

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

Number 66: Autumn 2024

Community rail is a big success story across Yorkshire. Here's Bridlington station's Barrow Boy, recently sculpted by local artist [Stephen Carvill](#). Going back 60 or 70 years, barrow boys – and no doubt girls – used to help travellers get their bags and suitcases from train to hotels and boarding houses. The days before wheeled suitcases! The lads and lasses made their own barrows, and could be 5 bob (25p!) better off after an hour or so easing folks journeys. (See also link [Stunning statue of Barrow Boy unveiled at Bridlington Station - Bridlington Echos](#).) Our very own Pete Myers, wearing his chair of Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership "hat", introduced the Mayor of Bridlington, Councillor Rick Arrand, who performed the unveiling. – JSW

Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individuals not of Railfuture or its Yorkshire branch. Notes by editor signed JSW.



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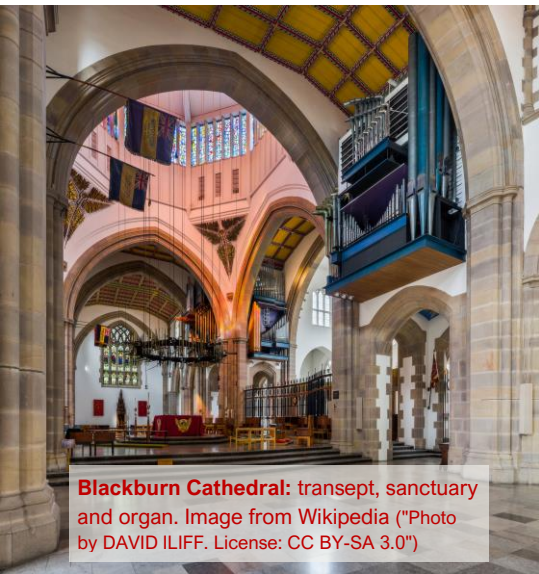
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Nobody said there'd be quick wins

editorial by **Stephen Waring**



Blackburn Cathedral: transept, sanctuary and organ. Image from Wikipedia ("Photo by DAVID ILIFF. License: CC BY-SA 3.0")

Where to start? Where better than the York-Blackpool service introduced by good old bad old 1980s British Rail? Successful enterprise by a state-owned business. A recent Saturday trip from Halifax to Blackburn for a concert in the cathedral suffered from the current epidemic of cancellations. Neither the 0827 nor 1029 was running from Halifax, so we boarded the 0927. As expected, the 3-car train was more than a little crowded. Why are these busy trains only three carriages? People couldn't get to the toilet (only one per train of course).

You could forgive folks getting angry, but – d'you know what? – everyone just decided to grin and bear it.

Clearly there is a shortage of available staff at weekends affecting workings starting at both ends. Now that the long-running pay disputes have been settled (see p7) we can only hope for progress – mentioned by Louise Haigh MP, transport secretary – on reforming weekend working agreements.

We've also seen cancellations on the reduced Leeds-Rochdale service; problems on the Roses route were the cap on a Calder Valley service disrupted for not quite three weeks in September. **Of course work to replace the bridge over the M62 near Castleton had to be done.** Monday to Friday, the blockade was Rochdale to Manchester. Trains from Leeds were cut from three an hour to

just one. Leeds-Brighouse-Manchester trains turned back at Hebden Bridge, with less than ideal connections onwards. An hourly service from Manchester ran to Rochdale via Blackburn. (We thought we heard a conductor telling a passenger this was the wrong route for a Manchester-Rochdale ticket. Sensibly no penalty was applied. Did it say "Rochdale" on front of train?) We also heard of people having to wait up to half an hour in Rochdale for the bus link. Trains coming in were often late (not sure why!), but we guess the buses departed on time. Correct us if we've got this wrong.

People from Bradford/Halifax could – at some extra cost! – travel via Brighouse and Huddersfield. A commuting contact said she had used that route. **But it's a higher price for less convenient service.**

On Saturdays and Sundays the line was blocked over a greater length because of work in other parts. There was little sign of passengers at Halifax station on the first weekend when there were no trains there at all.

No printed timetables. At Manchester Victoria, staff at the bus stops had timetables on phones. They kindly directed me to screens right at the far end of the concourse. These screens are invisible until you get almost to the ticket gate and look over your shoulder. The ones over the ticket barriers mainly show adverts. Could you make it up?

So what is the prospect of rail improvement – and development – under the new Labour government? *RAIL* 1015 (7-20 Aug) magazine's comment column "Reeves scraps impractical RYR: our railways can be restored, as part of sensible development" asked whether the now shelved Restoring Your Railway scheme was "ever really alive". The chancellor claimed £1bn-worth of transport projects of the previous government were unfunded. False promises, she said, had to stop. The £80-ish million saving this year on RYR may not sound much, but this is nothing like what would be needed to actually achieve all RYR's hoped-for reopenings. Haxby station alone is costed at £24 million.

Can we really suggest that rail reopenings should come before repairing a damaged, desperately underfunded National Health Service? Not to mention all the other vital but impoverished emergency services, adult and children's social care... those infamous potholes...

Nobody said there would be quick wins. So we must keep on – increase! – campaigning.

In West Yorkshire we have responded to consultations on mass transit and initial thoughts on the next transport plan. Why is there so little emphasis on rail? The answer is that the previous government allocated WYCA's mayor funding to improve buses (started but will take a while!) and develop mass transit, but little if anything to grow heavy rail. So the need for devolution with locally based thinking seems urgent. By the way, with renationalisation in the offing, how ready are rail managers to serve the people not the shareholders? And yes Northern, TPE and East Coast are already government-owned. Changing ownership is a first step. **Then the culture has to change.**

Back in Blackburn, after breakfast in the market, a round of the impressive upstairs shopping mall, and a stunning concert by [The Sixteen](#), we waited for our train. It was running! Some teenagers were on the platform, two girls and a younger boy. The lad was being a lad, messing about close to the platform edge. One of the girls pulled him back, and then he acted out pushing her towards the drop. The train appeared. The boy stood close to the edge as if to say "Come on, driver, speed past me." Thankfully no serious consequences. But let's put ourselves in the position of that driver. **Unsocial hours, moral duty to work safely, pressure to do the company a favour by working weekends, and kids messing about terrifyingly.** You could be forgiven for thinking you deserved that high pay.

No staff station staff seen on platform, but busy in the subway checking people through the infernal ticket barriers. **All about money.**

Read on for Pennine thoughts, Nina's column as branch chair p6-9, and more. *Diary* at end: meetings coming up!

Pennine operator plans to restore (most) services in December

by **Mark Ashmore and David Hagerty** Stalybridge–Huddersfield Rail Users' Group (SHRUG) and **Andrew Dyson**

TransPennine Express expects to restore its four-trains-per-hour service between Leeds and Manchester Victoria with effect from the 15 December 2024 timetable change. As train operating company, TPE had temporarily reduced service frequency to three-trains-per-hour to provide a more robust timetable in the face of ongoing performance issues and continuing significant backlog in training.

The reinstated service will bring a welcome introduction of easy-to-remember clockface departures from both Leeds and Manchester Victoria. From Leeds these will be at xx.00 (to Liverpool), xx.15 (Manchester Victoria), xx.30 (Liverpool) and xx.45 (Manchester Airport). From Manchester Victoria departures will be at xx.00 (to Newcastle), xx.15 (Redcar), xx.30 (Hull) and xx.45 (Scarborough).

The Hull–Liverpool service will for the first time see some services operated by Class 802 Nova 1 bi-mode trains; others will still be operated by Class 185 diesels. Class 185s will also be used on all Manchester Victoria–Scarborough trains¹. The hourly stopping service on Leeds–Huddersfield will become a shared operation between Northern and TPE due to rolling stock issues².

The Manchester to York via Stalybridge & Castleford service which provides the stopping service at Slaithwaite, Marsden, Greenfield and Mossley – as well as an obviously essential Wakefield to Manchester service – will be just a 3-car single Class 185 unit even in the peaks due to the short platform length at Normanton and will increase in frequency to hourly (as the former Northern Wakefield–Huddersfield trains used to be).

The current extra peaks between Manchester Piccadilly and Leeds will be cut back to Huddersfield meaning that peak time passengers from the important commuter towns of Marsden and Slaithwaite (including WY metro mayor Tracy Brabin), will lose their direct service to the regional centre of Leeds. It will also mean that in the peak period the service from Manchester Piccadilly to Leeds will be halved to just one train per hour. ...→



Great views around TPE's main line! (All photos in this piece by SHRUG)



"185" crosses viaduct, Slaithwaite. These trains may have a slightly outer-suburban feel but my goodness they have saved TPE! (SHRUG)

¹ A downgrade from previous use of 5-carriage loco-hauled sets? The Class 68s and Mark 5A coaches are now in store pending a new user emerging. They were more like inter-city stock than Class 185 3-car trains, but complaints included noise when parked with engines running. Other faults included cracks in a number of coaches. Replacement of the diesel locos with electro-diesel or battery bi-modes could have been – could still be – a step towards decarbonisation. But probably not in the North. Chiltern lines have been mooted as possible future user. – JSW

² So let's hope TPE and Northern have enough trains, with enough carriages, between them! – JSW

Outside of the peaks there will be effectively just 1 tph from Manchester Piccadilly to Huddersfield as both the Airport (via the Ordsall curve and Victoria) train to Middlesbrough/Redcar and the train to York via Castleford trains are timetabled to leave Piccadilly within minutes of each other and arrive in York within minutes of each other. This has resulted in grave concern being expressed about overcrowding on the 3-car train to York via Castleford from the bay platforms at Piccadilly as both trains depart at the same time.³

More coaches on Hope Valley. Eaglescliffe gains but Saltburn loses.

On the Cleethorpes–Liverpool route, the timetable will be unchanged, but more trains will be formed of 6-car

Class 185 DMUs (six of eight diagrams, up from the present four), to alleviate overcrowding on some of the busiest services.

The additional Class 185 units available for the Cleethorpes–Liverpool route are a consequence of TPE's withdrawal of most services from Saltburn; all Manchester Airport–Teesside services, except one early morning and two evening trains, will terminate at Redcar Central. A consolation for Teesside is that Redcar trains will in future call at Eaglescliffe.

TPE states there will be a 12% increase in the number of seats provided per day.



Over the border, late afternoon in Stalybridge – now electrified. (SHRUG)

Redesigning “Sla’wit”! New stations must be fully compliant.

by Graham Collett

Arcadis, who have been tasked to assess the impact of the proposed changes to Slaithwaite and Marsden stations on people with protected characteristics, sought RF's advice. Together with representatives of two disabled person's groups (whom I invited) I met Arcadis – an international consultancy – firstly to consider the plans for Slaithwaite.

We provided detailed comments. The proposal to limit access to the station to the north side was challenged and we await the outcome. David Hagerty of SHRUG also met the Arcadis team in a separate meeting.

One discussion point was access from the south side, where use of the road underbridge would involve pedestrians crossing the road at several points where there is poor visibility. Possible new paths were discussed to make access easier. Arcadia agreed to take issues back – main one being our point about need for direct access from the south side of the line. The station redesigns are to accommodate the third track planned between Huddersfield and Marsden under the TransPennine Route Upgrade. The third track will effectively be a bidirectional centre line⁴. We understand all three lines will have platforms. At Slaithwaite a new station building is expected on the north side of the line. As well as ticket vending machines, car parking, and a new footbridge with lifts there could be toilets.

A separate meeting to consider **Marsden** is planned.



Marsden already has three platforms, though not the greatest for access. A new layout is expected as part of TRU, with – we hope – a third track almost all the way to Huddersfield. (SHRUG)

³ Underlining the need for a better deal for local stations between Stalybridge and Huddersfield. More trains need to call!

⁴ Marsden already has three platforms, but we'd guess some redesign is in prospect. We have already seen new stations at Morley (just about finished), with work underway at Mirfield, Deighton and Ravensthorpe – worth a ride along the line to see what's going on! Slaithwaite and Marsden are in a later phase. – JSW

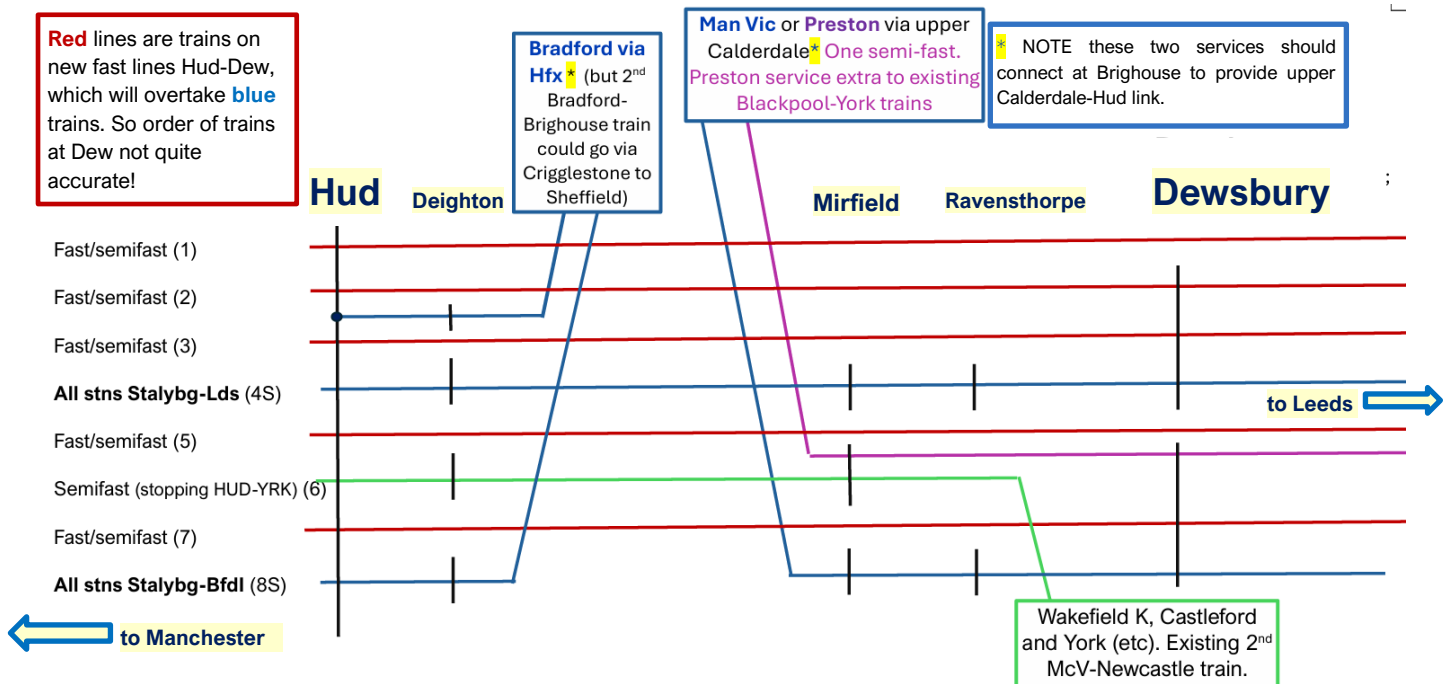
Pennine upgrade – how might future service develop?

by **Stephen Waring**, Chair, Halifax & District Rail Action Group
(with help from friends along the Huddersfield-Stalybridge line)

So what might a future service pattern on the Huddersfield line look like? Will the only passenger beneficiaries be going through Huddersfield? The present train company TPE – are they necessarily long for this world under renationalisation plans for the whole network? – has realised what a good idea it was to divert hourly trains through Wakefield to Castleford and York. It gives a new service linking Manchester, Wakefield and York directly, as well as putting back in place the former (Northern) Huddersfield-Castleford trains. Our friends on the Huddersfield-Stalybridge route long not only for hourly trains to Leeds, but might also welcome hourly trains to Halifax and Bradford. Meanwhile Halifax & District Rail Action Group would like a better fast service linking upper Calderdale, Brighouse, →



Latest TPE type enters Huddersfield, journeying from Liverpool to Newcastle. (JSW)



→ and Leeds via Dewsbury with fast trains. That's also called for in West Yorkshire Combined Authority's rail strategy. The diagram above shows one **possible pattern** of services. When the TP route upgrade (TRU) delivers 4 tracks fast services shown in red overtake stoppers between Huddersfield and Dewsbury – a feature omitted to keep the drawing simple. **And it is not the only solution.** Comments welcome!

Note we've shown has 6 fasts and 2 stoppers each hour Dewsbury-Leeds, which should be compared with 4 fasts plus 2 stoppers in the December 2024 timetable. So not a massive increase but what seems to be suggested in what we've seen about TRU. With digital signalling coming as well, could more be accommodated? One thing that must be certain is that performance – punctuality of trains – should improve with the extra tracks Huddersfield-Dewsbury. Journey times will shorten: just over 40 minutes Manchester to Leeds.

This has been mainly about the Huddersfield line and its links through Calderdale and Wakefield. The need for improvements in other parts of West Yorkshire and beyond is at least as massive. We think of the three routes through Pontefract all of which need a lot more trains and service extensions to places like Doncaster via Askern (South Yorks), and Goole (East Riding). Two trains an hour Leeds-Pontefract (spread over two routes) need doubling in frequency.

And the pathetic service Sheffield to York via Pontefract Baghill needs to become hourly.

How is all this to be achieved? At present WYCA's rail strategy is little more than a list of desires. The combined authority does not have resources to big time invest in rail. What is needed is real devolution – rail devolution! – with decision-making powers in our regions.

And enough money – investment in trains and tracks – to make it all happen.

High hopes in doubt?

This column has on many occasions in the past few years been critical of transport secretaries, rail ministers and HM Treasury. Patrick McLaughlin, now Chair of Transport for the North (TfN) was an exception. An honourable mention also to Huw Merriman who, I am sure, would have done much more had the Treasury allowed him to. Many of us had high hopes for railway development when the Labour Government was elected on 4th July. On initial showing, have those hopes been lived up to? The (provisional) answer has to be no.

To look first at the positives, on 8th July, the new transport secretary, Sheffield Heeley MP Louise Haigh, set out five strategic priorities, “putting transport at the heart of a mission-driven government”. Five positives are:

- **improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform**
- **improving bus services and growing usage across the country**
- **transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality**
- **delivering greener transport**
- **better integrating transport networks**

However, there is no mention of growing the railway, in terms of more rolling stock, more services, or station and line openings and reopenings. Doubtless the Treasury again.

The Government acted quickly to introduce the **Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill**, which provides for the gradual nationalisation of all franchised Train Operating Companies. It had its Second Reading in the Commons on 29th July. As I wrote in our summer 2024 issue, the legislation “will only be beneficial if it is used as a springboard to grow our railways, to make services more comfortable and reliable, and to achieve a very significant mode shift to rail”. In the King’s Speech, legislation was also announced to formally establish the new public body, Great British Railways (GBR). GBR is expected to be focused on improving services and creating better value for money for passengers. There will be simplified fares, discounts, and ticket types. Once established, the new body will also ensure that ticketing innovations like automatic compensation, digital pay-as-you-go and digital season ticketing are rolled out across the whole network.⁵

It is important that GBR is not micro-manged by transport ministers, and that the Treasury gives the new body a budget sufficient to provide the railway system we need in the mid-21st century. This is about targets with wide public benefits: achieving net zero, reducing road congestion, easing access to employment and leisure, and rapidly doubling the volume of freight carried by rail. The Treasury must recognise that this planet has a climate emergency, and the UK can improve its ability to help in tackling it if we have a rolling programme of electrification, and expansion of rail routes to reduce car and lorry dependency.

Open access value!

The Government has recognised the value of open access operators, so valuable for people living in or near Hull, the Calder Valley and other places in Yorkshire. I recently travelled from London King’s Cross to Hebden Bridge with a change at Halifax in about two and three quarter hours – First Class comfort for a very reasonable fare.

Yorkshire hub!

Yorkshire is a hub for open-access with Grand Central, Hull Trains and Lumo on the east coast main line. Hull Trains and Lumo both belong to First Group, but are very different. Lumo is very much a no-frills operation. Watch out for luggage limits, and take a flask of tea! – **JSW**

Grand Central operate the Bradford and Sunderland services. It is good to know that GC are seeking to extend their track access agreement until 2038, and that they plan to acquire new bi-mode trainsets⁶. These will apparently have 20% more seats than the current Class 180s as well as a reduced carbon footprint. I hope that these extra seats will be due to train sets being 6 cars compared to the current 5 car, as otherwise GC’s big selling point of comfortable seating with good leg room will disappear.

I sincerely hope they are not planning to go down the Lumo road of only one class and no catering. If they do, they will lose more than a few existing passengers.
→

⁵ GBR will be set up in by a second bill but already exists in shadow form.

⁶ We are not clear whether this means electric trains with diesel capability or with batteries or with both. Having both would be trimode of course!

Dispute resolved: welcome but problematic?

The Government has also resolved the ASLEF train driver's dispute that has been inconveniencing passengers for the past two years. This is most welcome, although a pay increase that takes some of their salaries above £80,000 a year is problematic, given that the increased costs have to come out of the inadequate railways budget, and the settlement excluded any of the vital reforms to working conditions necessary to achieve a smooth functioning railway. It is nonsense that, in 2024, not all passenger train drivers are on the same contracts, and that many train operating companies rely on voluntary rest day working. All operational staff should have contracts that mean their standard working week is on any 4 or 5 day permutation over 7 days.

ASLEF and its train driver members are effectively in a monopoly position. I do not like monopolies, whether they are union monopolies or capitalist monopolies. One would hope that as the providers of a public service, ASLEF leaders and members would realise that there are limits to what the public purse and fare payers can afford, and that the public expects a full timetable to be run every day. That is not the case at the moment. Northern's Sunday services in the north-west are currently severely hit by a lack of available staff due to their outdated contracts. This affects some Yorkshire services as well, as some of our cross border trains are crewed from north-west depots. The privatisation of the railways in 1996 has resulted in a bidding war between train companies for staff and the growth of a variety of Terms and Conditions.

A priority for the Labour Government must be to sort this mess out.

Disappointments

There have been several disappointments already in the government's approach to rail. Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves's £22 billion public expenditure cuts including scrapping of the **Restore Your Railways Fund** to save £76 million in 2024-5⁷ – a miserly 0.4% of the money she needs to find, or £1 in every £400. Whilst I fully accept that the chancellor needs to find £22 billion to plug the gap in the public finances she inherited, did she really need to include what in the overall scheme of things is a paltry saving? What does this say about the government's commitment to net-zero, to delivering greener transport? What does it say about the important issue we are no longer supposed to call levelling-up? The chancellor could have found the £76 million in many other ways, but the Labour Party foolishly tied its hand by promising not to raise income tax, VAT or national insurance.

A recent YouGov poll⁸ shows that 58% of people would like to see an increase in the top rate of income tax, which would raise more than enough to cover RYR. But the chancellor still has many options open to her, including a wealth tax, a mansion tax, restoring fuel duty to 2012 levels, and taxing electric cars. If she does this, she could have enough money to increase NHS expenditure, increase the schools, justice and defence budgets, as well as properly investing in public transport.

The ending of the RYR Fund has put in jeopardy the reopening of **Haxby station**. This has been campaigned for increasingly over the past 20 years. It is vital to reduce car commuting into York, and to enable better access for Haxby and Strensall residents to further employment centres such as Leeds and Newcastle, and for leisure trips to Scarborough – thus relieving pressure on the dangerous and often overcrowded A64. The chancellor's statement did say that other sources of funding will be considered, and the new local MP has said he will explore alternative sources of funding - that needs to happen NOW!

The government needs to realise that railways are the greenest form of transport (apart from walking and cycling), and that modal shift from road vehicles and aircraft to trains is vital to cut carbon dioxide emissions and road congestion, as well as opening up new travel opportunities, not least for people living in deprived areas. Towns such as Nelson, just over the border in Lancashire, would have new opportunities for accessing jobs if the railway was reopened from Colne to Skipton, thus making access to the employment centres of Leeds, Bradford, and Skipton much easier.

In other ways too, the transport secretary and rail minister have disappointed. Did they intervene to try and convince **Royal Mail** to continue running its own mail trains or, better still, to increase its network?

The last two big majority Labour Governments were those under Harold Wilson in the 1960s and Blair and Brown in 1997-2010. Both did many good things in other policy areas, but Wilson did the Conservative's job for them by severely cutting the railway network, and Blair made little investment in public transport, other than the very welcome older person's bus pass.

Starmer's government must not disappoint by having a similarly dismal record. →

Ballot backs deal

The ASLEF ballot result announced just as we were producing this YRC was 96% in favour of accepting the deal (turnout 84%). Union leaders had recommended acceptance following negotiations with the government. The 3-year deal is a no-strings offer: 2022 to 2025 not quite 5% for each of the three years. Louise Haigh described the deal as "an important step forward in fixing our railways. Crucially," Haigh the transport secretary added, "It clears the way for vital reform – including modernising outdated working practices – to ensure a better performing railway for everyone. "The cost of not settling would significantly outstrip the cost of this below-inflation deal."

As we went to press RMT ballots overwhelmingly accepted offers of 4.5% (Network Rail – 1 yr) and 4.75%+4.5 (TOCs – 2 yr). – JSW

⁷ Nothing was spent in 2023-24.

⁸ <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/50354-what-tax-rises-would-britons-support>

However, on the positive side, **Network Rail has just announced a six month track access charge holiday** for new freight traffic – much welcomed.

Maier Review

The Rail and Urban Transport Review ([Rail and Urban Transport Review | Urban Transport Group](#)) was commissioned by the Labour Party in December 2023. In August this year recommendations were published, designed to accelerate the huge benefits that rail and urban transport infrastructure can unlock. The press release refers to:

An ambitious network. report setting out a bold vision and plan for the future of the UK's rail and urban transport infrastructure, emphasising the need for a paradigm shift to create a more connected, affordable, and high-capacity transport

The independent review was led by Juergen Maier CBE, former Siemens CEO and guided by an expert panel from across the industry. Evidence has been distilled into **five themes to identify how transport can better meet the needs of our economy, society and environment**, and with policy recommendations designed to reignite the private-public sector relationship and significantly reduce project delivery timelines and costs:

- 1 **A bold long-term vision and ambition for transport infrastructure:** An ambitious national transport strategy to increase journeys by public transport, walking, and cycling by 2035, and to double the mode share of rail within a decade.
- 2 **Accelerating delivery of transport infrastructure across the nation:** Proposing a "Greener, Faster, Cheaper" framework, the review suggests reducing project delivery costs by 20% and timelines by 25%. Catalysing growth by building on the progress of English devolution.
- 3 **Harnessing the benefits of public-private partnerships:** Recognising the essential role of private investment, the review recommends developing an infrastructure investment playbook to facilitate public-private partnerships. This should be supported by a HM Treasury to develop a new approach to private finance.
- 4 **Getting the structure right for delivery now and in the future:** A clear, long-term national transport strategy aligned with the UK's industrial strategy and housing delivery. This includes reforms to planning processes and enhancing the role of local authorities in delivering transport infrastructure.
- 5 **The voice of Britain's transport users and workforce at the heart of transport plans:** Emphasising the importance of user and workforce engagement, the review calls for greater involvement of trade unions and underrepresented groups to ensure inclusive and effective infrastructure development.

In response, Transport Secretary Louise Haigh MP said:

"This independent expert-led review provides a comprehensive assessment of the challenges and opportunities we face in delivering transport infrastructure in Britain, and will help inform this new Government's thinking.

"We are clear that we will deliver value for the taxpayer while turbocharging delivery of transport projects. That's how you grow the economy in every corner of the country, and deliver the transport network that modern Britain needs."

Let us hope that the Chancellor finds the funding to enable this vital work to happen. We cannot afford yet another important report to bite the treasury-induced dust!

Let's be fair on innocent passengers

In August, the Chief Magistrate Paul Golding said as many as 75,000 convictions for ticketless travel could be quashed following a ruling that some train operating companies including Northern were wrong to bring prosecutions under the Regulation of Railways Act 1899 using the single justice procedure. This followed appeals against conviction brought in six cases by people who had no intention of defrauding the railway, but for different reasons were unable to buy a ticket.

It is unequivocally wrong for people to get on a train **when they have no intention of paying their fare**, and it is right that such people are given penalty fares or prosecuted when caught. Defrauding the railway reduces the income of the train operator, and this can lead higher fare increases or service reductions. Northern, for example, has successfully reduced ticketless travel to 2%. **But we must be fair to the non-criminal passenger who gets on a train without a ticket for a variety of valid reasons, and then gets issued with a Penalty Fare of £100, and, if they contest it, run the risk of being criminalised.** There are many valid reasons for not buying a ticket before your journey. Faulty ticket machines, ticket vending machines not accepting cash. Sometimes it's nobody's fault, just circumstances: long delays queueing to buy a ticket at a ticket office or a TVM, inability to work out how to use a TVM, being delayed on your journey to the station, whether because of your bus being late, your car was stuck in traffic, the car park was full, or an emergency at home. You should not be expected to miss a train for these reasons because you do not have a ticket.

The train operators must get better at distinguishing between the fraudster and the innocent, and they must make it easier to buy a ticket. **We need to return to the era not very long ago when people were encouraged to buy their ticket on the train**, and when there was a ticket window at major stations at which you could buy a ticket after completing your journey.

What price “simpler fares”?

I put “simpler fares” in inverted commas because LNER’s now expanding new ticket regime is anything but. It is actually more complicated, more restrictive, and removes several reasonably priced fare options. This experiment has now been extended to some local stations between Newcastle and Edinburgh and around the Scottish capital.

Leaflets and online publicity have been issued that remind me of “Newspeak” in Orwell’s dystopian 1984:

“Our ambition is to offer customers clearer ticket options, more modern flexibility and a better experience....”

Yet only three types of ticket are available:

- Advance (fixed price no refund),
- 70 min Flex (semi-flexible),
- and Anytime (full flexible – but very expensive).

It is essential that passengers retain the option of lower price flexible off-peak tickets. Most people cannot afford full price open tickets, many people cannot be sure which train they want to return on (and one of the advantages of a frequent timetable like LNER’s is turn up and go – it is different from the open access operators who only run a few trains each day. Many people also want the simplicity of a return ticket. See also [Simpler Fares \(lner.co.uk\)](http://SimplerFares.lner.co.uk)

It is disgraceful that the new transport secretary has allowed this, given that LNER is already state owned. Haigh has proclaimed herself the “passenger in chief”, and yet she has failed here. If she wants to maintain the confidence of train passengers, she needs to put an end to LNER’s ticket “simplification” as soon as possible.⁹

Disabled travellers get a fair deal?

Not content with reducing ticket options on an increasing number of journeys, LNER has now disgraced itself by failing to provide a staff member to help paralympian Baroness Tanni Grey-Thomson get off her train from Leeds when it arrived in Kings Cross at 22.13 on Sunday 25th August. Waiting 15 minutes for assistance to arrive, the sporting Baroness got off the train by crawling off. How undignified is that? And what if the passenger had not been a strong former paralympic champion? LNER has questions to answer. Under the Disability and Discrimination Act, there was supposed to be level boarding onto trains by 2020. As Tanni says, “the government has kicked the can down the road”. Why were trains as new as the Azumas, which I believed were designed to a DfT specification, not specified with access ramps?

As someone who in the early 1980s was instrumental in advocating accessible public transport for disabled people, I am appalled at how far we still have to go.

Tickets madness

LNER’s simpler fares are really not that simple. Just three kinds of ticket? A search online for LNER tickets London-Edinburgh revealed at least six levels of both “fixed” (old advance) and “semi flex”, plus super-price “fully flex”. So that’s 13 or more different fare levels for the same trip! Simpler? Of course advantages of the new system include possible reduction of standing passenger when it’s busy, and yield management. But flexibility comes at a price most cannot afford.

To be fair on the transport secretary the LNER scheme is less than one year into a 2-year trial.

Then there’s the Northern madness. Recently two of us came back from Holland via the overnight ferry to Hull. We knew there were cheap advance singles available at £10.05, to Halifax compared with anytime single at £26.30 (short distance return £35.55) – all these fares are with railcard discount. But of course we didn’t know in advance which train we’d catch. So we went to the Hull ticket office. **They are not allowed by Northern to sell on-the-day advance tickets**, so we had to book on mobile phone. The booking clerk could have sorted us out much quicker.

Weeks later I bought a single from Northern’s Manchester Vic ticket office to Huddersfield, and was offered a TransPennine cheap advance ticket not long before the train was due. They sell, it seems, other operators’ cheapest tickets on the day but not their own. People are discouraged from using Northern ticket offices except where Northern profits from selling other companies, fares. Correct us if we are wrong. – **JSW**

Access: new Northern trains

Nina asked Northern managing director Tricia Williams, about Northern’s proposed new trains in a Q&A at the recent Modern Railways conference in Leeds. We followed up with an email about the need for level boarding and received a very prompt reply from Tricia. Northern’s new trains will comply with national rules on PRM (passengers of reduced mobility). This meets Network Rail’s platform height standard of 915 mm above rail level. Automated platform-train gap fillers will be specified at every passenger doorway. Whilst variations in platform height may continue to be an issue for some time, this will be a boon for all passengers. – **JSW**

⁹ The LNER trial started in February this year. The trial runs for two years. The autumn expansion extends the trial to more of Scotland and NE England presumably so that people cannot “cheat” by buying a ticket to a nearby station just outside the area. Nina is absolutely right that the publicity about this trial is an example of **newspeak**. – JSW

York – always worth a visit!

Plus Haxby latest

by **Graham Collett**

York is of course a great place to visit by train! Work continues on the York Central development involving a new station entrance on the west side of York station – where a lot of us go to access the National Railway Museum. York Central is a major area of redevelopment, much of it on former railway land west.

On the east side outside the main station entrance, recent visitors will have noticed major road changes centred on demolition of Queen St bridge to the south. This reveals a previously obscured section of the city walls. Bus stops – mighty useful if you are in a rush for the Coastliner 840 connection to Whitby as well as local routes – that at present cause congestion outside the station will be moved a little further south into new lay-bys.

Our new Mayor's transport team has already recognised the need to expand the station to cope with the increasing demand, including that expected to be generated from York Central. A meeting with the Mayor's rail officer

to put forward our suggested priorities for York and North Yorkshire is being arranged.

More in future issues of this newsletter!

Haxby worries: About 7km (4½ mile) north of York, the future of this station reopening project has been cast into doubt by the new government's decision to terminate the previous Restoring Your Railway scheme. The new MP for York Outer, Luke Charters, has been contacted and is exploring whether alternative sources of funding could be made available. York Council has said it remains committed to the scheme.



Station on left, city walls revealed right, bus stops in middle. What city entrance of York station could look like.

Picture credit [York Station Gateway – City of York Council](#)

CrossCountry timetable cuts: short-term pain for longer-term gain?

by **Andrew Dyson**

As widely reported, long-distance train operator CrossCountry Trains has been operating a reduced timetable for 13 weeks from 10 August to 9 November. The Railfuture's Yorkshire area is arguably hardest hit by these cuts, which include the complete withdrawal of the Newcastle to Reading service group. This completely removes Doncaster from the CrossCountry network, now that all the remaining hourly CrossCountry services between Sheffield and York are routed via Leeds. These latest cuts come hot on the heels of cutbacks earlier this year, when several stops at Wakefield Westgate and Chesterfield were temporarily removed from the Edinburgh–Plymouth service group, apparently to ease overcrowding.

All a far cry from CrossCountry's pre-covid timetable of two-trains per hour through Yorkshire.

CrossCountry has taken the latest action to deal with the backlog of critical training days required by train drivers. The argument is that, by accelerating this training, the company can build a more resilient and dependable service. We would agree that advertising a reduced timetable is preferable to a catalogue of short notice cancellations, or extensive P-coding (withdrawal of trains from the timetable on the day before they are due to operate). This is, after all, the same approach taken last year by TransPennine Express, when confronted with similar difficulties. The outcome there is that TPE will be restoring their full timetable from December 2024 (see article elsewhere in this issue).

Restoration of the entire Newcastle–Reading service remains one of CrossCountry's key aspirations.

However, the problems of CrossCountry are more deep-seated than just the timetable, and even a restoration of pre-covid timetables will not address the major issues facing the operator. Although principally a long-distance

operator, CrossCountry provides the only “fast” train service between Leeds and Sheffield¹⁰. This operates on an hourly frequency and is usually formed of four or five car Voyager DMUs. Little wonder then, that gross overcrowding is commonplace.

Some services are being strengthened during the reduced timetable period and for the longer term, three additional Voyager units have recently been acquired from Avanti West Coast. Further sets will follow from Avanti and a £60 million contract was signed with Alstom at the end of August to refurbish the entire Voyager fleet. However, the suitability of these short DMUs – now over 20 years old – for long distance InterCity services, remains questionable. Yorkshire is not the only area of the country to experience overcrowding issues in relation to Voyagers.

Transport secretary Louise Haigh was not slow to criticise CrossCountry’s revised timetable. She has accepted the need for temporary measures, but effectively put the company on notice that any further failure to meet contractual service levels will result in Government intervention. ***We hope to see the pre-covid CrossCountry timetable restored in full and, in line with other operators, to see CrossCountry devise plans for service enhancement and a rolling stock replacement strategy.***

Penistone line euphoria evaporates

by Ian Joustra, Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users Association

At the end of 2023, three of the Conservative MPs whose constituencies included the Penistone Line announced that £47million had been awarded towards an upgrade of the line to improve timetable resilience, help with accessibility at Shepley and Honley (which do not have step-free access), and contribute towards the ultimate aim of allowing a half hourly service by creating some additional double track sections.

Since then there has been little tangible progress, with the plans mired in the DfT approval process, and the money still safely in the Treasury. Following the General Election, the chancellor has confirmed that all new rail projects are being paused for review, with the exception of those a lot further on than this one. So it looks like we’re back to square one. Again.

However, HPSRUA, in conjunction with our colleagues in the Penistone Line Partnership, are progressing work with individual MPs to look at specific issues such as the station accessibility work, in the hope that we may be able to make at least some progress,

Meanwhile, our euphoria a couple of years ago at getting 3-car trains on all services has not lasted, with only two out of the three units covering the daytime service being diagrammed for 3 cars, and that only subject to availability. Northern have advised that they may be able to go back to all 3 cars for the December timetable, but we shall see¹¹.

Joining together!

Yorkshire Railfuture will be joining up with East Midlands and Lincolnshire branches for our early autumn meeting on 12 October, in Sheffield. We’re hoping for a speaker from **East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA)** – to be confirmed. PTO for times and venue. Our 30 November meeting is hosted by North West branch and is in Manchester.

So see you in October or November or both! Don’t forget to send your feedback – and copy for next issue of this newsletter by end November.



East Midlands Railway services criss-cross the EMCCA area. Here's one at Nottingham. Our joint branch meeting is in Sheffield – details overleaf.
Picture, (Mar'24) [Vanmany Creative Commons Attribution 4.0](#)

¹⁰ A proposed local fast service Leeds-Sheffield, maybe a Northern operation, still seems some way off.

¹¹ Remember Northern may be short of rolling stock in December because it will be partnering TPE on the Hud-Leeds stoppers!

DIARY: Saturdays coming up – Railfuture Yorkshire branch meetings

12 October, Yorks, East Midlands and Lincolnshire branches joint mtg at the Sheffield Hallam View Meeting Room, Owen Building, Sheffield Hallam University S1 1WB. Opposite Sheffield railway station, past fountain and a little way up hill, as last year, [Owen Building - Google Maps](#). Starts **13.00**. **Speaker** invited from East Midlands combined county authority, probably on an emerging local transport plan.

30 November, NW and Yorkshire, Friends Meeting House, Mount St (behind central library [Home - Friends Meeting House \(meetinghousemanchester.co.uk\)](#)) Manchester M2 5NS, starting at **13.00**. **Speakers planned for both meetings.**

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Please send us your contributions for Winter 2024-5 issue:

by **Sat 30 November 2024**, or **earlier if possible** so we can publish before Christmas.

Digital submissions preferred: any paper articles should be not too much more than one side of A4.

Not too early to think about what you want to say!

User groups affiliated to Railfuture in Yorkshire

Askern Station, Friends of	Contact Graham Moss on graz.moss@sky.com or 07510 555722
Aire Valley Rail Users Group (AVRUG)	www.avrug.org email chair@avrug.org
Esk Valley Railway	http://www.eskvalleyrailway.co.uk/evrdc.html
Halifax and District Rail Action Group and Electric Railway Charter	www.hadrag.com and www.electriccharter.wordpress.com email js.waring@hotmail.co.uk
Harrogate Line Rail Users' Group	Care of billymms@btinternet.com
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@gmail.com
Hull and East Riding Rail Users' Association	davidpennierail21@gmail.com
Hunmanby Railway Station, Friends of	https://e-voice.org.uk/friendsofhunmanbyrailwaystation/
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	
Minsters Rail Campaign (Beverley-York)	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 (SHRUG)	Email: markashmore@yahoo.com
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: Nina.Smith@railfuture.org.uk
Upper Wensleydale Railway	https://upperwensleydaleraailway.org.uk/
Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership (Yorkshire Coast Wolds Coast Line)	www.yccrp.co.uk

Yorkshire branch (RfY) committee and the small print

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Vice Chair (SY lead): Andrew Dyson: andrew.dyson@platform5.com
Branch secretary (for now) and newsletter editor: Stephen Waring js.waring@hotmail.co.uk
Minutes secretary [watch this space]
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