

# Rail North West



*The shape of things to come? From the Air-Conditioned luxury of the 3 car Class 185 'Pennine' stock to the 2 car bouncy 'Nodding Donkeys' class 142 of a new 'Rail North' Franchise? Photo courtesy Alan Johnston, FLAG*

## FLAG fights for Fair Franchise

As politicians argue the merits of HS2 resolving main line capacity problems in 20 years time, the Furness Line Action Group, FLAG is fighting to prevent a new franchise taking the Cumbrian Coast 20 years back in time. The reductions in Manchester through services from December 2013 and May 2014 are the tip of the iceberg, as all could be removed from 2016 under the new Northern franchise. FLAG feels a high-speed rail system is long overdue and is a crucial long-term strategy to address massive

increases in rail traffic; however, there are more pressing rail investments in the short and medium term which would bring benefits to larger numbers of passengers, including the Furness line. HS2 must not divert money away from other essential projects including improving the capacity of existing routes, re-opening closed lines and ordering new rolling stock. FLAG also totally reject the suggestion of Institute of Directors chairman Ian Dormer to abandon HS2 and spend the money on new motorways. Railways

suffered from decades of under-investment as road-building thrived from the 1960s to the 1990s, encouraging growth of road transport and leading us down a blind alley of increasing traffic gridlock. We now have to concentrate on renewing our railways for the next two decades.

With the help of local MPs Tim Farron and John Woodcock and the Cumbria Better Connected campaign, FLAG is campaigning to prevent the Department for Transport marginalising the Cumbrian Coast to a branch line backwater. There is a high risk the DfT will remove the statutory requirement on a future operator to run Barrow to Manchester through services as electrification proceeds everywhere else. The DfT also supports local Councils overseeing our next franchise, which would leave Cumbria County Council as the small rural fish in the big urban pond. The city Passenger Transport Executives and populous authorities such as Lancashire County Council would control the bulk of the funding for rolling stock and services.

FLAG's current key aspirations can be summarised into the following key areas;

- The retention of through trains to Manchester Airport and possible new services to Leeds,
- a Sunday service between Barrow and Whitehaven,
- regular frequency trains at all stations with improved connections
- Increased use of the Cumbrian

Coast line by freight traffic.

To support the above, the line needs to retain air-conditioned modern rolling stock with 100mph capability to enable running beyond Lancaster and, in the longer term, electrification from Carnforth to Barrow. Resignalling between Barrow and Whitehaven would eliminate manual crossings and facilitate new services.

FLAG feels it's important that the DfT's Franchise agreement with any future operator ensures investment in passenger information systems, car parking and full disabled access at stations.

FLAG therefore is looking to convince the Department for Transport of the case for Furness and South Cumbria rail services. Effectively, the DfT has:-

- Sanctioned North West electrification schemes which excluded the Furness line
- Failed to sanction investment in new rolling stock
- Sought to reduce the Passenger Service Requirement which determines the minimum number of Barrow/Manchester through services

The DfT is also overseeing a franchising process which may result in Furness being relegated to a lower-tier Northern type franchise with limited investment, and is pushing a move towards localisation which, on balance of funding, would favour the PTEs and penalise the

rural Councils, particularly Cumbria.

The economic importance of South Cumbria with growing industries and tourism needs re-stressing to the DfT. Burnley gets through services in 2014 through new Todmorden curve, so Barrow could soon become the only major North West town without a through link. The area's two MPs and the Cumbria Better Connected campaign must lose no time in continuing the fight for the future.

## **News from Friends of Reddish South**

Friends of Reddish South Station are celebrating a double achievement recently after pressing on with their campaign for regular trains on the line.

Motions in support of lobbying TfGM for the full re-opening of the line were passed at both Stockport and Tameside Council meetings, with the help of a local MP and Councillors. In Stockport, Councillor Iain Roberts proposed the motion with three seconders: Councillor Walter Brett, Councillor & TfGM committee member, Paul Bellis, and Councillor Peter Burns, coming forward to support it

The line from Stockport to Stalybridge via Guide Bridge currently only has one train a week, the so-called "parliamentary" service that avoids the authorities moving forward with any official closure. Several Friends were there to witness this event and were pleased (as would most people), but not

surprised, to read that their motion was eloquently and ardently seconded by Walter in support of the motion, and enthusiastic cross-party support was also given both by Paul Bellis (Conservative) and Peter Burns (Independent). The motion was agreed unanimously by the council and the Friends could barely wait to get out of the council chamber to express their delight!

If you wish to hear it for yourself, go onto the Council website where there is a webcast of the whole meeting.

The Friends do thank Andrew Gwynne MP for all his work, and who initiated the first meeting with both Stockport & Tameside Council leaders as reported in their previous newsletter and said that they could not do this without him! They also thanked Council Leader Sue Derbyshire, Walter, Tom Grundy & Andy Verdeille for all their hard work within the council to make this happen as well as Liberal Democrat Political Assistant to Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), Jason Good & Labour Political Assistant to SMBC, Matthew Rhodes, who also worked so hard to get everything right.

The good news had started the week before when a similar motion was passed by Tameside council - the group thanks Councillor Kieran Quinn, Councillors Allison Gwynne, Dawson Lane and Brenda Warrington for their help. The Tameside motion, incidentally, includes the re-opening of Droylsden

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Station which is a cause very close to Cllr Quinn's heart so it coincides perfectly with the Campaign group's aims. FORSS are now confident that with both our councils' backing they can start to make real progress - at least the powers that be within Transport for Greater Manchester will realise they aren't going away!!

## **Trains and Trams miss the market again**

Members of STORM, support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester line reported that on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> STORM there was overcrowding on Calder Valley Trains. Evidently there was a particularly popular sporting attraction due to be played at Old Trafford that Saturday afternoon. This resulted in greater numbers wishing to travel to Manchester that morning but there was no serious problem reported at Sowerby Bridge until just after the 0959 train to Manchester had left. However, the two-car 150 unit forming the 0937 Leeds-Bradford Interchange – Manchester Victoria arrived at Sowerby Bridge (due 1019) already full with standing passengers, to the extent that more than fifty would-be passengers remained on the platform after it had departed. The following Manchester Victoria bound train, half an hour afterwards, booked to dash through Sowerby Bridge, ran as advertised. The next Manchester-bound train, the 1013 Leeds-Brighouse-Manchester Victoria was fortunately able to accommodate all those still waiting to travel from

Sowerby Bridge. Subsequent Manchester-bound departures from Sowerby Bridge until mid-afternoon were all heavily laden. It was observed that Manchester-bound Trans Pennine Express units left hundreds of potential match spectators, match ticket holders and would-be shoppers standing on Huddersfield station platform having failed to push their way aboard their booked or preferred train that morning – some of which was due no doubt to the spectators travelling to the World Cup Rugby at Old Trafford in Manchester. At the same time in Cardiff, Arsenal were playing Cardiff City Football club, also the Wales v Australia rugby autumn international, Arriva Trains Wales were providing extra train services and additional seating capacity where possible. STORM wonders why Northern and TPE didn't do the same."

This lack of planning has an effect that ran through the day as the initial problem at Huddersfield that Saturday morning didn't just melt away. A Huddersfield resident advised STORM members that there were hundreds unable to board FTPE Manchester bound trains because each one arriving was already at full upon arrival at Huddersfield. The trouble lasted for hours.

STORM feels both TOCs should have anticipated the situation and strengthened services as appropriate, though short of cancelling services on other routes to free up units for strengthening these

services, there is often very little Northern or TPE can do (it is known that an East Midlands HST is spare on Saturdays). Could either TOC have hired it with crew? But the over restrictive regulation these days precludes what all other countries would see as a good idea. The TOC's aren't solely to blame, successive government(s) since 1990 have brought in an era of minimum spare capacity. STORM feels that restrictions should be relaxed on these occasions, making it possible to hire in coaching stock (even Mark 1s) to give capacity at peak times.

STORM members report that Metrolink trams were affected by the extra traffic too, with one giving an example of how the Rochdale – Victoria line was affected. “A Tram arriving at Shaw around 12noon was already full and standing with about 50 passengers waiting to board. At Derker, there was another platform full and most managed to force their way on but those waiting at subsequent stops were not so lucky.” Although it's a maximum of 12 minutes between trams, STORM feels double trams could have been deployed to avoid this. The return trip was almost as bad, with a service timed at about 16.30 standing all the way back to Shaw and other Metrolink lines much the same. Was this just an unfortunate coincidence of major events?”

Another member reports, “Travelling from Freehold to Exchange Quays for the Rugby World Cup Final at Old

Trafford, and waiting for a tram at 12:06, with 2 minutes notice on the indicator board, the tram then arrived 12:11, absolutely packed and only two carriages.” This meant that no further passengers could board on the way to Victoria. There was no improvement further down when the member tried to pick up a tram at St. Peter's Square, three trams passed before there was room to board. On the way back from the match, there were similar occurrences, 2 carriage trams turned up for what was clearly a bigger need, the member eventually travelled instead to Piccadilly and walked to Victoria. Here there were more packed trams with a wait to get one to board, which then proceeded to take the wrong line to Bury despite being head-boarded as Rochdale and as the tram stopped at Abraham Moss station the driver to came down the tram saying “right tram, wrong line!” advising passengers to cross the line and get a packed tram being held to take back to Victoria. The STORM member declined and went onto Prestwich, where his wife (who was at Freehold) drove over to pick us up. But on a day when over 74,400 fans packed into Old Trafford from over the North and the world, with the Christmas shoppers in full force, the tram system badly let the city down. Bury trams were observed with four carriages. Why?”

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## **Railfuture North West**

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The Chairman of our Branch, Trevor Bishop has been considering how we can improve ourselves as a branch and be more effective campaigners.

We'd very much like it if just one or two more members were able to help the committee with a few things.

We have had a few retirements from the committee over the last few years and it has made us realise that we need more volunteers, of all ages and backgrounds, to work with the committee. The work is not onerous and can be tailored to suit each individual. Obviously, the more volunteers we have the easier each task becomes because it can be shared. One of the things that no doubt will grow is the use of the Internet and we can make better use of our own branch web-pages, and although we have been set up with a Twitter account, we have yet to make use of it as we simply don't have enough time.

We appreciate that the pace of life these days militates against taking on additional tasks especially when there is no monetary reward. But if we achieving an improvement to the rail service timetable or putting forward comments against a national transport consultation, is extremely high and well worth considering.

Currently the rail industry is enjoying an unprecedented period of growth with many projects coming forward in the next few years. You can play a small, but valuable part, in some of these developments.

Every organisation needs a steady inflow of new ideas, from all ages, and we are particularly keen to meet people who would be prepared to give just an hour or two per month to help our valuable work. Experience of the rail industry is not necessary as tasks are many and varied.

Railfuture needs you and your ideas to serve in any capacity and for as little or as much time as you can afford. Why not consider joining us for a few trial meetings, to see how you fit in and whether it is something you want to do for, we endeavour to make our activities enjoyable to all who participate.

All ages are welcome as are the fresh ideas which you can bring. It is also important that we have a steady inflow of new blood to maintain continuity within our organisation.

So why not have a go – contact any committee member, (see contact details at the end of this newsletter) and add a new dimension to your life!

## **Call for Calder Valley Route to be Electrified**

HADRAG, the Halifax and District Rail Action Group is calling on the Department for Transport to include the Calder Valley Line from Manchester to Leeds via Bradford to be included in the forthcoming study of routes being considered for electrification after the current wave is finished.

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The group has written to MP Linda (Riordan. MP Halifax) asking her to make polite and constructive but urgent representations to the Secretary of State for Transport and encourage other MPs along the Calder Valley rail line to do the same.

The DfT announced on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December a number of transport schemes in the North, including electrification of the Bolton-Wigan line.

At the end of the press release they announce a joint task force to "explore where next for electrification in the North". In addition to Wigan-Bolton electrification which was given specific approval, the release says "the routes to be examined will include:" Harrogate, Hull, Middlesbrough, Sheffield to Leeds/Doncaster, Sheffield to Manchester, and Warrington/Crewe to Chester."

HADRAG feels it is almost unbelievable that the Calder Valley route from Leeds to Manchester via Bradford and Brighouse is not included on that list, particularly when another equally complex cross-Pennine route, that from Sheffield to Manchester is. It may of course simply be an accidental omission but if this is so, it needs correcting without delay.

HADRAG feels Calder Valley electrification is an absolutely logical strategic development following on from completion of TransPennine electrification via Huddersfield and that the DfT's failure to include the

Calder Valley in its list of schemes to be examined by the task force gives credence to the view that Whitehall simply lacks any kind of detailed insight into the needs of the North. With the TransPennine electrification via Huddersfield going ahead, HADRAG feels perhaps the DfT might think that this covers it, without realising the strategic importance of the CV Line, serving the numerous significant communities there.

HADRAG had already included Calder Valley electrification in its response to the Rail North draft strategy and feels this makes total sense for a number of reasons:

- The Calder Valley Line is one of the busiest in the region.
- Building on the Northern Hub proposals for Manchester-Bradford linespeed improvements, it would enable further journey time improvements with the faster acceleration of electric trains.
- Benefits would come not just to the cities but also the major towns of Halifax and Rochdale other towns along the line.
- With electrification will come new and improved rolling stock –indeed it could be the only way the line gets ageing diesel trains replaced.
- Future service patterns will increasingly take Calder Valley Line trains beyond the current termini to other destinations including Manchester Airport and other North-West centres along lines that will already be electrified. It will make no sense to run diesels on such services. One of

the reasons given for Wigan-Bolton electrification is that it will allow through operation of electric service to Manchester Airport. The same argument needs to be applied to Bradford, Halifax, and Rochdale etc. Calder Valley trains also travel beyond Leeds to Selby and York, both lines to be electrified. The danger is that if we do not get electrification we could lose these through links that are planned to enhance strategic connectivity between Bradford, Calderdale, Rochdale and other centres right across the North of England.

- The Calder Valley route through Brighouse has always been the key diversionary route for Trans-Pennine express services when the Huddersfield route is under possession for engineering work. This has been the case for as long as anyone can remember. Not having the CV Line electrified

would make TPE diversions much more difficult.

When the CV Manchester route is electrified, the line through East Lancashire from Hall Royd Junction to Preston should follow, allowing integration with existing electrified routes in the North West and through electric operation of the Scarborough/York-Halifax-Blackpool trains.

HADRAG is confident that eventual Calder Valley electrification is inevitable, but wants to see this happening in less than ten years' time – in rail planning terms before the end of CP6 (CP6 is 2019-24). Some of the schemes on taskforce's list are relatively simple and straightforward to implement but HADRAG thinks that is all the more reason for including a study of CVL electrification now, so that the necessary planning can be done.

### Railfuture North West AGM

The North West branch's AGM in 2014 will be held on 1<sup>st</sup> February at the Savoy Hotel, Queens Promenade, Blackpool, FY2 9SJ starting at 11-00 am with coffee/tea available from 10-30 am and a 2 course lunch at 1-00 pm. The Lunch and tea/coffee will cost £14.50 per person. This must be booked in advance, with payment to our Treasurer by 18<sup>th</sup> January 2014. A booking form accompanies this newsletter

### Nomination for Railfuture North West England Branch Committee 2014-15

Nominee	Proposer	Seconder	Position (if any)	Standing for Officer only Y/N
A.N. Other 1	A.N. Other 2	A.N.Other 3	(e.g Secretary)	

Please return to Ronald Schwarz, either by post or email, addresses on the back cover of this edition, the closing date is midnight on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2014.

## **Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association** **( incorporating South Fylde Line Users Association )**

**Chairman: Paul Nettleton**  
8, Balham Avenue,  
Blackpool,  
FY4 3QP

**Vice-Chairman: Malcolm Richardson**  
135, Branstree Road,  
Blackpool,  
FY4 4SR,



**Join us; it's only £1/year, £1.50 for family membership.**

**Contact Membership Secretary,  
"Hamlet" 2B, Meadow Park, Wesham Preston PR4 3DN.**

**Download our online form from:  
<http://www.bafrua.org.uk/> click on "Join Our User Group."**

### **Future meetings.**

Our AGM is the next North West Branch meeting, which will be held on February 1<sup>st</sup> at the Savoy Hotel, Blackpool (see separate box for details and separate form for booking).

The next after that is on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2014, at the Littleborough station, History Project Room, then on 21<sup>st</sup> June at the Station Hotel, Preston.

Both the latter meetings will start at 1300, but for those that want lunch, we will be there from 1200. Confirmation and details can be obtained from the Chairman or Secretary closer to the time, details on the back page.

### **E-Mail of the bulletin**

You can opt to receive this bulletin by e-mail, which has the advantage of full colour photos and receipt before the main publication date. If you'd like to receive the bulletin by e-mail, let us know your name and membership number. We have already sent editions of the bulletin to members this way. Contact Arthur Thomson, e-mail address on the back of this newsletter or via the **Chairman**. **Please note** that this will mean you will **NOT** receive a printed copy, if you still wish to receive that, please let us know when you get in touch

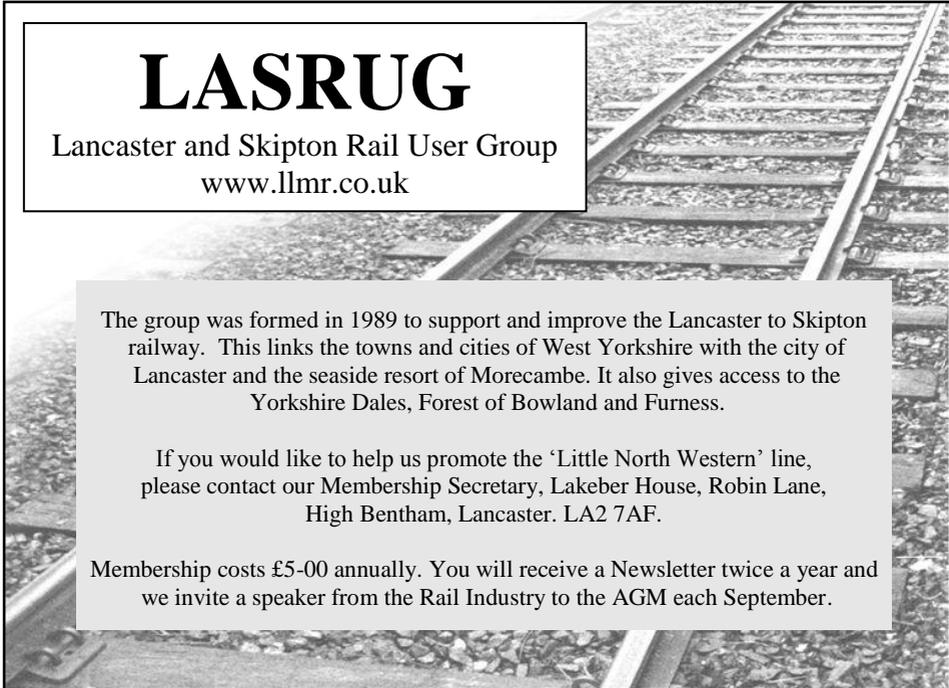
## Shrewsbury Chester Rail Users Association

SCRUA has been promoting the Shrewsbury-Chester line for over 20 years since it was formed at Gobowen in 1986. Compared with the basic train service then provided, today's trains offer an hourly frequency and extended destinations. The need to continue to represent rail users' interests remains and we welcome support from new members to help convey the message about trains along the Welsh border

A quarterly newsletter *Severn-Dee News* provides up to date information about trains, stations and activities, not only on the mainline, but also for the heritage lines associated with it.

Regular meetings are held at venues in Gobowen, Chirk and Wrexham when speakers from the associated rail industry are invited to make presentations and take questions and answers. Membership details can be had by contacting:

Chris Jenkins, 1 Perry View, Gobowen, Oswestry, Y10 7UF



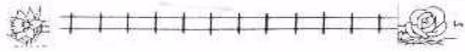
## LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group  
[www.llmr.co.uk](http://www.llmr.co.uk)

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

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

Membership costs £5-00 annually. You will receive a Newsletter twice a year and we invite a speaker from the Rail Industry to the AGM each September.

North  
WalesThe  
Wirral

## WREXHAM – BIRKENHEAD

Rail Users Association / Cymdeithas Defnyddwyr Rheilffordd

## WRECSAM – PENBEDW

The Association Supports the Electrification of the Wrexham Central – Birkenhead–Bidston Line.

We Support New Stations at Beechwood, Prenton / Woodchurch road Interchange, Well Lane, Little Neston / Ness Botanic Gardens and Deeside Industrial Estate.

We encourage the fullest use and development of the Wrexham Central– Birkenhead–Bidston Line, to promote the Line's development and safeguard its future.

Regular newsletters give full details of the Association's Activities.

***It's your line—help secure its future by joining us today!***

Individual membership £4.00 Family £6.00, Corporate £10.00

Send your subscription to our Membership Secretary to receive our latest newsletter  
Brian Grey, 56, Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral, CH61 4US.



## WIRRAL TRANSPORT USERS ASSOCIATION

We believe in modern, public transport systems for the Wirral and Merseyside and keep our members up to date with public transport developments

We support the campaign for electrification of the Wrexham Central– Birkenhead–Bidston Line

We support new railway stations at Ledsham, Town Meadow, Beechwood Estate, Prenton/Woodchurch road interchange, Well Lane, Little Neston or Ness Botanic Gardens and Deeside industrial Estate

We wish to see more bus/rail and car/rail interchange for the benefit of passengers

We are affiliated to Railfuture, Passenger Focus, Travelwatch North West, Bus users UK & represent Campaign for Better Transport in the area.

We publish a newsletter twice a year and run coach excursions

**Why not join us? Join today**

**Annual individual subscription £6.00; Family £8;**

**Corporate Bodies £25.00, representative bodies £12.50**

*Send your subscription to our Membership Secretary today  
and receive a copy of our latest newsletter*

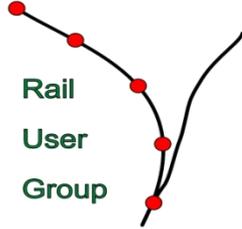
Brian Grey, 56, Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral, CH61 4US.

# THE LAKES LINE RAIL USER GROUP

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

Lakes Line

Rail  
User  
Group



**Join Today!**

Contact: Mr. P Bell 9, Vicars Hill,  
Kendal,  
Cumbria  
LA9 5DA

Membership: £5.00 Individuals,  
£7.00 Family, £13.00 Corporate

## Railfuture North West Branch Officers

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Specific further area contacts are:

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*Rail North West* is the newsletter of the North West branch of Railfuture, campaigning by the Railway Development Society. Contributions in the form of articles and letters are welcomed. Please send them to Arthur Thomson at [arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk) or by post via the chairman as above. Text files e-mailed are particularly welcome. The opinions expressed in *Rail North West* are those of any individual contributors and not necessarily those of Railfuture.

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