

Rail North West



A Class 769 bi-mode at Wigan Wallgate on the second day of their operation in service, running an Alderley Edge to Southport service.
Photo Arthur Thomson.

Patchy Return to Service For Northern

From the May timetable change this year, it was expected that a number of Northern services that had been removed during lockdown would be restored, but it seems there are a number of stations and lines that didn't see a full-service return.

Rail User Group STORM (Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines) report that for two of the Rochdale area smaller stations, Castleton and Smithy Bridge, a basic hourly train service remains, with a few peak hour extras.

The reason given is that this is the only way that Low Moor station in Yorkshire can be given a through service to Manchester, but STORM thinks that apart from Todmorden and Hebden Bridge, the amount of through traffic to/from Manchester would be very small from West Yorkshire stations. Meanwhile once busy stations like Smithy Bridge and Castleton are becoming ghost stations because of the reduced services. STORM thinks this basic one train an hour in a suburban setting is quite ludicrous, and suggests

its not sensible that in the same timetable, Mytholmroyd has two trains an hour to Manchester, Hebden Bridge three, and Todmorden has four.

STORM thinks it really does seem to be the case that priority has been given to West Yorkshire stations rather than those in Greater Manchester, despite passenger numbers.

Meanwhile on other lines, Monday – Saturday services from Preston to Manchester Victoria are limited to two – hourly, rather than the previous hourly that existed in the December 2019 timetable, meaning passengers connecting to the stations east of Victoria will need to change at Bolton or Salford Crescent and vice versa. The service also ends an hour earlier in the evening, while on Sundays, the service is switched, with the Blackpool – Oxford Road (and later Manchester Airport) service picking all the calls from the Preston - Victoria service (except Salford Central), with only one morning train to Victoria.

Sunday services on the Lancaster – Morecambe line are reduced to five return trains for the day versus thirteen in the December 2019 timetable, while the Manchester Victoria – Blackburn via Darwen service is reduced to hourly, and with all trains now starting and finishing at Rochdale this also means Castleton and Moston stations between Rochdale and Victoria are reduced to hourly too. Because of this reduction, an extra stop at Mills Hill has been added to the Blackburn – Kirkby via Manchester service, but this is at the expense of the previous stop at Smithy Bridge.

Direct Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Bank Quay trains have also not returned, meaning passengers will have to change at Earlestown or Newton-Le-Willows, while the Liverpool – Manchester Airport via Warrington Central service didn't return until June 6th, which was understood to be a consequence of the recent withdrawal of new class 195's because of suspension problems. Services from Lime Street to Wigan North Western are reduced to hourly from half-hourly.

The Mid-Cheshire line from Manchester to Chester via Northwich finally sees a return to an hourly service, though no peak services nor any no sign yet of the franchise promised half hourly one (though that's thought to be more to do with crewing), while most of the actual trains are reduced to two carriages from the previous four.

The Manchester to Rose Hill Marple route, which was subjected to a complete cut in the Autumn of last year because of driver shortages caused by Covid, is still not completely back to the two trains per hour service that ran pre-Covid, with a number of peak services missing too.

Sunday services on the Glossop – Manchester line are reduced to hourly, from pre-Covid half – hourly, while the Sundays service from Blackpool South – Colne via Preston is reduced to two – hourly from hourly.

The Buxton – Manchester route only retains the previous two trains per hour in the peaks on weekdays, the rest of the day its hourly

Squires Gate Station Improvements

Members of the Friends of Squires Gate station near Blackpool have been busy since being allowed back on the platform with the easing of lockdown. Below are before and after views of the station where group members have been working to reclaim Platform 2. After work to remove the overgrowth, new fencing

has been erected and the platform edge painted. It's a work in progress to integrate it into its natural surroundings but also show the significance as part of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway and the Fylde Coast.



Photo's courtesy Friends of Squires Gate Station

Restoring your railway bids 1: Clitheroe to Hellifield

Under the Government's Restoring Your Railway fund, Ribble Valley Council submitted a successful bid for funding to commission a study to create a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the possibility of extending the Manchester to Clitheroe train service to Hellifield (and possibly Garsdale) on the Settle-Carlisle line.

The study has been completed and the SOBC has now been submitted to the Department for Transport and one of

the key points mentioned in the report holds out hope for a quick start to services; "It is clear that a passenger service between Clitheroe and Hellifield (as an extension of existing Manchester Victoria to Clitheroe services) could be reinstated in the short-term with little or no need for additional infrastructure and could potentially be delivered as part of the May 2023 timetable change."

2: Fleetwood Re-Opening Study Completed.

An initial study has now been completed into the feasibility of reopening the Fleetwood to Poulton-le-Fylde railway.

The study to reopen the railway is now ready to be submitted by Lancashire County Council to the Department for Transport for consideration within the government's 'Restoring Your Railway' programme.

A Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC), prepared by Atkins on behalf of Lancashire County Council, examines the case and feasibility for re-opening the 5-mile line which was closed to passenger traffic in 1970, and freight in 1999.

Developed in partnership with the Department for Transport, Blackpool Council, Blackpool Transport, Fleetwood Town Council, Network Rail, Poulton & Wyre Railway Society, Wyre Borough Council, the study looked at three options:

- Restoration of the heavy rail link integrating with the national rail network at Poulton-le-Fylde.
- Extending the existing tram network at Fleetwood Ferry and Poulton-le-Fylde.
- A tram/train hybrid scheme where light rail vehicles are able to operate on both heavy and light rail systems.

A review of existing bus provision has also been carried out, which concludes that improvements to local bus services and interchange with rail services could be delivered as part of the emerging National Bus Strategy.

The study estimated the costs of the three options, ranging from £121m to £251m depending on the mode, form of electrification and frequency of service.

It also found that the reinstated heavy rail link offers an 11-minute journey time from Fleetwood to Poulton and 28 minutes from Fleetwood to Preston. This journey currently takes between 50 and 60 minutes by public transport.

The study will now progress to the next stage, which will involve detailed engineering and design, in depth forecasting and modelling of future demands, and a more detailed value for money analysis. A single preferred option for delivery will also be identified.

Charlie Edwards, Lancashire County Council cabinet member for highways and transport, said: "Restoring the rail link will be transformational for Fleetwood and the Fylde Coast in terms of where people can live, work and access opportunities and I look forward to progressing this project with the Department for Transport and our partners.

"Lancashire County Council has carried out a significant amount of work to get to this point with the project, and we now pass our findings to government in the hope that it will eventually get full backing.

"For the people of Fleetwood and wider Lancashire, this will be a real game changer and we will continue to seek inward investment and opportunities for our residents."

County Councillor Stephen Clarke for Fleetwood West and Cleveleys said: "This is going to be monumental for our town and it will really put Fleetwood on the map....it will make it easier for people to get in and out of town, as well as create more trade and jobs. We hope the government will give this project its full support and backing."



175th Anniversary For Furness Railway & the Lakes Line

The Community Rail Partnerships of the Furness and Lakes Lines, the Lakes Line Rail User Group (LLRUG) and Furness Line Action Group (FLAG), are working with station adoption groups and rail industry stakeholders in planning a series of events to mark the 175th anniversary of the lines' openings, starting with the line to Barrow-in-Furness which opened on 3rd June 1846 for, then on 21st September 1846 the line to Windermere opened as far as Kendal and then through to Windermere on 20th April 1847, hence the longer celebration times.

175 years ago, the first steam train on the Furness Railway carried iron ore from the mines at Kirkby in Furness to the boats at Barrow, replacing many years of carriage by horse and cart. Not long after, in August the same year, passenger services started. Over at the Lakes Line, Oxenholme station was inaugurated on the 21st of September 1846 when the first service to Kendal ran. The following April, the service opened from Kendal to Windermere.

The two committees - **Furness Railway (FR175)** and **Lakes Line (LL175)** - are leading on a programme of exciting events. The committees are planning to launch in mid-July 2021 in conjunction with the Barrow Festival of Transport.

To start the celebrations, Northern is planning to name one of their new trains at a ceremony at Barrow-in-Furness station, and on Saturday 17th July, the Barrow Festival of Transport will see Furness Railway locomotive No.20 returning to Barrow for the day, parked at the dock museum where a number of gazebos will be manned by railway organisations and charity groups, including FLAG, the Lakes Line Rail User Group and the Cumbrian Railways Association. Other events on the day include model railway exhibitions in the Market Hall, historic road vehicles in Barrow town centre, bus tours from the Town Hall, RC Cars at the outdoor market and fairground rides at the bottom end of Dalton Road.

On the Furness Line, a series of FR175 roadshows are taking place in July and August at which you can;

- Hear about the history and development of the railway
- Hear how a locomotive fell down a hole and is still there
- Talk with the station adoption groups about their work at their station
- See a range of gifts, books and postcards.

/cont.

The Lakes Line will celebrate their 175th anniversary at Oxenholme station with speeches, music, entertainment and the opening of an Anniversary Railway Memorabilia Exhibition at Kendal Museum which will run from September 2021 until April/May 2022. During this time there are

smaller events planned at Burneside, Staveley and Windermere, interspersed with talks and guided walks., The anniversary celebrations finish in late April 2022 with a large celebratory event in Windermere station, courtesy of Booths using their porte-cochère.

There's a joint Facebook page with photos, stories and more information on events as dates are firmed up. <https://www.facebook.com/Cumbria175/events>

EVENTS DIARY

- Saturday 17th July, the Barrow Festival of Transport (details below)
- Thursday 12th August: Cark station with Friends of Cark station.
- Friday 13th August: Station Close, Dalton-in-Furness station with Tidy Town Dalton.
- Saturday 14th August: Kents Bank Railway Station with Friends of Kents Bank station & Foreshore.
- On – Line Quiz from early September.
- September 21st Oxenholme Station Celebration (details above) and opening of Kendal Museum Display.
- Walks and talks round Kendal dates T.B.C.
- March 11/12th 2022 Memorabilia display at The Bryce Institute.
- March 18/19th 2022 Memorabilia display at Staveley Roundhouse.
- Mid/late April 2022 large celebratory event at Windermere Station.

(More event details may be added later).

FR175 and LL175 are heartened by the support they have already received from train operators, stakeholders, local businesses and organisations. The committees are hoping that the

Anniversary will give businesses the opportunity to sponsor and support events and gain additional visibility for themselves during the anniversary celebrations.

If you would like to know more, please contact

David Stubbins stubbins.dr@btinternet.com 015395 58453 – Furness – chair, FR175 committee

Ian Conway on ianconway90@yahoo.com 01539 733844 – Lakes – chair, LL175 committee

Adrian Faulkner on a.g.faulkner@gmail.com – Lakes - LL175 committee merchandise

Kerstin Esbjornsson kerstin.esbjornsson@cumbria.gov.uk – Furness & Lakes CRP Officer

The committees have worked hard to take into account both existing Covid restrictions and possible continuing limitations. These celebrations will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Most, if not all, events are planned to be outside except in the case of Museum exhibitions, with back-up plans for talks to be virtual if needed.

No Plans Yet for Better Services from Ellesmere Port to Helsby

At a recent meeting of the Liverpool City Region rail user groups hosted by Liam Robinson, Chair of Merseytravel, a short presentation was given detailing progress in bringing the new Class 777 Stadler fleet into service and North Cheshire Rail User Group (NCRUG) members welcomed the progress, but were disappointed to learn getting Merseyrail network extended to Helsby is not in Merseytravel's immediate plans.

NCRUG has been keeping a keen watch on the introduction of this new fleet as some later models will have the ability to leave the 3rd rail and operate under battery power for 20 miles or more with a full load, thus permitting expansion of the Merseyrail network beyond its current limits.

Of particular interest in their patch is the Ellesmere Port to Helsby line, and NCRUG members raised the concept of having a complete Merseyrail service circling the Mersey Estuary on a metro styled basis. This would require considerable work at Liverpool South Parkway, however the terrain is suitably flat and the trains will be capable.

The introduction of the Class 777's has been delayed for a number of factors, but trials are taking place on the Kirby and Ormskirk lines; full introduction might not be until as late as next year.

The Liverpool City Region's current objectives for development of the rail network have a line to Skelmersdale top of the list and the first step is a new station at Headbolt Lane, Kirby which is expected by

It is expected to be this line where proof of concept trials will be conducted for the battery powered 777's, although Merseyrail does have authorisation to use Ellesmere Port–Helsby on account of the low traffic movements on that line!

Merseyrail network expansion is being considered to Widnes via Hunts Cross and possibly as far as Warrington, but when the question of Ellesmere Port–Helsby was raised, the route, although under consideration, was not high on the priority list.

NCRUG suspects this delayed introduction will further delay any possible testing of the type on the Ellesmere Port - Helsby route, so will be disappointing for NCRUG and also the Community Rail Partnership and CWaC Council, who have funded a basic feasibility study into possible demand.

NCRUG is left with the Northern Trains service for the foreseeable future – three return trains daily on the current schedule.

Future branch meetings.

Members will no doubt be aware that we have been unable to hold regular face-to-face branch committee meetings since the outbreak of corona virus, and in 2020, all but two of our regular branch committee meetings did not go ahead as face-to-face meetings, and we think they will be unlikely in the first half of this year.

With the current restrictions still in place at the time of writing, we are planning to resume face-to-face meetings in the autumn of this year, the first is on September 11th the second on 20th November, venues will be advised on the website or contact the Chair or Secretary.

We may be able to resume before then and will advise on our website but in the meantime, do please get in touch with your branch committee, (details on the back page) if there are any issues you wish to raise.

WANTED – Media help!

Railfuture are campaigning for more and better train services across the North West area and as every member will know, Railfuture is a totally voluntary organisation in which people are giving up their spare time to campaign, and while we are always looking for new committee members to help out, we do have a specific need to raise our media profile to get our messages across more effectively. Can you help?

We are looking for someone who can assist with any or all of the following, depending on your own wishes, skills and experience: -

- Develop and maintain contacts in key local media across the region
- Write eye-catching press releases
- Be our Social Media presence
- Be our first contact point for media enquiries and be willing to give interviews

Knowledge of and interest in transport and related issues in the region would be very helpful but full support can be given. We are all volunteers; how much time you give is up to you. This may suit someone who has worked in PR/journalism/marketing etc who is about to or has recently retired. It could also suit a student or recent graduate in a relevant discipline who is looking to gain experience in a voluntary campaigning group. Interested? To find out more, email trevor.bishop@railfuture.org.uk

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 pages)

- [Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association](#)
- [Bolton Rail Users Group](#)
- [Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group](#)
- [Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group \(CRUG\)](#)
- [Friends of Castleton Station](#)
- [Friends of Denton Station](#)
- [Friends of Littleborough Stations \(Lancashire\)](#)
- [Friends of Reddish South Station](#)
- [Friends of Rose Hill Station](#)
- Friends of St Annes Stations email tonyford19@gmail.com
- [Friends of Settle Carlisle Line](#)
- [Furness Line Action Group \(FLAG\)](#)
- [Goyt Valley Rail Users' Association \(Stockport\)](#)
- [Lakes Line Rail User Group \(LLRUG\)](#)
- [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 (no website currently)
- [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, "Hamlet" 2B, Meadow Park,
 Wesham Preston PR4 3DN. Contact through our Facebook page at:
<https://www.facebook.com/Blackpool-Fylde-Rail-Users-Association-1266722540018377/> and click on "Sign Up"

LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group
www.llmr.co.uk www.lasrug.btck.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 £7-00 annually. You will receive a Newsletter quarterly and we invite a speaker from the Rail Industry to the AGM each September.

Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group



If you'd like to join a group representing rail users in West Cumbria, and particularly on the Cumbrian Coast line from Carlisle to Barrow, the **Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group** would welcome your membership.

See www.crug.org.uk where you will find all the details about us and how to join. It costs £5 for individuals or £10 for organisations.

We can make a difference, and with your help, our voice will be stronger.



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 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.



Join Today!

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

Membership: £5.00 Individuals,

£7.00 Family, £13.00 Corporate

LA9 5DA

PLEASE NOTE the email addresses below wont correctly copy from the pdf edition, this is to prevent spam, you will need to type them in manually.

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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 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.

www.railfuture.org.uk

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Newsletter of the North West England Branch of Railfuture