

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

Number 73: Summer 2026

It'll look good when finished. Double arrow symbol proudly declares in original colour this is *our* railway. Let that be so! Let it be convenient for *passengers*. The post-modern edifice outside Leeds station may be not far off finished when you read this. Note green wall at side, worthy modern accessory. Next, the old staff block (out of shot to right) will come down in preparation for new ticket office. Listed buildings will be left alone but there are big, if tentative, ideas for a bigger concourse, maybe extending over two floors.

At some point we should get platform 17 extended, so longer trains can run to Barnsley, Sheffield and beyond. Good idea. Could other new platforms follow?

– JSW, Summer Solstice 2026 (pic & text).

As always, all opinions in by-lined or initialled articles are those of the writer, not of Railfuture, its Yorkshire branch (nor even the editor of this issue of YRC!) Find us on Facebook at [Railfuture Yorkshire | Facebook](#). Articles may be edited for length and style. (JSW – Ed.)

Railfuture Yorkshire branch

President: Alan Whitehouse

Vice-presidents: Mike Crowhurst, Alan Williams

railfuture



Doncaster (JSW)

→ Lots of us of boarded for a trip to York and back. Among the guests were Ben Godfrey and Nina Batten, Gresley's grandson and great-granddaughter. A day of pride for them, for a great engineer's legacy and for a railway future set to blaze forward not with steam and smoke but with electric magic. – JSW (pics & text)

Electric magic!

Named **Gresley 150**, Azuma 801228 pulls into Doncaster, 19 June this year. 150 years after the birth of Sir Nigel Gresley, mechanical engineer who gave us locos such as Flying Scotsman and Mallard. Doncaster works is to the left in our shot. →



York. "Nameplate" includes engineering drawings and a bit of "Mallard"! (JSW)

Editorial by Stephen Waring, helped by Ann Hindley, Chris Morgan and Nina Smith Prioritising needs of passengers?



Canalside behind Leeds station. Photo by Chris Morgan.



Platform 17 is high above. (Chris Morgan)

A group of Railfuture Yorkshire members were shown round Leeds station by Julie Swift, station interface manager at Network Rail, with Richard Isaac and Danielle Clarkson from Northern Trains.

"I really like what they're doing at the front of the station," writes **Ann Hindley**. "More open, safer and easier to navigate – or it will be when it's done. But should we not be focusing on more urgent issues? Others may think differently but is it really a sound idea to move retailers to a proposed new basement?"

"The present toilets do need expanding. But I would have mixed feelings about the idea of moving them, and about moving the gate-line."

"Leeds seems to have the lowest ratio of waiting rooms to passengers. Waiting rooms are very important. Leeds station is an inhospitable place to travel late on a winter's night. I speak as one who has done it."

"The tour interested me," says **Chris Morgan**, "Not least because it brought back memories of my first visit to Leeds by train from Newcastle in late 1965, when trains were still using platforms near where the latest rebuilding is about to commence. There were lines of red telephone boxes outside the Post Office opposite the station. In the 1980s and

90s I attended meetings in Park Row so a train should have been convenient. It was in Leeds but wasn't in Sheffield, so I usually drove and parked my car on what is now marketed as Granary Wharf.

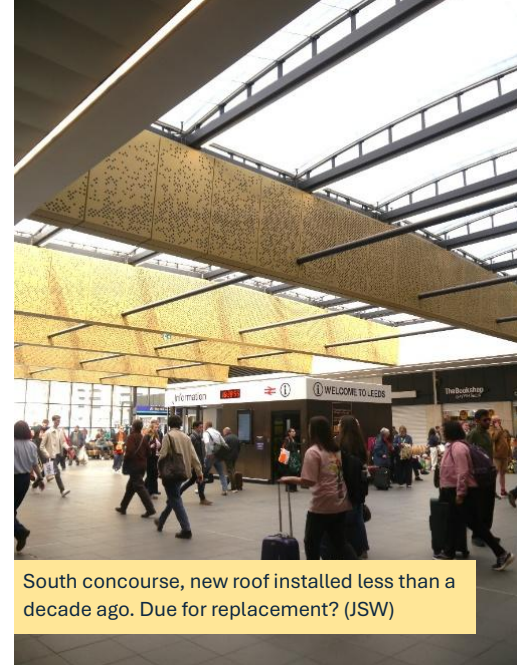
"How that has changed! The attached pictures were taken on the day I visited the Platform 17 Consultation/Engagement, 20th March 2025. I wanted to see what lay below. At that time it was being suggested work → -could start as early as 2026/7 with completion before 2030. The arches area they wish to develop seems to knit in →

→ with this area but more detailed plans, maps and artistic impressions would have helped understanding greatly. Construction of the improved Platform 17 area with new footbridge, lifts and stairs would require use of the areas immediately below and around the arches. I share the concerns regarding how the public can get better travelling experiences from more trains and the retailers can also profit from the increasing footfall for trains.”

Summing up, **Nina Smith** adds: “Key point is proposed move downstairs of key shops from present convenient position near the ticket gates. Issues also include proposed loss of toilets from the main floor of the concourse, and platform waiting areas that need to be expanded, not cut.

“Stations should prioritise the convenience of passengers.”

Once the station front is finished, work will start on demolition of the old office block west of the ticket office. This will, we assume, make more space around the concourse. There are ideas for new entrances and additional platforms beyond current platform 0. **The 1930s listed buildings (north concourse) including the former information office will be retained.** It seems the newish ticket office will be redesigned.



The final part of the station we were shown was the **safe hub** opened last year on the north concourse.

The hub hosts various organisations including British Transport Police, Samaritans, and the Women's Night Safe Space group. Other charities are encouraged to join.

All the items inside the hub, including furniture and artwork, have been donated.

Julie Swift, quoted in Network Rail's press release last year said: “This vital new hub represents a significant step forward in supporting vulnerable people across Leeds. By partnering with trusted local organisations, we're not just creating a space – we're building a link where people can access essential support in times of need.” Julie herself maintains supervision of the hub and how it is used. (From Network Rail website with thanks.)

Map and explorer ticket from Northern!

The all-Northern network map is now in its second edition and advertises the new Northern Explorer ranger (or do we mean rover?) tickets. Cost is £35 for one adult for one day. There are no railcard discounts, but it looks like good value. You can get a discount for small groups travelling together. Tickets for several days are available. Half price for children. It's strictly Northern Trains only. So you can't use the York-Darlington line. Going north use the Settle-Carlisle, or catch the bus from York to Whitby, paying the bus fare extra. Or take the Cumbrian Coast line via Barrow and Whitehaven. The map is a really neat plan of the north. Other operators' lines are shown in grey. With rail renationalisation on the way might a future version show all lines as equals? For now you can book your Northern Explorer online, but it's also available from ticket vending machines and ticket offices though that is not too clear on the website. **Why not?** – JSW



See link: [The Northern Explorer Ticket | Hop-On Hop-Off | Northern](#) for details. The above believed correct at time of publication.

New rail user group needs name to campaign for more local trains on Doncaster-Scunthorpe line

by **Ann Hindley**, Secretary, Yorkshire Railfuture

A meeting is planned for Thursday 2nd July at 7.30 at Ealand Victory Hall (DN17 4JL) near Crowle in North Lincolnshire. So far the proposed new rail users' group has no name – one aim of the meeting which will be discussed and hopefully decided!

The group will straddle South Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire and cover the line that runs between Doncaster and Scunthorpe. **It has largely been inspired by the post Covid cut in stopping trains from hourly to two hourly and has sprung out of a campaign supported by the local MP and by Railfuture to restore the service.**

Anyone interested in supporting this new venture is welcome to attend or contact Ann Hindley on ann@hindley.gn.aoc.org. The venue is within walking distance of Crowle station and has good car parking.

Accessibility progress on Northern

by **Stephen Waring** based on email from Northern



Northern have introduced more passenger assist boarding points on platforms. Following initial and successful installations on the Leeds-Harrogate line, next spots are at Woodhouse, Kiveton Bridge, Kiveton Park, Shireoaks and Retford, with Gainsbrough Lea Road and Saxilby coming very soon, all on the Sheffield-Lincoln route. **The points aim to make it clear to customers where they can wait to meet with the conductor when the train arrives.**

The Government's accessibility plan mentions providing clear passenger assistance meeting points and platform boarding point signage. So following Northern's original trial "It's great to not wait for GBR and get these implemented as soon as possible to support our customers." Our picture by **Andrew Whitworth** is the last stop before Harrogate on the line from Leeds.

Calling all Yorkshire Railfuture members!

from **Ann Hindley**, Secretary, Yorkshire Railfuture

Those of you who attended the recent branch meeting in York will have had the opportunity to contribute to a brief consultation exercise asking our members about the best place, time and day for meetings and ideas for future speakers. We would like to extend this exercise to those of you who were not able to be there.

So please let us know:

- where is the **best venue** in Yorkshire for you to get to? Town or city or wherever.
- whether you prefer **morning, afternoon or evening**
- the best day of the week for you
- and whether meetings could be structured better and, **if so, how?**

We would also appreciate any suggestions you might have for webinars for next year.

Do get in touch at ann.hindley@railfuture.co.uk .

Plans for South Yorkshire People's Network revealed: tram-trains could be the thing

by Andrew Dyson, vice-chair, Railfuture Yorkshire

Oliver Coppard, South Yorkshire Mayor, has announced details of his plan to bring public transport in South Yorkshire back under public control. The £1.5 billion plan, South Yorkshire's equivalent of Greater Manchester's "Bee Network", includes £630 million to replace the 25 original South Yorkshire Supertram vehicles, which are now over 30 years old. All buses and trams in South Yorkshire will receive a new orange and charcoal livery, with **South Yorkshire People's Network** branding.

Plans for rail are limited in the early years, with first major projects scheduled for 2030-35. These include

- capacity improvements at Sheffield
- and a new station for Rotherham at Rotherham Gateway, on the main line between Sheffield and Leeds/Doncaster.

The new station planned for Waverley on the Sheffield–Worksop line, to serve the nearby advanced manufacturing park and new housing developments, is also planned to go ahead.

The "Restoring Your Railways" schemes to introduce services on the Barrow Hill and Stocksbridge lines, dropped following Government's decision to withdraw funding for the initiative, will be revisited.

Speaking ahead of the South Yorkshire People's Network (SYPN) formal launch, Mayor Coppard told Railfuture that although heavy-rail options had not been discounted, **tram-train was SYMCA's preferred solution for these lines**.

The SYPN launch document repeats Mayor Coppard's aspiration to see four fast trains per hour between Sheffield and Leeds and anticipates this will be achieved in the 2030–35 period. However, no specific details were provided of how this would be achieved. Given the already congested infrastructure, it is difficult to see how a four-trains-per-hour service can be delivered without either significant investment in the infrastructure, or the withdrawal of services that currently use the line.

The same can be said of the Sheffield–Manchester Hope Valley route, for which SYPN aspires to deliver four fast trains per hour in the 2040s.

Proposals for a station at Askern, previously championed through RYR, are absent from the SYPN plan, and no mention is made of reinstating services on local lines to pre-Covid levels. Sheffield-Gainsborough Central, Doncaster-Scunthorpe, Sheffield-Doncaster local. Nor are there any proposals to increase services on lines with infrequent services: Doncaster-Lincoln, Sheffield-York via Pontefract. However, Mayor Coppard told Railfuture, **Askern is still a live project**. More precise details of SYMCA's plans for the rail network would be released at a later date.

Much-needed capacity enhancements at Doncaster station are not scheduled to take place until the 2036–40 period, although SYMCA is investigating options for a direct rail link to Doncaster-Sheffield airport (due to reopen in 2028), utilising either heavy rail or tram-train.

Park and Ride facilities at Meadowhall are due to be expanded in 2028, and all stations in South Yorkshire are expected to be step-free by the 2040s.



Sharing a joke? Mayor Oliver Coppard (centre) flanked by (L to R) Jason Prince (Director, Urban Transport Group), Collette Carroll (Managing Director of transportation division, AtkinsRéalis), Bailey Hargate (Barnsley student) and Ed Clancey (SY Active Lives Commissioner). Picture by Andrew Dyson.

Points of view from Nina Smith, Chair, Railfuture Yorkshire Branch Political – with small ‘p’!

Nina looks at mood music for trams and Mini-Switzerland. Among other desires, new services in Yorkshire would be nice!



Diverted Trans Pennine Express departs Todmorden for Manchester...

The last three months have been eventful, to say the least, with the economies of many nations reeling under the oil supply crisis, and populists winning unprecedented power in local elections here in Yorkshire, and elsewhere.

As time of writing, the political composition and chairing of the WYCA Transport Committee and the SYMCA Mayoral Combined Authority Board are unknown.

Whilst Railfuture is a “small p” political organisation in that we seek to influence government and local authorities to improve the railway infrastructure and train services, **we are not party political:**

- We work with whichever party or parties are in power.
- We campaign for improved and extended services.
- And we support national and local government when they are being pro-rail, including trams.

Conversely:

- we criticise and campaign against them when they advocate or adopt policies detrimental to rail,
- or if we feel there are better solutions to problems, or better uses of limited resources.



... having just called at the station! (Photos by Nina Smith)

Financial woes

According to The Times, Sir Keir Starmer recently ordered all departments to find 1% savings to finance increased spending on defence. The DfT may be ordered to find further cuts.

If that is the case, then those savings should be found from the most environmentally damaging areas i.e. roads and aviation. **Rail should be exempt** – except perhaps for decreasing the number of civil servants micro-managing the railway to no-one’s benefit. But will that happen? The environmentally damaging Lower Thames Crossing should be a prime candidate for cuts together with putting VAT on aviation fuel. A **frequent flyer tax** should apply on all routes, except for domestic ones that do not compete with rail. →

→ On the West Coast main line, following a DfT request to save money, Avanti West Coast is reducing the number of services by 12% for a six week period from July 20 to August 28. Let's hope that this does not spread to operators serving Yorkshire.

RAIL magazine 1063 (10-24 June) reports that TPE's diesel bill has soared by £15m due to the fuel crisis caused by Trump's ill-judged war on Iran. This represents a 75% increase in their diesel bill and means that TPE is currently showing a £300k subsidy deficit. The UK government needs to follow Trump's playbook and sue the USA government for the damage done to the UK economy from this disastrous war.

A major worry is will the Treasury and DfT allow Northern to have some (and ideally all) of the class 158 units being released by Transport for Wales next year. Northern urgently needs these to reduce overcrowding, provide hourly services from Goole to Leeds and Sheffield-Pontefract-York, introduce an hourly service from Pontefract to Doncaster, and run an hourly cross-boundary service between Doncaster and Lincoln (EMR currently run 5 trains a day) **One thing we can be fairly certain about is that it is most unlikely there will be a fares freeze next year.**

Better mood music says: *let there be trams!*

We still have no idea of the new timescales for the West Yorkshire mass transport system, which the evidence from across Europe including Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham and Tyneside says needs to be a tram system, Leeds and West Yorkshire being the largest conurbation in Western Europe without trams. But the Treasury bean counters thought otherwise, ordering a pause so that alternative bus options can be considered. Whilst buses are a vital part of public transport, indeed the most used in terms of passenger journeys, one of their roles should be to feed into rail based systems and to go where trams and trains never will. Buses in urban areas have to cope with traffic congestion that plays havoc with timetables, and they tend to be less spacious and less well sprung than trams and trains. Let's recognise there are horses for courses!

There have been some promising developments in recent weeks. These include the announcement by DfT of the setting up of the **mass transit taskforce**, whose remit is to tackle barriers to delivery of mass transit systems. Alongside this, the government is to consult on Transport and Works Act Orders to devolve to mayors "the tools to deliver local transport that meets the needs of local people", which is being interpreted as the power to approve their own mass transit schemes. This is long overdue.

Finally, there is promising mood music following Starmer's summit with West Yorkshire's and other executive mayors on 3rd June. One of the issues was mayors being given devolved powers to take control of local transport. Speaking after the summit, **West Yorkshire Mayor Tracy Brabin** was reported in Rail Business Daily as saying "We have ambitious plans for our region and a mass transit network is a key part to unlocking our untapped potential which will boost growth and put more money in people's pockets. With backing from the Government and more powers devolved to mayors who know their areas best, we will transform West Yorkshire. **Building the Mass Transit system our region needs will benefit the economy, strengthen connections, and improve lives for generations to come.**"

One of the first proposed tram routes would link Leeds United's stadium to central Leeds. This has become even more important given the planned redevelopment at Elland Road which will increase the capacity of the stadium from 37 000 to 53 000, and create 2500 new homes. The planning documents for the redevelopment have the clear ambition to reduce the number of spectators arriving by car from 64.5 % to 27.5%, and mass transit is clearly vital →



Lots of big cities have them. Here's one in Birmingham. Trams are comfier than buses and can reach more places than trains. What's not to like? Sadly, the DfT feels obliged to question good ideas, but there is more optimism in West Yorkshire after recent meeting between Kier Starmer and the northern mayors. (Photo NS, caption JSW)

→ to achieving this. **As an aside, this redevelopment will also impact on the numbers arriving at Leeds by train, and is another reason why Northern and TPE need an overall increase in the number of both train sets and train carriages.** Will HM Treasury allow this?

Mini-Switzerland!

An encouraging piece of recent news is the “mini-Switzerland” pilot in the Hope Valley area of the Peak District. Switzerland is renowned for its integrated public transport, with clockface timetables. The pilot will promote reliable bus and train connections between buses services and train services at the Hope Valley line stations of Edale, Bamford, Hathersage, Hope and Eyam, as well as between different bus services. This is an imaginative scheme, the brainchild of Hope Valley Climate Action, and funded by a £6 million government grant to the East Midlands Combined Authority.

The biggest obstacle to the scheme’s success has to be the crisis affecting Hope Valley Line services on Sundays. Northern has had to introduce a reduced Sunday timetable owing to the limited availability of train conductors, who are based in their Central region, and are on terms and conditions of service dating from the early privatisation days of First North Western when new contracts were given that made Sundays not a part of the normal working week and thus to be staffed by voluntary overtime. Results of a recent union ballot may be known by the time you read this.

We have a speaker on mini-Switzerland at our October branch meeting. **See back page.**

Train crew contracts

As I and many others have said on numerous occasions, it is complete nonsense that staff operating a crucial public service are not on contracts that ensure full staffing across a seven-day week. It does not apply to all of Northern: fortunately, staff in our east region have proper seven-day availability contracts. However, some other train operating companies’ services are suffering from the same staffing issues as Northern’s central region.

The sooner DfT and GBR¹ can sort this out, the better. All GBR staff should be on the same contracts that require the working week to be on any of the seven days. This is a crisis, and one that not only inconveniences people and reduces railway revenue, but also sabotages the need for modal shift to reduce carbon emissions and reduce overcrowding and congestion on our overcrowded roads.²

East of Leeds corridor

Network Rail has just published a report **East of Leeds Corridor – Strategic Advice**. The report asks “What is the optimum service pattern for local services? What service improvements are required to accommodate forecast passenger and freight growth?”, and **it puts forward scenarios based on different growth forecasts.**

Whilst I have only had time to skim read it, it is clear that much thought and work has gone into the modelling to develop the scenarios, and the report needs detailed consideration.

Good news includes:

- assumptions that longer trains will be needed on some routes,
- TPE Manchester-Wakefield-York service should continue, and call at Sherburn-in-Elmet,
- and that there should be an hourly service between Sheffield and York via Pontefract.

The report does not appear to have modelled the impact of resolving the bottleneck immediately east of Leeds station, whether that be by the very expensive option of four tracking that would involve land purchase and property demolition, or whether it can be achieved by digital signalling that allows for much shorter headways between trains than currently. Nor has the report looked at an expanding railway, thus the need to reopen the railway between York and Beverley is not looked at.

Tickets, rights, and refunds

In our previous issue I raised the unfairness of being unable to get even a partial refund on unused advanced purchase tickets. I hope that this issue is being looked at by DfT, but I fear it is not. Around the time that issue of YRC was published, DfT announced a new policy whereby no ticket can be refunded on the day of travel except in “exceptional circumstances”. This has HM Treasury written all over it, as they are concerned about the estimated £40 million lost each year through ticket fraud, particularly people using anytime tickets again if they have not been cancelled by ticket staff or gates.

So honest people who are unable to fulfil their travel plans are being penalised, perhaps by hundreds of →

¹ And presumably workers’ elected trade unions! – JSW

² Ballot result expected very soon – JSW

→ pounds, because the railway is failing to do enough to catch enough criminal defrauders. Whilst £40 million is a lot of money to you and me, it is a very small amount in terms of the cost of running the railway and a tiny amount in terms of overall government expenditure. I do hope a future government will undo this wrong.

Innovation centre at Barrow Hill

Good news is that a new railway innovation centre has been completed at Barrow Hill near Chesterfield, and will officially open later this year. It aims to be a flagship destination for the railway industry, offering modern classrooms and training areas, specialist research and development facilities including a digital laboratory, and high quality commercial workshop space. There is only one problem.

Whilst Barrow Hill is on the direct route from Rotherham to Chesterfield, it does not have a station as the route is freight only. So all the railway employees accessing this new centre will be driving there, or getting a taxi from Chesterfield. **Either way, it adds to the case for restoring passenger services on this route, perhaps with tram trains, and opening stations on the line, including Barrow Hill.** This was, after all, one of those lines which was progressing well through the Restoring Our Railways scheme until Rachel Reeves pulled the plug.



Rob Burrow CBE (26 September 1982 – 2 June 2024) was a professional Rugby League player. In December 2019, Pontefract-born Burrows was diagnosed with motor neurone disease (MND). He went on to raise awareness of the disease. He and fellow player Kevin Sinfield were both awarded CBEs in 2024 for their efforts in raising funds and raising awareness of the disease. Burrows died from complications of MND on 2 June 2024, aged 41. Sinfield received a knighthood in the recent King's Birthday Honours for services to rugby and to the MND community. This Class 195 Northern train celebrates Burrow's life and charitable fundraising. Photo at Hebden Bridge by Nina (caption JSW).

New services elsewhere. What about Yorkshire? Just asking!

There is good news from elsewhere on the railway network. A new hourly Transport for Wales service has just started between Liverpool and Llandudno. The Camp Hill line and three stations have reopened to passengers in Birmingham. The government has given the go-ahead to the long awaiting reopening of the Portishead branch, which will provide much needed commuter railway into Bristol. The first phase of the [Mid Cornwall Metro](#) has opened, restoring an hourly service between Newquay and Par. Later this will be extended to St Austell, Truro and Falmouth, linking some of Cornwall's largest towns with a single service. The service will be operated by excellent class 175 DMUs, displaced from Wales.

So when will Yorkshire get an hourly service between Sheffield, Pontefract and York; an hourly service from Pontefract to Doncaster with a new station at the Askern; and an hourly service from Goole to Leeds? And when will Marsden, Slaithwaite, Greenfield, Brighouse (and Elland!), and Rotherham get two trains an hour to Leeds?

Northern's new trains

Northern has appointed James Howard as to take charge of its new trains programme. It is hoped to award contracts by early 2027. **Railfuture stresses that these new trains must have at least two toilets, and that there should be two and probably three different internal specifications dependent on the normal use of units.**

Whilst high-capacity stock is needed for short distance commuter journeys such as Pontefract to Leeds, more comfortable trains are needed for middle distances services, whilst Northern needs dedicated rolling stock for its longest journeys such as York to Blackpool, and Leeds to Carlisle, Nottingham, Lincoln and Chester. Such rolling stock should have upgraded seating, provision for a refreshment trolley, adequate provision for luggage and bicycles. All new trains should have capacity for at least two wheelchairs and room for folded buggies.

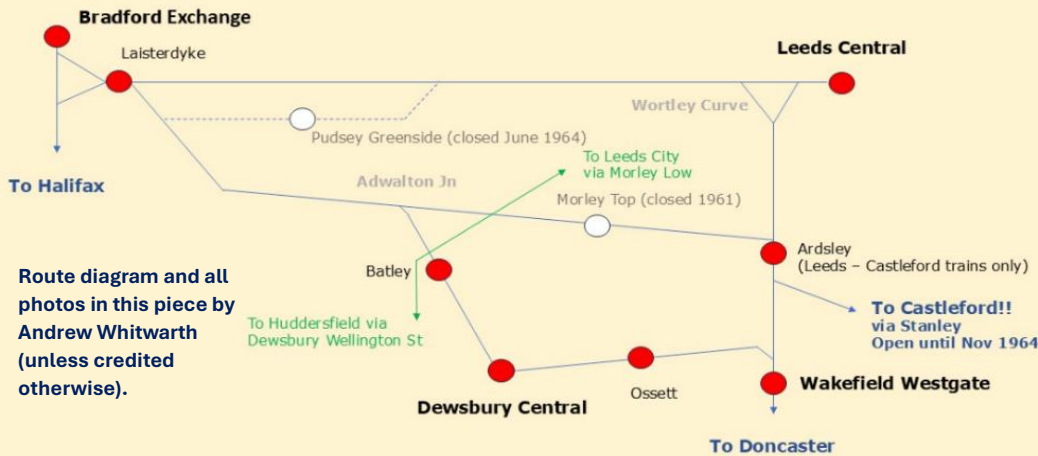
The new train orders must not be confined to like for like. The DFT must authorise sufficient new rolling stock (carriages and units) to enable Northern to fully serve the region, including the new and enhanced services examples of which are mentioned above, as well as an additional Brighouse line trains service, and an enhanced Leeds-Sheffield fast service.

NS: 11/6/2026

Gone but not forgotten: Bradford-Wakefield routes

by Andrew Whitworth, continuing his series

Bradford to Wakefield rail connections – August 1964



Route diagram and all photos in this piece by Andrew Whitworth (unless credited otherwise).

Note: Stanningley, Bramley and Armley Moor were open, but for Bradford-Leeds local services only

We're all very used to the rail network in West Yorkshire being primarily a radial design with Leeds City at the hub since that station's remodelling and enlargement in April 1967 towards the end of the Beeching closures. There have always been exceptions to this: the Bradford-Ilkley/Keighley and the Huddersfield-Wakefield services. More recently they have been joined by some others: Wakefield to Knottingley and Bradford to →

→Huddersfield, plus Grand Central's open access trains.

But back in 1963 West Yorkshire's second city still had direct services south to Wakefield and to Huddersfield. Both of them ran over multiple routes, and all these lines were threatened with closure in Beeching's Reshaping report.

The links to Huddersfield will be covered in a future article but in this issue I explore the Bradford – Wakefield direct routes.

Bradford-Wakefield trains

One service connecting Bradford with Wakefield Westgate was a local service calling at Laisterdyke, Batley, Dewsbury Central and Ossett stations. This ran over former Great Northern tracks and shared a station at Batley with the Leeds-Huddersfield ex-LNW line, though the stations at Dewsbury were distinct. The service was an early convert to diesel operation in 1957.

The line was proposed for closure in the reshaping report, and services ended in September 1964 with closure for freight following five months later³. The service at the end was decent but irregular, with 9 trains daily on weekdays, and a handful of trains continuing through Kirkgate and on ... →



³ To preserve access to Dewsbury Railway Street goods yard, which stayed open until 1990, BR reinstated a link to the Calder Valley line that had previously closed in 1933.



Earlsheaton tunnel, east of Dewsbury, reopened in 2013 to improve the greenway to Ossett. Rampant vegetation looks intimidating.

→ ... to Goole.

Travelling from Bradford, journey times were amazingly fast compared to modern trips on congested roads, or the alternative rail journeys via Leeds. Bradford to Dewsbury was 23 mins compared to 59 mins on the 283 bus today, or typically 47 mins changing trains at Leeds. Bradford to Batley was 19 mins versus today's 44 mins by bus and 55 mins by train⁴. Wakefield to Dewsbury now takes 44 mins by the 268 bus or by train via Leeds, compared with 1964's 14 minutes!

Mass-transit potential?

There has been massive redevelopment along the route – including an improved stretch of the A650 road and the Birstall retail

park, while the section from Dewsbury to Ossett through Earlsheaton Tunnel is now a pleasant greenway. It's not a line that would ever reopen as heavy rail, but with the severe congestion in this area couldn't it be an eventual candidate for mass transit which could reuse parts of this alignment where still available, quite possibly in combination with the Spen Valley line, or the ex-LNW Leeds "new" line?

And wouldn't this role for mass transit make more sense than running parallel to existing heavy rail services, or running along bus routes at the same traffic speed as today?

Bradford-Wakefield portions

In 1963 the above local service was supplemented by portions of King's Cross expresses, 2 or 3 coaches in length, which ran direct from Bradford Exchange to Wakefield Westgate where they would be joined to the major portion from



Bizarrely, the frontage of Dewsbury Central survives today, carrying the 1988 ring road.

Leeds Central. These generally ran on a second direct route from Laisterdyke via Morley Top (closed in 1961) to Ardsley, but as there were no longer any intermediate station calls some of these trains instead took the Wortley curve, and there seems to be little difference in the times by either route.

Several London services from Bradford Exchange travelled via Leeds where they often joined with portions from Harrogate. The overall journey time was very similar – about 45 to 48 minutes from leaving Bradford Exchange to departing Wakefield Westgate whether combining the portions at Leeds or Wakefield, though the latter added about 5 minutes to the Leeds-London time. The

Bradford to Wakefield direct journey itself took around 32 minutes. In the April 1966 timetable there appear to be only two remaining King's Cross services whose Bradford portions continued to be combined at Wakefield, though this increased to five on summer Saturdays.

Given the lack of time benefit, there was little justification for keeping the Morley Top route open. With intermediate stops having ceased in 1961 there was no single objection when axing was proposed and the line was closed to passengers in July 1966. Three months later the line was severed for goods traffic, though the eastern section from Ardsley continued in freight use until 1969, while the section from Laisterdyke to Dudley Hill lasted a further decade. The route is now heavily developed and reopening would be impractical, though the line's raison d'être has been lost in any case.

For a while after July 1966 these Bradford – Wakefield portions were all routed via Wortley, but from the next timetable in March 1967 the Bradford portions were recast so that they all combined at Leeds.

The operation of all these portions seems bizarre to modern eyes – short trains clogging up major stations with complicated manoeuvres. The fact that they were steam hauled until October 1967 – the last such services in the →

⁴ Slower than the Dewsbury journey due to reduced frequency increasing connection times at Leeds

→ West Riding – only makes this practice more archaic. There were also portions from Bradford combining at Leeds for services to St Pancras and the West Country – though in line with tradition going back to before nationalisation these ran from Forster Square until switched to Exchange in May 1967.

The Bradford Executive

Around this time there was another significant development in Bradford to King's Cross services. Steam finished in June 1963 for West Riding expresses to King's Cross, and on the entire East Coast main line by the end of 1965. The April 1966 timetable saw an acceleration of services as track improvements now allowed 100mph operation with the superb Deltics, and several realignments along the route (such as the Retford flyunder) gave further speed benefits. Additionally, a select number of premier services were scheduled with Deltics hauling a lighter load of 8 carriages rather than the usual 12. This included a new direct service from Bradford avoiding Leeds, leaving Wakefield after 32 minutes then running non-stop to King's Cross.

Bradford's prestigious London express wasn't actually named the Bradford Executive until June 1973, but this train continued into the Inter City 125 era, eventually calling also at Leeds after May 1984 when the Wortley curve fell into disuse, though still bearing the same name for several years. In 2024 Network Rail spent the trifling sum of £47k buying back the Wortley curve footprint for reasons that remain rather mysterious – though WYCA is proposing using this land for one of the mass transit route options between Leeds and Bradford.⁵

A renaissance

Meanwhile the introduction of Inter City 125 on the East Coast starting in May 1978 meant that the use of portions was abandoned in readiness for the fixed formation units, and a handful of whole trains now started at Bradford, running via Leeds with the single exception of the Bradford Executive up to 1984. In October 1988 these services were transferred to Bradford Forster Square, and after building an extra platform there in May 2025 the number of daily LNER services dramatically increased from 2 to 7.

The ghost of the Bradford Executive can still be seen today in one of these services – the 0630 from Forster Square leaves Leeds at 0700, and arrives King's Cross 1h 59m later with one call only, at Wakefield. It's a named train – The West Riding Limited – and though the moniker receives little publicity it's shown in LNER's timetable and on the platform displays. This title was first launched back in 1937 – traditions still have weight on the railway!

Bradford Interchange found itself reconnected to London – and once again "directly"⁶ to Wakefield (though now Kirkgate) – when Grand Central introduced their open access services in May 2010 routed via Halifax and Brighouse which now total four daily trains.

Though useful local rail links from Bradford to Dewsbury and Wakefield have sadly been lost, the connections from Bradford on to London, after many changes over recent decades, now seem to be as strong as ever!



Bradford's trains to London have had a chequered history. Here's a Grand Central one about to leave Interchange station and go via Halifax. A long way round but the four trains a day are massively useful for Low Moor, Brighouse and Mirfield. (Photo and caption – JSW)



Bradford Forster Square is pretty much fully electric with local trains to Skipton, Ilkley and Leeds. The Skipton and Ilkley trains are now only one an hour for much of the day. The LNER Azuma also has "pan up" to collect the juice. The London Kings Cross trains (LNER) run 7 times daily each way, 6 on Sundays. (Photo and caption – JSW)

⁵ Could they path a Bradford-Wakefield service (say half hourly) via the Wortley curve and GNR line? Moot point! – JSW

⁶ If you can call Bradford-Wakefield via Halifax direct! But let's not knock it. We're glad of it! – JSW

Sheffield and Hope Valley – starting with some history!

by Chris Morgan

Older heads may recall their local railways at the time of the Beeching Report of 1963. Lots of steam locos to record in Ian Allan spotting books. That was certainly still true through Sheffield although diesel haulage and first generation DMUs were starting to appear. These were the twilight days with four active platforms at Dore & Topley and four tracks from there into Sheffield where the 1900 flyunder was still taking expresses across from Platform 1 to go south⁷. In the 1960s the Sheffield area was one of the busiest areas in the country but in 1968 all stopping services down the Sheaf Valley ceased. By 1972 all the stations were demolished and two tracks from Dore into Sheffield had been removed.

At the other end of the former Dore & Chinley Railway services were being withdrawn between Chinley and Derby



Crowds take the sun and wait for trains at Edale on the Hope Valley line. Northern runs just two trains every three hours on Sundays on this prime days-out line. Picture by Chris Morgan.

via Bakewell and Matlock. There too tracks and platforms were removed.

Railways were declining faster than ever when the 1982 Serpell Report coincided with widespread industrial action. More draconian closures looked to be on the way but the executioner's hand was stayed. Most remaining branch lines survived but big cuts were needed, less track mileage, fewer points and signals, shorter platforms to be maintained and fewer manned stations. In 1985 Dore & Topley was reduced to a single platform on a single bottle necking track that became an increasing problem for almost 40 years.

These decisions were probably correct based on the declining traffic at that time. There was one fast train each hour between Sheffield and Manchester and a stopping service every 2 or 3 hours - rarely more than 3 trains an hour running through the station. Curiously the Hazel Grove chord was opened in 1986 to speed Manchester bound trains: ***east and west sides of British Railways on opposing courses.***

By 2020 there were at least six trains an hour through Dore station run by three operators between Sheffield and Manchester. In 2023 the second track at Dore and a new platform were built. Both platforms were upgraded for 6-car trains. Manchester is the top destination from Sheffield and we have new capacity issues.

Northern's faulty CAF trains to be fixed by August, we're assured

All three operators are short of serviceable rolling stock to run more, especially when only a small part of long distance routes are busy for parts of the day. Northern's newest 3-car Class 195s are less than 7 years old but many already need engine and wheel set replacement. That leaves them short to run services, but ***we're assured they should all be fixed by CAF before August.***

Northern conductors working from their North West depots don't want to volunteer enough Sunday overtime to operate their full timetable. That's been the case since 2024 and means we've lost of one in three hourly Sunday services at all stations - the most popular day for leisure! The RMT's holding a referendum on a new offer as I write. Fingers crossed that the offer is better tuned to their work force than the one that was resoundingly rejected in 2024.

On the brighter side TPE's extra 08.15 westbound Sunday stop at Dore has been welcomed. EMR's new 4-car return service from Nottingham to Manchester with stops at Dore is loading very well with full and standing eastbound every week. From May they've been stopping a 6-car train from Nottingham at Edale ***and it's proving very popular.***

⁷ Remember the fly-under? Our editor thinks he remembers travelling it to reach low numbered platforms. You can still see its remains south of Sheffield station. Does the railway regret its demise? - JSW

Wolds coast day out

by Ian Wood

Pontefract Civic Society rail group coordinator, and Railfuture Yorkshire branch treasurer

Pontefract Civic Society's rail group has been a member of the Community Rail Network (CRN) organisation since 2023 when all three of our stations joined their station adoption scheme. This has enabled us to apply for up to £1,000 per annum per station from their grant fund together with access to various networking and training opportunities.

I recently joined CRN's tourism network group and was privileged to join their trip with Community Rail Partnership (CRP) members in April this year. We were hosted by Rachel Osborne of the Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership, winners of the Outstanding Contribution To Community Rail award at this year's CRN awards. I was struck by the positive energy and passion that Rachel displays.

The Yorkshire Coast CRP (chaired by Railfuture Yorkshire committee member Pete Myers) deliver a vast range of events and activities to connect communities with their railways. The partnership has shown real passion in supporting its network of station adopters.

We began by boarding the Hull to Bridlington (Wolds Coast) train and were invited to experience the Yorkshire Coast CRP's Traxplorer, an interactive app that enriches train journeys with live maps, travel information, station and line guides to help passengers explore, learn and travel by rail. I was particularly impressed with this. (See also: [Traxplorer' app looks to the future for Settle Carlisle Railway's 150th anniversary - Community Rail Network](#))

On arrival at Bridlington shortly after mid-day we were given a tour of the impressive Grade 2 listed station including station history and details of CRP projects along with an opportunity to take photographs. This was followed by lunch at a nearby local café where there was an opportunity to network with representatives from Community Rail Network and the other guest participants. After lunch some of the participants walked to the harbour before boarding the train back to Hull.

After a particularly interesting and enjoyable day, I am hopeful that some of what I learned may be applied at our stations in Pontefract – Monkhill, Tanshelf and Baghill. I also hope to participate in future on-line or in-person events that the Tourism Network are planning.



Community rail folks at Bridlington included Alice Mannion who organised the event, with Paul Webster, Erin Kelly (all from CRN) and representatives of other CRPs, including Brid's barrow boy. Picture by Rachel Osborne of the Yorkshire Coast community rail partnership.

Selby campaigners report

Work starts at last on station upgrade

By Terry French, Secretary, SADRAG

Campaigners in Selby and District Rail Action Group are pleased to report that after many delays work is now beginning on schemes aiming to improve accessibility to the station with greener forms of transport and encourage the growing local population to use train services more often.

The first stage of the £32million investment involves demolishing the former Railway Club building to allow the bus station area to be improved. The frontage of the station building will be refurbished and there will be a new car park.

There will be new access to the eastern side of the station. →



Can you see the scaffolding? Northern local service contrasts with Hull Trains! (Photo and caption JSW)

→The group is, however, disappointed that there appears to be little progress in producing a plan to re-build the canopies and upgrade the station buildings. With scaffolding and cages around pillars the station looks unsightly, as it has for quite a while, and the group continues to push for an action plan to be put in place. New lifts enabling access across between platforms via the refurbished footbridge are more than welcome of course.

S&C snaps

It would be wrong of us not to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Settle-Carlisle so here's a couple of shots, **by Andrew Whitworth**. Andrew had to rush off the train to get and dive quickly back on to get the panorama below on 1st May. At least there was room on the train. Beware of the busy days people have recounted 2-car trains impossible to board. **Appleby** (right) had more celebrations evident with bunting and costumes from over the years. (The lad's green wellies look very modern.)

More at [150 Celebrations – Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust – Visit and Stay at our Stations.](#)

Have a great trip! (JSW)



Hoping you have enjoyed YRC73!
Turn over for events and the small print.

Upcoming meetings (speakers may be subject to confirmation)

Inaugural user group meeting: Thursday 2nd July 19.30 Ealand Victory Hall, DN17 4JL near Crowle (see p4)

Sheffield Sat 10 Oct, joint branch meeting with Rf East Mids and Lincolnshire. Hallam View Meeting Room, Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus, Sheffield, S1 1WB (5 mins from station). **Starts 13.00.** Speakers **Kevin Towle, SYMCA** rail development manager on **improving capacity at Sheffield station**, and **Anne Robinson** of Hope Valley Climate Action on **Mini-Switzerland**. Ends 16.00

Manchester Sat 7 Nov joint branch meeting with Rf North West. Friends Meeting House, Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS, **Starts 13.00.** Speaker TBA. Ends 16.00. More details will follow in next issue of YRC.

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Please send articles and pictures for Autumn 2026 issue: by **last day of August 2026**

Early submissions welcome!

Digital copy preferred. 750 words will fill page; longer or shorter pieces welcome. Please be concise. Copy may be edited for style, grammar, etc. **Illustrations** (not just pictures of trains!) also very much encouraged if we can reproduce them freely (so give source or photographer etc. Any **paper articles** should be **no more than one side of A4.**

It's not too early to think about what you want to write.

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.uk
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	railadministrator@pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk
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://upperwensleydalerrailway.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) and Membership & distribution officer : Andrew Dyson andrew.dyson@railfuture.org.uk
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