new trains suffered wheel damage which will take the whole of December to complete. TfW's press release notes the start of this new timetable is now planned for January 2024, though it does not give an exact date

## Twenty – Four hour Buses and Trams for Manchester?

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is planning to have 24-hour bus and tram services across Manchester, and its urging residents to make use of the recent extension of the tram finish times to 0100 on Fridays and Saturdays to help make the case.

TfGM noted that nearly 360,000 people work late at night in Manchester and local Night Time Economy Advisor Sacha Lord said, “The bar worker finishing at 2am should have just as much ease getting home as the office worker finishing at 5pm.”

### Railfuture North West Branch Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

For members' information, please note the accounts for our branch in 2023 below (with 2022's accounts shown on the left for reference). Members also please note that this year is the first where we have virtual branch account i.e. that the branch has money allocated for us to choose to spend locally but money is held nationally, we simply ask for bills to be paid etc.

#### Income

	2022	2023
	£	£
Opening balance at 1 <sup>st</sup> January	324.06	55.93
Funding from national funds	300.00	800.00
Total	624.06	855.93

#### Expenditure

Newsletter printing and distribution	353.88	350.71
Room hires	214.25	236.00
Grant to Travel Watch North West		50.00
Closing balance at 31st December	55.93	219.22
Total	624.06	855.93

**Railfuture North West England  
Annual General Meeting  
Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2024  
Coal Yard Room (ground floor)  
Irlam Station, Station Road,  
Irlam M44 5ZR,  
0161 222 1923**



Railfuture North West England’s Annual General Meeting for 2024 is at Irlam Station, as above, and is planned to be in the Coal Yard Room,

We are hoping to have a speaker from Network Rail to talk about the renewed Tran-Pennine Route Upgrade, so we plan to extend the day to accommodate if needs be.

If a speaker is confirmed, we will have a 1130 start, lunch at 1230 for 60 minutes with the speaker after lunch and a finish no later than 1530. If there is no speaker, we will keep the same starting timetable but simply finish earlier.

This will be confirmed by email and on the website or by checking with the

Chair, Vice Chair or Secretary, contact on the back page.

The outline agenda will be the normal AGM business to start, we will also have topics that will no doubt prove talking points and do want to hear members thoughts on any issue you wish to raise.

Lunch can be ordered on the day directly from The Station café. The current menu can be found here <https://www.thestationirlam.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Winter-Menu-From-Midday.pdf> but for those that can’t view this, the choices include homemade pies, fish and chips, sandwiches and omelettes.

**Nomination for Railfuture North West England Branch  
Committee 2024/5**

Nominations are now invited for the 2024/5 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	Seconders	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, address is 26 Handsworth Road, Blackpool, FY1 2RQ, email [cjnblackpool@btinternet.com](mailto:cjnblackpool@btinternet.com), the closing date is midnight on Sunday February 11<sup>th</sup> 2024.

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



## Future branch meetings.

Our next branch committee meeting after our AGM is planned to be on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at a venue to be confirmed. This will be at our usual start time of 1300,

The following meeting is planned for Saturday June 8<sup>th</sup> depending on securing a venue. Further dates/details will be on our website but do please get in touch with your branch committee, Chair, Vice Chair or Secretary (details on the back page) to confirm and if there are any issues you wish to raise.



# 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.

## **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](#)
- [Friends of Castleton Station](#)
- [Friends of Denton Station](#)
- [Friends of Eccles Station](#)
- [Friends of Littleborough Stations \(Lancashire\)](#)
- [Friends of Reddish South Station](#)
- [Friends of Rose Hill Station](#)
- Friends of St Annes Stations email [brussell\\_2019@outlook.com](mailto:brussell_2019@outlook.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 \(WBRUA\)](#)

## **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,



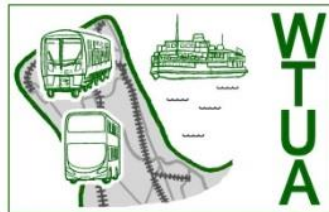
Join us, it's only £3/year, £5 for family membership.

Contact; Membership Secretary, c/o 8, Balham Avenue, Blackpool,  
FY4 3QP. Contact through our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/BAFRUA> and click on "Sign Up"

## **Wirral Transport Users Association**

We believe in modern public transport systems for Wirral, Merseyside and the Chester area. The WTUA has a watching brief over the public transport operations in the Wirral and their connections to the rest of the country. It represents the interests of transport users in the local area and has representation on various transport user groups.



We publish our newsletter once or twice a year. Our AGM includes a talk from an expert on some facet of the transport world. We aim to run coach excursions to heritage railways and other places of transport activity or interest once or twice a year.

For more info, see website- [www.wirraltua.org.uk](http://www.wirraltua.org.uk),  
email [wirraltua@gmail.com](mailto:wirraltua@gmail.com), or phone Brian Grey on 0151 648 3070.

Annual membership- Individual: £8, Couple at same address: £10. Send for an application form to: 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

**PLEASE NOTE** the email addresses below won't correctly copy from the pdf (electronic) edition, this is to prevent spam, you will need to type them in manually.

## 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, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5LL.	malcolm.conway@railfuture.org.uk Tel 01539 725995.
<i>Freight Officer</i> (vacant)		
<i>Secretary and Returning Officer</i> Christopher Norton	26 Handsworth Road Blackpool FY1 2RQ	cjnblackpool@btinternet.com 01253 623338
<i>Media Officer</i> (vacant)		

*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. 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**

Railfuture Limited. Registered in England and Wales No 05011634, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: Edinburgh House, 1-5 Bellevue Road, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 7NP Edinburgh House, (for legal correspondence only).  
All other correspondence to 14 Ghent Field Circle, Thurston, Suffolk IP31 3UP