

Rail North West



A Class 195 in the Hope Valley. Photo courtesy of Northern

Northern North West Sunday Services Cut by Nearly 40%

Analysis by Railfuture North West branch shows that some services in the North West are now 50% of their previous levels on Sundays, with the average about 37%. This is due to the ongoing shortage of conductors volunteering to work Sundays to cover previous service levels. This situation has been ongoing since December 2024 when North West based RMT members rejected an offer to include Sundays in their working week and Northern have then since had insufficient conductors to cover services.

Railfuture understands that over the last 18 months, there have been several further offers put to the North West based RMT conductors such that Sundays would be part of their working week in future, meaning that

a full service could be scheduled again, but no deal has yet been accepted.

Following on from problems highlighted on the Hope Valley Line between Manchester and Sheffield, where the problem seems to be most acute, with on the day cancellations to an already limited services causing widespread disruption, Railfuture has heard a number of examples of local walking groups that used the train to get to Hope Valley destinations to start and finish walks, either having the walk cancelled because of a planned service being cancelled or unable to either board the train because it was short formed (and likely to be the first service available for all passengers because of earlier cancellations).



Avanti West Coast Avero 807006 at Liverpool South Parkway station, photo courtesy Avanti West Coast

Summer Service Cuts on Avanti

Avanti are cutting nearly 12% of their summer services on weekdays following pressure from the Department for Transport to cut costs.

The cuts to services will apply for a six-week period from 20th July to 28th August 2026, with the North West having 5 return services from each of Liverpool and Manchester removed (detailed timings in the boxes on the right). Although not directly affecting the North West the cuts of 9 return services to Birmingham are likely to affect services further north as they're likely to add to the load of Scottish services which call at stations further north on the West Coast Main Line (Preston, Lancaster, Oxenholme and Penrith). It's to be hoped that all of the remaining services will be diagrammed for 11-car sets.

Avanti says that they have prioritised off peak, lightly loaded services, although its noted

Liverpool Route

Departure	From	To	Arrival
07:07	Liverpool Lime Street	London Euston	09:34
09:08	Liverpool Lime Street	London Euston	11:30
11:08	Liverpool Lime Street	London Euston	13:30
13:08	Liverpool Lime Street	London Euston	15:30
18:08	Liverpool Lime Street	London Euston	20:30
08:07	London Euston	Liverpool Lime Street	10:23
10:07	London Euston	Liverpool Lime Street	12:23
15:07	London Euston	Liverpool Lime Street	17:23
16:07	London Euston	Liverpool Lime Street	18:35
20:07	London Euston	Liverpool Lime Street	22:33

Manchester Route

Departure	From	To	Arrival
06:23	Manchester Piccadilly	London Euston	09:41
07:54	Manchester Piccadilly	London Euston	10:09
12:14	Manchester Piccadilly	London Euston	14:27
16:14	Manchester Piccadilly	London Euston	18:27
18:14	Manchester Piccadilly	London Euston	20:27
09:33	London Euston	Manchester Piccadilly	11:44
13:33	London Euston	Manchester Piccadilly	15:44
15:33	London Euston	Manchester Piccadilly	17:44
19:13	London Euston	Manchester Piccadilly	21:19
20:53	London Euston	Manchester Piccadilly	23:07

that two of the five southbound service cuts for both Liverpool and Manchester are the

0707 and 0908 from Liverpool and the 0623 and 0754 from Manchester which most would class as peak.

Avanti also claims to minimise the impact on capacity but all those removed from the Liverpool southbound services are 9 coach Pendolinos, when there is a 7 coach Avero (class 807) leaving 24/25 minutes before that could be removed to minimise the capacity impact instead. On the Manchester services, the 0623 and 1614 and 1814 southbound services are all 11 coach and the northbound 1333, 1533, 1913 and 2053 are all 11 coach

The three afternoon southbound services cut (1214, 1614 and 1814) do mean that Macclesfield loses its hourly direct services in those hours (only 1 Manchester - Euston tph calls at Macclesfield in the off peak).

The first three XX33 northbound Manchester departures cut mean Wilmslow has 2-hour service gaps in its direct services, while removal of the 2053 service departing Euston means effectively the last train of the day that makes connections with the last local services at Piccadilly is now the 2033. This service is the first after an hour's gap, so is likely to be busy with day trippers returning after a day out.

Lostock Energy Plant Rail Expansion

Lostock Sustainable Energy Plant (LSEP) Ltd is proposing to submit an application under S36C of the Electricity Act to vary the existing consent for the LSEP energy-from-waste facility, which is currently being built at the Lostock Works site near Northwich in Cheshire.

The proposed variation would allow the plant to maximise its full energy-generating potential. If approved, the facility could produce enough electricity to power up to 210,000 homes – equivalent to a town around two and a half times the size of Northwich and Winsford combined.

Although the plant is designed to generate up to 76.9 megawatts (MW) of electricity from non-recyclable waste, current planning restrictions on the waste that can be treated at the plant limit output to an equivalent of 67.3MW. The proposed variation would enable the plant to process more waste and increase electricity generation by around 10MW, but without any increase in the number of permitted HGV movements to and from the site.

In order to achieve this, LSEP is proposing to use the site's existing rail connection to export around 165,000 tonnes of ash from

the plant each year. This would involve bringing the former rail sidings previously used by Tata Chemicals back into use and investing in upgrades to the rail infrastructure, creating opportunities for greater use of rail at the site in the future. By using rail to export ash, it will be possible to import more waste fuel while remaining within the currently approved HGV numbers limit.

The plans also include changes to the approved Ash Handling Building, which would be slightly relocated (positioned over existing rail sidings) and expanded to add rail loading, allowing ash to be loaded directly onto trains within an enclosed environment.

It's expected the project overall will boost the regional economy with an annual operational expenditure of around £27 million per year, including opportunities for local firms, and additional income to the Council with an estimated £2.5 million per year in business rates.

LSEP Ltd expect to submit the Section 36C variation application to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) in late 2026.



Class 350's stored at Long Marston Photo courtesy The Basingstoker, CC BY-SA 4. via Wikimedia Commons

Northern To Replace Class 323's with Class 350/2's

Following on from trials on the Manchester – Glossop - Hadfield line last year, Northern has been given permission from the Department for Transport to lease 37 x 4 car Class 350/2's EMU's (previously used by West Midlands Trains and currently in store at Long Marston) to replace the present 34 x 3 car Class 323 EMU's in use across the North West electrified network.

Owain Roberts, Northern's North West Stakeholder Manager said, "Northern intend to take on the entire 37 x Class 350/2 fleet of trains which are currently off lease. We expect the first of these to arrive next

year with approximately 5x trains operating services in South Manchester by the end of 2027. They will then replace the rest of the Class 323 fleet as we move through 2028."

The units will have a £25m refurb before entering service. Current routes using the 323's are those from Blackpool to Manchester Airport, Liverpool to Wigan North Western, Manchester to Glossop/Hadfield, Manchester to Crewe via both Stockport and Manchester Airport and Manchester to Stoke-on-Trent and it's the last two that are expected to be first in line to be replaced by 323's during 2027.

Open at Royal Birkdale Gets Extra Trains

Between Monday July 13th and Sunday 19th July, Northern was able to increase capacity and services during the Open Golf tournament at Royal Birkdale, while protecting existing services and 4-car

operation on the Southport route as a priority.

They extended the Leeds-Wigan services through to Southport from Monday 13th to

Saturday 18th thus providing 3 trains per hour Wigan-Southport. On the final day, Sunday 19th, Northern restored an hourly service between Manchester Victoria and Southport and operated some additional Wigan-Southport shuttles to provide a half hourly frequency for some parts of the day. These services were included in Northern's online journey planner.

Meanwhile a week later from Monday 27th July to Friday 31st July, Rail Replacement buses will run from Southport-Wigan.

Network Rail has taken out a full possession order on the line to facilitate engineering work along the route, mainly track renewal at the Parbold Flood Site,

signalling maintenance around Meols Cop with no fundamental changes to the signalling layout, some rail changing work around New Lane and vegetation clearance taking place alongside all locations mentioned.

The Fylde MP Andrew Snowden has called for government backing for a loop on the South Fylde line following the award of the 2028 Open Golf Championship to the Royal Lytham and St Annes Golf Club. The single-track line is limited to one train per hour each way and installation of a passing loop part way along the route would enable more frequent services.

Investment in Metrolink continues with major track and lift replacement programme

Manchester's Metrolink network is undergoing major engineering works over the summer with a key closure of the central artery of the network between Trafford Bar and Deansgate-Castlefield between 13th July and 2nd August for 1.6km of track replacement, some of which is more than thirty years old.

The closure will affect all services that pass through Cornbrook and no trams will run on the Eccles, Trafford Centre and Altrincham lines. Services on the East Didsbury and Manchester Airport lines will terminate at Firswood, while services on the Rochdale line will terminate at Exchange Square.

Replacement buses will run between affected stops, with normal services due to resume from Monday 3 August. There will be a special event bus service running for the cricket at Old Trafford on 26 and 31 July (The Hundred, Manchester Super Giants vs Birmingham and then Trent Rockets). There will be no replacement

buses on the Trafford Park Line after 8pm on Sundays. The route is well served by Bee Network buses which will provide an alternative for passengers at these times.

Between 13th and 29th July, work will also take place at Eccles and the city centre around Piccadilly Gardens. This will help to reduce the need for further disruptions to the network.

Due to the scale of the work at Trafford Bar and Deansgate-Castlefield – and to keep disruption to a minimum – there will also be a further two-week closure in the autumn to complete this phase.

Alongside this work, a separate £1.7 million investment will fund the replacement of eight ageing lifts at tram stops across the network over the coming months, as some of the existing lifts have ongoing issues so this work should improve the reliability of step free access.

The first lifts to be replaced will be at Heaton Park (from 29 July 2026) /cont...

and Failsworth (from 3 August 2026), with further work planned at Hollinwood, Freehold, Dane Road, Brooklands, Chorlton and Firwood. Each lift replacement is expected to take around four to eight weeks, during which time the affected lift will be out of service.

Work will take place in phases, with no more than two sites at a time. Only one platform will be done during each phase to

ensure step-free access is retained where possible.

TfGM are deploying staff at key stops to support customers. Passengers who need extra help completing their journey will be able to contact TfGM in advance to arrange support, with teams on hand to offer advice and assistance based on individual needs.

Boost to North West to North Wales Services

Transport for Wales introduced what they are calling one of the most significant timetable changes for North Wales in a generation on May 17th.

The change increased the number of rail services on the North Wales Coast Line by around 50%.

For North West passengers, the major changes are that most Manchester - North Wales services that previously terminated at Llandudno, are now extended to Holyhead, enhancing ferry connections to Ireland, while Liverpool now gets a through service to Llandudno by extending the present Liverpool – Chester service. The separate Wrexham - Chester and Chester - Crewe hourly services are being combined into one through service.

The new structure introduces a standard hourly pattern along the North Wales Coast, meaning some trains will run at the same time each hour to make journey planning easier.

The changes will deliver a significant increase in train frequency and capacity between Chester and Llandudno Junction, one of the busiest sections of the Wales and Borders rail network.

TfW is also preparing for the rollout of phase one of Pay as you Go (PAYG) in

North Wales this year after introduction in South East Wales. The first phase of the rollout, which went live on 18th May, includes 15 stations from Wrexham General - Bidston. (Bidston is not a TfW station however a TfW platform validator is available at the station to enable PAYG use.).

Last year, funding was secured to remodel Padeswood sidings on the Wrexham – Bidston line to remove the need to split and join freight trains from Heidelberg Materials cement works on the main line, and make provision for southbound access. A further benefit is that much longer trains will be possible, meaning less HGV traffic on the local road network, which currently takes 80% of the factory's output.

This work will enable the full two trains per hour (tph) passenger service long called for by the Wrexham Bidston Rail Users Association and will enable the longer-term ambition of 4 tph, along with the possibility of through services to Liverpool using battery electric trains.

The Outline Business case for the remodelling was completed last October and the project is currently preparing the Full Business Case.



CGI View of platform level at Liverpool Baltic, courtesy Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Liverpool Baltic Station Delay

Steve Rotheram, The Mayor of Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has express his frustration at further delays in getting work underway on the planned new station in Liverpool.

Work to start building this station on the Northern line part of the Merseyrail network has previously experienced delays in appointing a qualified contractor to undertake the work, with Network Rai (who would likely be the one invited to manage the project) unable to offer any resources or staffing to the project, due to workload elsewhere.

The work needed would involve licensed contractors on what is a live railway in a

cutting but the mayor now says thoughts are turning towards a series of planned line possessions with bus replacements instead, which has delayed the process further as planning for this takes considerable co-ordination.

The station is planned to be between Brunswick and Liverpool Central on the site of the former St James station, serving the emerging creative and hospitality businesses building up in the area

Work was meant to start towards the end of last year, opening late in 2027, but that had already been put back to March 2028, and the Combined Authority is now not confirming any possible opening date.

Joint Meeting

On Saturday 7th November, there's a joint branch meeting with Railfuture Yorkshire branch. It's planned to have a speaker to talk about the ongoing central Manchester issues, but that's not confirmed at the time of going to press.

The meeting will be at Friends Meeting House, Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS, **Starts 13.00** Ends 16.00. More details will follow on the NW [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

New Ticket Gates

Avanti West Coast (at Liverpool) and Trans Pennine Express (at Manchester) are among those allocated funding for new or replacement ticket gates by the Government. These new gates are expected to be taller to prevent barrier jumping

£33.4 million overall has been allocated for the project covering eighteen stations across England.

The new ticket gates will be able to scan digital tickets, insert paper tickets or 'tap out' where contactless travel is available and follow wider changes coming in across the railway to improve ticketing and stop fraud. Earlier this year, the government announced that under Great British Railways, passengers will be able to claim Delay Repay directly from wherever they buy their ticket, making it quicker and easier to apply for compensation.

Integrated Ticket to Keswick Drives Record Public Transport Growth

The integrated rail and bus ticket to Keswick has relaunched for its third year, building on the success of a "virtual railway station" that is helping drive record public transport use to the Lake District.

By adding Keswick as a destination in journey planners, customers can now book a single ticket for seamless travel by train to Penrith and onward by bus, making sustainable journeys to the North Lakes easier all year round.

Avanti's initiative, delivered in partnership with other rail operators and Stagecoach, has contributed to significant growth in visitor

numbers. Travel to Penrith has risen sharply, while bus journeys between Penrith and Keswick have also increased following improved service frequency.

This collaborative approach is supporting wider sustainable tourism ambitions, encouraging more people to leave the car behind and explore the region by public transport. It also aligns with regional efforts to reduce congestion and protect the Lake District environment while improving connectivity for visitors and local communities.

Railfuture North West Facebook Page

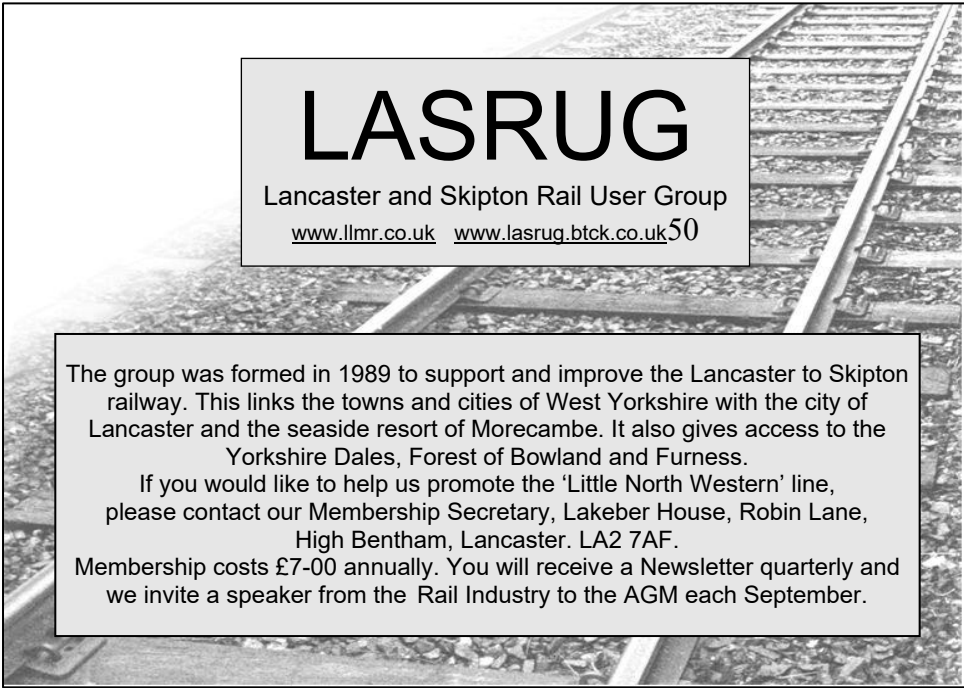
Railfuture North West now has a Facebook page where we post news and other items about the latest developments. We encourage all members to subscribe and like the page, you can also post anything of relevance yourselves. The page can be found at;

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1469070153787148>

Future branch meetings.

Our next branch committee meeting is planned to be on Thursday 3rd September 2026 starting at 1300 at a Castlestead View, Burton Road, Oxenholme, KENDAL, LA9 7FY

The following meeting will be on Thursday November 12th 2026, at venue to be advised, at our usual time. Further dates/details will be on our website but do please get in touch with your branch committee, Chair, Vice Chair or Secretary (details on the back page) to confirm and if there are any issues you wish to raise.



LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group

www.llmr.co.uk www.lasrug.btck.co.uk50

The group was formed in 1989 to support and improve the Lancaster to Skipton railway. This links the towns and cities of West Yorkshire with the city of Lancaster and the seaside resort of Morecambe. It also gives access to the Yorkshire Dales, Forest of Bowland and Furness.

If you would like to help us promote the 'Little North Western' line, please contact our Membership Secretary, Lakeber House, Robin Lane, High Bentham, Lancaster. LA2 7AF.

Membership costs £7-00 annually. You will receive a Newsletter quarterly and we invite a speaker from the Rail Industry to the AGM each September.

Rail User Groups within the North West area

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

- Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association
- Bolton Rail Users Group (note link presently not working)
- Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group
- Friends of Castleton Station
- Friends of Denton Station (link not working, see friends of Reddish South)
- Friends of Eccles Station
- Friends of Littleborough Stations (Lancashire)
- Friends of Reddish South Station
- Friends of Rose Hill Station
- Friends of St Annes Stations email brussell_2019@outlook.com
- Friends of Settle Carlisle Line
- Furness Line Action Group (FLAG)
- Lakes Line Rail User Group (LLRUG)
- Lancaster, Morecambe Rail & District Rail User Group (no link presently)
- Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group (LASRUG)
- Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association (MCRUA)
- North Cheshire Rail Users' Group (NCRUG)
- Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers Association (OPSTA)
- Ribble Valley Rail
- Shrewsbury-Chester Association for Rail Passengers
- Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership (SELRAP) (reopening campaign)
- Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester line (STORM)
- Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group
- Wirral Transport Users' Association (WTUA)
- Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users Association (WBRUA)

Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association (Incorporating South Fylde Line Users Association)

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

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



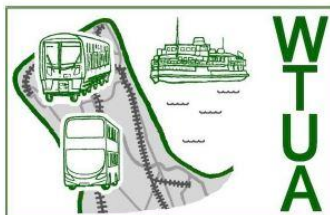
Join us, it's only £3/year, £5 for family membership.

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

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

Wirral Transport Users Association

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



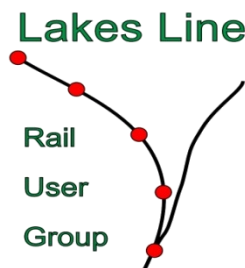
We publish our newsletter once or twice a year. Our AGM includes a talk from an expert on some facet of the transport world. We aim to run coach excursions to heritage railways and other places of transport activity or interest once or twice a year.

For more info, see website- www.wirraltua.org.uk, email wirraltua@gmail.com, or phone Brian Grey on 0151 648 3070.

Annual membership- Individual: £10, Couple at same address: £12. Send for an application form to: Brian Grey, 56 Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral CH61 4US.

THE LAKES LINE RAIL USER GROUP

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



Join Today!

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

Membership: £6.00 Individuals,

£7.00 Family, £13.00 Corporate

LA9 5DA

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

Railfuture North West Branch Officers

<i>Chairman</i> Trevor Bishop	4 Butterfield Close Cheadle Hulme Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 7AE	trevor.bishop@railfuture.org.uk Tel 0161 485 8426 mobile 07973 725254
<i>Vice Chairman & Treasurer</i> Malcolm Conway	34, Castlestead View, Castlestead Close, Oxenholme, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7FY	malcolmconway@aol.co.uk Tel 01539 756272 mobile 07956 345130
<i>Freight Officer</i> (vacant)		
<i>Secretary and Returning Officer</i> Christopher Norton	26 Handsworth Road Blackpool FY1 2RQ	cjnblackpool@btinternet.com 01253 623338
<i>Media Officer</i> (vacant)		

Rail North West is the newsletter of the North West branch of Railfuture. Contributions in the form of articles and letters are welcomed. Please send them to Arthur Thomson at arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk. Text files e-mailed are particularly welcome. The opinions expressed in *Rail North West* are those of any individual contributors and not necessarily those of Railfuture.

www.railfuture.org.uk

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All other correspondence to 3 Chandos Court, Martlesham, Suffolk IP12 4SU

Newsletter of the North West England Branch of Railfuture