

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

No 24 March 2014

railfuture *Yorkshire*

President: Gerald Egan Vice-President: Alan Whitehouse

A look back in Sheffield as the Branch prepares to host Railfuture's National Annual General Meeting there.

by Andrew Oldfield



Photo by Paul Colbeck – Chapeltown, a South Yorkshire Station

As Sheffield prepares to stage the national annual general meeting after a gap of 33 years it is appropriate to reflect on the fortunes of rail across South Yorkshire during this period. Back in April 1981 the City boasted an electrified railway, albeit the then freight only Woodhead route which closed just 3 months later, its express passenger services having been withdrawn in January 1970.

The Annual General Meeting is an opportunity to rally Railfuture members and highlight developments in the locality of the host city which, unfortunately, only amounts to the enlarged car park at Dore. Ironically, Woodhead 33 years on since the last Sheffield annual general meeting, does provide a link. September 14th marks the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Woodhead electrification project, with the 1954 tunnel seen as the Jewel in the Crown of a scheme that was the HS2 of its day. Future Trans-Pennine electrification will feature Manchester to Leeds being wired up in a few years, offering precisely the modern electrified link that Sheffield enjoyed in 1954. When the wires next reach Sheffield, via Midland Main Line Electrification, the City will have endured almost 50 wireless years.

Sheffield, England's fourth largest city, has consistently punched below its weight on rail for decades, something which seemingly does not register with either Sheffield City Council or the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, could such signals, or rather the lack of them, be precisely why the city underperforms? Does this explain why South Yorkshire is the largest populated area in the UK without a local electrified rail network? The body language from this duo has been one of excluding rather than embracing rail, along with exuding resistance to rail instead of being receptive.

South Yorkshire is not entirely without wires as a result of East Coast main line electrification in the 1980s, with Doncaster being the beneficiary. Thanks to the vision of Councillor Michael Simmonds in West Yorkshire, electrification was extended beyond Leeds to serve Bradford, Ilkley and Skipton. Sadly none of his South Yorkshire counterparts have demonstrated similar vision.

If they had, they would be seeking to extract maximum benefits from the Midland Main Line Scheme, initially through a Sheaf Valley local electric service between Sheffield and Chesterfield, including new stations at Heeley and Millhouses, plus the re-instatement of Dore main line platforms, which would be compatible with the Sheffield City Region. It would also tackle serious road traffic congestion at Sheffield station which is to be addressed by increasing the capacity of the car park. Why do this when new stations could remove this traffic off the roads, particularly along the severely congested Abbeydale Road Corridor? On completion, the next task would be the electrification of all routes between South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

New stations, though, are not the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive's forte. The last new station to be opened was back in 1993. The Executive then directed the four South Yorkshire local authorities in 2003 to cease safeguarding potential new station sites. Consultants engaged in 1999 identified a list of 36 potential new stations, after four years of inactivity, the Executive unleashed a cull with the actual instruction used being, "be brutal", which saw just three station sites spared, though none of them have since materialised. Out of the 36 around a dozen should have been protected for possible development at a time when rail usage was starting to rise. What vision? It seems that since then nobody has even considered revisiting the 2003 directive. Is there any other area, county or region which has taken such draconian action? This is South Yorkshire, though, the home of the alternative Passenger Transport Executive whose focus is on the questionable Meadow Hall to Parkgate tram train trial and the Sheffield to Rotherham Bus Rapid Transit. In an area hard hit by the recession, rail could help with recovery and regeneration by the doubling of the Homes Chord to allow extra trains to serve Rotherham Central, and also through the provision of a station at Parkgate, but no such luck.

South Yorkshire's brief "railway age" was in the 1980s with new stations at Rotherham Central, along the Dearne Valley and around Doncaster. Barnsley featured too, and later gained two new Transport Interchanges within twelve years. Sheffield boasts (sic) just four suburban stations, setting aside Meadowhall, which is pivotal to the South Yorkshire Network, as well as being the ninth busiest Northern Station. It could do much more to ease traffic congestion around Tinsley, which suffers from being next to the M1, as well as being adjacent to Meadow Hall, especially on Sundays the busiest trading day of the week.

Dismiss all thoughts though that the good and the great, and the movers and shakers of Sheffield have been quiet: certainly not. They have made regular contributions throughout 2013 on HS2, but is this because it is sexy and glamorous? Have they just jumped on a passing band wagon with their gesticulating and posturing? The core debate covers the HS2 station site for the City, Sheffield Victoria versus Meadowhall with the latter being the choice of the HS2 promoters. Sheffield Victoria would add to the costs of the route beyond the City to Leeds, and Meadowhall was selected because it is viewed as the Station not only for Sheffield, but for South Yorkshire too. Sheffield Victoria campaigners have also floated the idea of providing a link with a reopened Attercliffe Road station. Has this really been thought through, or is it just a sound bite? What all the HS2 lobbying has exposed is that these people have shown precious little interest in other railway matters facing the City.

Back to electrification, if the Sheffield Victoria set want to see services restored through the station, why not press for a reinstated electrified Woodhead route? What lobbying did they make on the sealing of the Woodhead Victorian Tunnels with local MPs? Out of forty MPs canvassed it is reported that only three responded. The western third of the Woodhead Line still remains electrified, something which seems to conveniently escape most people. A restored Woodhead link would provide an enormous boost to the regeneration of the long neglected Upper Don Valley. It would also deliver electrification parity with Manchester and Leeds.

Sheffield is, sadly, the UK's largest anti-rail city. To rid itself of this tag horizons must be raised and blinkers removed, along with a complete change of mentality to deliver enterprise, flair, imagination and vision.

Why should Sheffielders continue to be denied improved rail services and new stations, while passengers from elsewhere across the UK are enjoying such?

Minsters' Line

by Mark Parry

Our last report on this campaign, to re-instate the Hull-Beverley-York line, was in Yorkshire Rail Campaigner issue number 22. We explained how George McManus, Chair of the Minsters' Rail Campaign, had discussed the need to reserve land in Pocklington to allow for the re-opening of this line, with the East Riding Council. Despite what seemed to be positive discussions, the Council moved to allocate some land along the route for other purposes.

Campaigners demonstrated outside the Head Quarters of the East Riding Council as they considered this decision was a fatal blow to their aspirations to reverse the closure of this line back in 1965.

On 3 January the York Press reported that the Council had pointed out that the cost of re-opening the line was not affordable during the period of their plan which was for the period up to 2029. According to Government guidelines only deliverable projects can be included in their plan. This situation must have implications for other re-opening campaigns.

The line would go through Stamford Bridge, Pocklington, Market Weighton and Beverley. In 2005 the cost of re-opening was estimated at £240 million, but more recent estimates suggest nearer to £350 million now.

In a letter to our own Tony Ross, the Interim Director of Corporate Strategy and Commissioning, John Skidmore, said the plan would be subject to review. He said the Council did not think this would end the aspiration of re-opening the line but he accepted that new alignments would be required in some locations for the campaign to succeed.

First Group – 1 of 3 Short Listed East Coast Bidders

by Mark Parry



Paul Oxley & Mark Wilkins of First. Photo by Paul Colbeck

First Group is one of three bidders short listed to take over the East Coast main line franchise in February 2015. Along with Virgin/Stagecoach and Keolis/Eurostar they are waiting for the Government's invitation to tender which is about to be issued. The Department for Transport's deadline for bids is likely to be in the Summer and the franchise is likely to last for 8 to 9 years.

First have been inviting Rail User Groups, around the region, to consultations. We suggested they organise a meeting in Leeds and in return we would invite

members both of Railfuture and the Campaign for Better Transport. The notice was short so those members on email and a few others we could ring round were invited; nonetheless about 20 attended.

Unfortunately we got very little from Mark Wilkins and Paul Oxley from First as the Department for Transport rules prevent them from stating details of the service they would like to offer. However, we were able to highlight deficits in the current franchise and state our aspirations, of which there were many.

First Group is an international company with a £6.9 billion annual revenue and experience of offering sleeper services, commuter trains, rural lines and inter city services. Their performance has been improving in recent years on the railways. They currently run First Capital Connect, First Great Western, First Scotrail, First Transpennine Express, First Hull Trains and Croyden Tramlink.

The Department for Transport issues objectives that it wants to see the successful company work within. These include a focus on good customer service, an aim to increase the market and an objective to simplify ticketing. The Government will publish a minimum service requirement and the successful bidder will have the flexibility to add services to that.

The current franchise operates 155 services per day through 2,900 staff providing 19 million journeys. 55% of these journeys are for leisure, 42% for business and 3% are commuters travelling regularly to work. The trains average 28 years old and cover 53 stations, 12 of which are managed by East Coast. The Inter City Express Programme is to produce new trains to replace both the older 125 diesels and the 225 electrics. Network Rail are also to spend £240 million on infrastructure improvements to cut journey times.

The issues our members raised were:

- The disparity of fares between the East and West Coast main lines.
- Some large disparity of fares between walk on and advance.
- Disparity of fares south bound compared with north bound.
- Concerns over the need to split the purchase of tickets mid route in order to save money.
- The Unions had heard of a plan to run reduce train lengths in the off peak periods.
- Coach fares were often cheaper and needn't be booked so far in advance.
- The need to fill empty first class seats with offers such as club 55.
- Perhaps different length trains for different runs and different terminal points.
- Hull trains run until 2016, could there be less competition if First wins the East Coast franchise?

- London trains introduced to such places as Keighley and Huddersfield, with extra journeys to the likes of Bradford and Harrogate.
- More north bound trains wanted, such as Bradford to Aberdeen.
- Better connections to Lincoln.
- Some of these aspirations could be met by splitting trains especially as the new trains may come in two sets of 5 cars.
- The proposals by Alliance rail were raised, but little was known of their progress.
- Concern over the future of the York Head Quarters.
- Catering is considered to be very good but needs to be available for more of the journey.
- Bus connections need to be retained with a focus on integration and the provision of good information and through ticketing.
- Concerns over a renewed effort to install ticket barriers where they are not wanted.
- Too many car parks at stations are full by 08:30.
- Additional services wanted:
 - Later Saturday evening services from London.
 - More weekend services.
 - 3 weekday trains per hour.
 - Early Sunday morning services.
 - Boxing Day services.
 - Through trains to the South Coast and good connections with Thames link.
- The lack of a travel centre at Wakefield Westgate.

I suspect we'd all be delighted if we got everything in this wish list, but we have to ask if we are to progress our aims. We look forward to seeing who wins and what they propose and can but hope.

Around Yorkshire

by Mark Parry

The Don Valley Railway Campaign Group is hoping to win 5 million euros from a European Innovation Competition to help reinstate passenger traffic on the line from Stocksbridge to Sheffield using light rail. Rail User Express reported this on 12 January and also noted that provision for a station at Stocksbridge was being made despite development in the area.

The Harrogate – Ripon – Northallerton line will cost £45 million to reinstate according to the Leeds Northern Railway Reinstatement Group. The Yorkshire Post reported this on 18 January and that this group have presented their case to MPs.

On 24 January the Yorkshire Evening Post said locals want to turn the redundant Holbeck Viaduct into a park and walkway into Leeds with some work being completed by volunteers. However, Leeds City Council has said Network Rail had been slow to discuss this, Network Rail said the viaduct could be needed for rail expansion in the future.

You may have seen the videos detering fare dodgers created by Northern and reported by the York Press on 31 January. The worst route for offenders for Northern is the Leeds to York line. Interestingly most dodgers start their journeys at stations where ticket offices exist and are open and adequate ticket machines are available.

A rail link to Leeds Bradford Airport might be created by moving the airport! On 31 January the Yorkshire Post reported this. There is a desire to have the airport near the HS2 line but no one has any idea where this might be. It was pointed out a rail link to the existing airport maybe cheaper.

HS2 support is not coming from both Bradford and Wakefield councils. On 1 February the Telegraph and Argus reported that Bradford council felt it brought no clear benefit to the City, with the awkward interchange at Leeds wrecking any time advantage for those travelling to and from Bradford. They felt improving the existing East Coast line was a better option. A little earlier on 30 January the Wakefield Express said Wakefield council preferred a package of better transport which included an £11 billion option to upgrade the local road network.

Midland Mainline Trains can now travel at up to 125 miles per hour reported Rail Action on 1 February. This speed is only an option on certain parts of the route but it knocks 7 minutes off the Sheffield to London journey time. This is possible after Network Rail upgraded 159 miles of track and closed some level crossings.

The Huddersfield examiner on 1 February pointed out a new volunteer Visitors Information Point is now open on Huddersfield station. It assists passengers with travel, accommodation and places of interest information. It is open on Thursdays and Fridays but shortly will include Mondays as well, from 10:00 to 14:00 and hopefully onto 15:00 hours in the Summer.

The South Yorkshire Passenger Transport executive may have to scrap free train travel for pensioners and the disabled from 1 April because of budget cuts; as reported by the Doncaster Free Press on 5 February.

Selby & District Rail User Group

by Reg & Terry French

(1) The hope that the Chancellor's Autumn Statement would give the green light for Hull Trains to go ahead with the proposal to electrify the line to Selby and Templehirst Junction did not materialize. However it is included in the proposals that the Working Group is to consider with an interim report due within 12 months.

(2) The laser and radar scanned Obstacle Detector Crossings on the line to Leeds are still subject to intermittent failures giving problems to both rail and road services. Network Rail are continuing to both monitor and make adjustments which it is hoped will solve the difficulty.

(3) Major work has started at South Milford Station to make improvements that are necessary for safety reasons. The access road to Platform 1 is being resurfaced, lighting installed, pedestrian access being marked out and 3 additional disabled car park spaces being provided. Additional lighting is being provided on the pedestrian footpath to Platform 2. Ongoing representations are taking place with Northern Rail, Selby District Council and North Yorkshire Police regarding the provision of CCTV Cameras and a help phone on Platform 1. The work on the access to Platforms 1 and 2 is expected to be completed by the end of February.

(4) The provision of lifts at Selby Station is being actively pursued. Agreement has been reached with First Transpennine Express for an application for funding from the main Access for all Fund. A meeting with the local MP has resulted in him agreeing to support the application by making a direct intervention with the Minister of State. Lifts will cost approximately £1 million and installation would likely take place at the time the line is electrified.

(5) Network Rail has completed some preparatory work on the closure of the swing bridge over the river. Discussions are now taking place to ensure the disabled have easy access to Platforms 2 and 3 while the 6 weeks closure takes place.

(6) The footbridge between platforms 1 and 2 at Selby Station is in a state of disrepair and some temporary work is now taking place to mitigate the problems.

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The past couple of months have seen some interesting developments. The Government has agreed a partnership with the Rail North consortium over the new franchises to replace the Northern and First Trans Pennine Express contracts in 2016. All the runes coming out of the Department for Transport (DfT) suggest that Northern and TransPennine Express will remain as two separate franchises. I do feel this is a mistake, not least because it means that advance purchase discount tickets are only for one or other networks, and free one day tickets given as compensation for severely disrupted journeys are of limited benefit in the north as Northern's network has several gaps where only Transpennine services run. It also lessens the chances of decent **connectivity** between services, and the holding of local trains to meet late running inter-regional services.

There has been a lot of positive activity regarding electrification. Firstly, First Hull trains are prepared to invest in the electrification of the line between Selby and Hull, as well as financing new electric rolling stock. In response, the Secretary of State will be meeting with local MPs and business leaders on 25 February. Secondly, the Harrogate Line campaign has gained considerable momentum thanks to the efforts of the local Chamber of Commerce, and I would think it likely that it will be electrified this decade. Various routes including Harrogate have been identified for scrutiny by a DfT taskforce for possible electrification. The list also includes Manchester-Sheffield and Selby-Hull, but curiously omits the Calder Valley routes. Intense lobbying from Railfuture affiliates and others has resulted in DfT saying their list is not exclusive and the case for Calder Valley electrification will be examined. Finally, the campaign to re-connect Ripon to the national rail network is developing momentum.

However, we have also had gloomy news. The new through service from East Lancashire to Manchester via the re-laid Todmorden curve will not start until December because Northern rail has no spare trains until some are released later in the year when the Manchester-Liverpool electrification comes on stream. Why cannot Northern Rail hire locomotives and carriages for the Manchester-Blackpool service, which deserves quality rolling stock, and thus release diesel multiple units to get Burnley **reconnected** to Manchester. Basic **fairness** and common sense, but will it happen in a rail system in which accountants and lawyers have too much power! Secondly, the East Riding Council has refused to protect the track bed of the former Beverley-York line, thus making future re-opening less likely. How short sighted can local politicians be! We really do need national leadership on this issue. Patrick McLoughlin has so far exceeded most people's expectations and is clearly one of the few decent Transport Secretaries in recent years, but he needs to recognise that the size of the present national network is not at its limit and that some of the mistakes of the Sixties need remedying. The situation for people without a railway is becoming increasingly dire, especially if you live in North Yorkshire. Recent or agreed cuts have meant the end of the superb Moorsbus network. Most rural trunk routes have been reduced to a 2 hourly service during the 'working day'. Sizeable communities now have very poor public transport links. This is grossly **unfair**, and unworthy of a still wealthy country in the twenty first century.

Pickering provides an excellent case study. It was a railway junction, with excellent **connectivity**. To the south the line ran to connect with the York-Seamer Scarborough route just east of Malton, whilst to the north the line provided links to Whitby, Saltburn, Redcar and Middlesbrough; this line survives as the heritage North York Moors Railway as far as Grosmont where it meets the Middlesbrough-Whitby line. The other route connected Scarborough and Seamer with the East Coast main line south of Thirsk. How is Pickering served today? It has a regular weekday daytime, and infrequent Sunday, bus service to Malton and York, a slightly better service to Scarborough and Helmsley, and a less frequent bus service to Whitby. It has no evening buses at all. If the railway to the York-Seamer line were still connected, it is likely that it would have a decent service to York and Scarborough, and possibly one to Bridlington and Hull; if it didn't, Railfuture and the local user group would be campaigning for it! This demonstrates admirably how the Beeching/Marple cuts of the sixties have created a two-tier world where public transport is concerned. It also demonstrates why restoring the railway to Pickering should be part of Railfuture's campaigning for railway development in the 2020s.

But what should happen in the near future? If we are to have a true public transport system worthy of that description, then we need to **reconnect** significant towns without a railway and, prior to this, or when it is not possible, the funding of rural trunk routes needs to be removed from Councils who have to balance the competing demands of care and education services *vis a vis* bus services. I'd like to propose that the responsibility for rural trunk routes in areas without a railway be transferred to the Train Operating Companies as part of new franchises, with those bus timetables incorporated into rail ones, to ensure connectivity and aid journey planning. There would be through ticketing as the buses would be equipped with railway ticket machines. Vehicles would be of a good specification with decent legroom, a toilet and ample luggage space.

Finally, HS2. I've held back previously from commenting on this, as I firmly believe that we need new high speed railway lines to free up capacity on existing routes. But I question why we need to travel at 250mph. Frankly, I don't want to as I like to see the countryside I am passing through. A 186 mph (300 kph) would be much more sensible. Running costs would be considerably lower thanks to considerably reduced energy consumption which would also contribute towards carbon reduction goals, and the M1 corridor route that serves more places and causes much less habitat destruction could be used instead of the route currently favoured. The new high speed line must have easy **connectivity** with the rest of the railway network, so ways need to be found for it to use the same stations, e.g by constructing new low level or high level stations at existing city centre sites. However, given that the most important element of a new line is to increase capacity, I would rather have HS2 as planned than nothing; but it will be an opportunity missed, so I urge the Government and the Opposition at this eleventh hour to give full consideration to the High Speed UK proposals.

NINA SMITH, VICE CHAIR, RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE BRANCH AND SECRETARY OF THE UPPER CALDER VALLEY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT GROUP.

Welcome to five new members:

Paul Colbeck – Membership Secretary

Mr Andrew Whitworth of Harrogate, Mr Dave Merrett of York, Mr J N Mark Lawson of Sherburn in Elmet, Mr Peter Horner of Shipley and Mark Severs of Huddersfield.

Hello from your editor – Mark Parry

Thank you to those who sent in contributions, I look forward to seeing members at our Annual General Meeting, this year in Leeds.

Press Date for (YRC 25) June 2014 issue

Please email material, news and feedback to: Mark.Parry61@Virginmedia.com to arrive by **Wednesday 30 April 2014. Alternatively call or text 07981 339558**

Railfuture Branch and National Events Diary

- Saturday 15 March 2014: **Yorkshire Branch Annual General Meeting**. 11:00 start see the last page.
- Monday 21 April 2014: **25th Anniversary** of saving the Settle to Carlisle Line.
- Saturday 10 May 2014: **National Annual General Meeting** – being hosted by our branch in Sheffield's Quaker Meeting House. The Shadow Transport Secretary, Mary Creagh will be speaking. 11:00 start.
- Sunday 18 May 2014: **National Rail Timetable Changes**.
- Saturday 21 June 2014: **Railfuture** summer conference in Cambridge's University Centre. 10:45 start.

Yorkshire Branch Annual General Meeting

Swarthmore Centre, Leeds

15 March 2014 @ 11:00

Speaker: Paul Salverson

Railfuture Yorkshire

Peter Scott, Secretary, 7, Anderson Grove, YORK, YO24 4DX. peter@scott3274.fsworld.co.uk

Dear Member,

Notice is hereby given that the, Annual General Meeting of Railfuture Yorkshire, will be held on Saturday 15th March 2014 at the, Swarthmore Education Centre, 2-7 Woodhouse Square, Leeds LS3 1AD commencing at 11.00am.

Coffee will be available from 10am

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting Held on Saturday 23rd March 2013
3. Matters Arising.
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Secretary's Report.
6. Treasurer's Report.
7. Appointment of Officers.
 - (a) Chairman
 - (b) Vice Chairman
 - (c) Secretary
 - (d) Treasurer
 - (e) Assistant Treasurer
 - (f) Auditor
 - (g) Newsletter Editor
 - (h) Membership Secretary
 - (i) Parliamentary Liaison Officer
8. Any other Business.

NOMINATIONS FOR ANY OF THE ABOVE POSITIONS MUST BE SENT TO THE SECRETARY BY E-MAIL OR POSTED TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN THURSDAY 13TH MARCH 2014.

Directions to the Swarthmore Centre: From Leeds railway station, enter City square and then Infirmary Street (to the right of the Old Post Office). Turn right into East Parade and keep walking straight ahead crossing over the Headrow and continuing with the Town Hall on your left. Turn left into Great George Street, and continue straight ahead with the old Infirmary buildings on your right and keep going over a pedestrian bridge over the inner ring road into Woodhouse Square with the Swarthmore Centre on your left.