

Rail North West

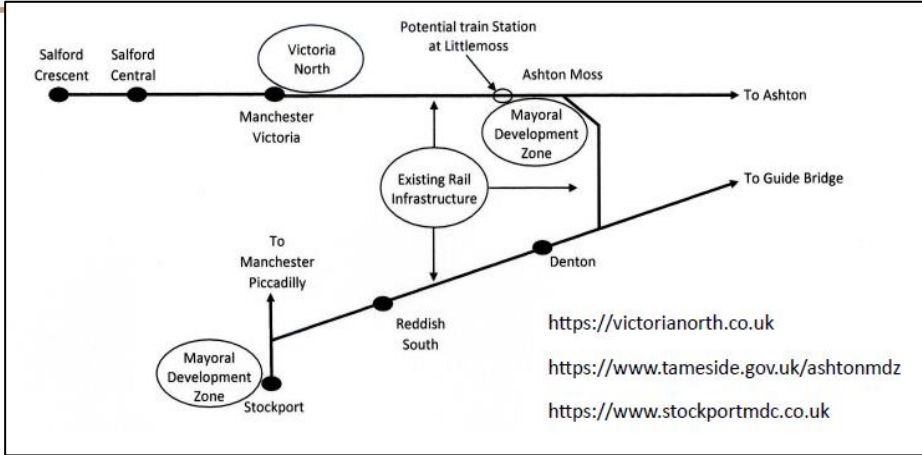


Diagram of an alternative route into Manchester, courtesy Friends of Reddish South and Denton Stations

Rail User Group Tells Transport Secretary “Piccadilly Is Full - Use Our Line“

Following an article in the i newspaper on Friday 1st November 2024 "Manchester Piccadilly is full- gateway to North not fit for HS2," Rail User Group Friends of Reddish South wrote to the then Transport Secretary Louise Haigh suggesting that reviving their local route with a full service into Manchester Victoria would be a quick win in relieving congestion into Piccadilly.

The group noted the fact that Piccadilly has not received any investment in the last 20 years and was no surprise to them (and many others) who live and work here that it was declared full and while the need for a substantial investment in Piccadilly is pressing, which the group feels they cannot do anything about, they do feel the problem of capacity could be ameliorated and it could be done quickly (whatever time scale that is in rail-speak).

Their line, which branches north east off the main line to Piccadilly shortly after Stockport station, does go to Manchester Victoria, although the present weekly "parliamentary" service goes to Stalybridge, and the group feels it's a much-underused hidden gem. The group's been campaigning for seventeen years to have this passenger service reinstated and have always realised that to reintroduce this service would have major benefits for the whole of the area, not just the populace of Reddish and Denton.

In the article, Gareth Dennis, a railway engineer and writer, noted that Piccadilly does not only feel a little bit out of the city centre - it is out of the city centre and it does require walking a distance to get anywhere near the social, retail and entertainment hub of the city.

Manchester Victoria meanwhile is in the centre of Manchester, does have capacity

and there is a railway line to it from south Manchester that could be used, with stations that deserve a service, and the potential for more stations, relieving the lack of capacity at Piccadilly. It would make it easier for those who wish to travel to the destinations from Manchester Victoria, (and go from Victoria to the south), give much needed public transport to those in desperate need of it and become a valued local as well as a north-west regional service. Piccadilly then would be able to be better used for more through traffic, as the gateway to the North.

Manchester City Council leader Bev Craig's made the case that Piccadilly is already above capacity and the group thinks that is absolutely accurate, yet this simple solution is under the nose of Transport for Greater Manchester. A recent study showed that an hourly service between Stockport and Manchester Victoria could be implemented immediately. With relatively little in additional infrastructure improvements, it could become a proper shot in the arm for capacity of Greater Manchester railways and the region

Northern's Sunday Woes Continue

Despite settling the long running dispute with its drivers and conductors earlier this year, Northern have continued to have problems in getting enough staff to run all their timetabled services, and its especially bad in the North West because of a long-standing situation where Sundays are not part of the normal working week for drivers and conductors.

The driver's union ASLEF recent reached a settlement on Rest Day Working so that the Northern could start to restore services they were having to cancel on a daily basis, but a deal for the conductors was rejected by the membership, even though the conductors' union the RMT, had recommended acceptance.

For instance the Mid Cheshire Rail User Association noted in September no trains ran on their line on three Sundays and there were no replacement buses and Northern issued 'Do Not Travel' notices for the mid Cheshire Line at the time.

In recent weeks (early December) Northern's ability to run services on all days of the week seemed to decline further according to many users, and the Sundays remained very badly affected with the wholesale withdrawal of all services on some routes, for instance users on the Crewe - Manchester via Stockport and Chester – Manchester via Altrincham lines had NO services at all on Sunday 8th

December while STORM report only 11 of their 33 scheduled services ran on their line from Littleborough through Rochdale to Manchester Victoria.

Northern have now announced that from the December 15th timetable change, TWELVE routes below in the North West will have no Sunday service for at least a month, they have only been able to secure replacement buses on eight of those routes.

- Manchester Piccadilly and Stoke-on-Trent - Buses will run between Stockport and Stoke-on-Trent
- Manchester Piccadilly and Crewe - Buses will run between Stockport and Crewe
- Manchester Piccadilly and Chester via Altrincham - Buses will run between Stockport and Chester
- Wigan North Western and Stalybridge
- Manchester Victoria and Southport
- Manchester Victoria and Chester
- Blackpool South and Preston - Buses will replace trains between these stations
- Preston and Colne. Buses replace trains between these stations.
- Blackburn and Clitheroe – Buses will replace trains between these stations
- Lancaster and Morecambe / Heysham - Buses will replace trains between these stations

- Lancaster and Windermere - Buses will replace trains between these stations
- Liverpool Lime Street and Blackpool North - Buses will replace trains between these stations

Message from your Chair, Trevor Bishop.

When I was first involved with your branch committee some twenty year ago, we had quite a large committee (15+) and when I took over as Chair in 2009 it was still quite large. Sadly, through natural causes and other pressures, we are now down to a committee of six.

*Based upon my experiences of working life in another sector, refresh is vital for any organisation. We need fresh ideas and experience. Yet despite repeated requests to our 140+ members here in the north west, no one has come forward. **Your Branch Officers are doing their best to manage but we can't carry on without additional help from you, our members.***

Can you help to reduce the load in some way? Obviously joining our committee would be the most useful but there are other ways you can help. It is not too onerous, as most of our work is undertaken by email. We do normally have regular committee meetings face-to-face 4/5 times/year and socialise over a pre-meeting lunch, exchanging our views on the railway.

If you are interested, please contact the chair, vice chair or secretary at northwest@railfuture.org.uk (combined mailbox) for a no commitment chat about how you can help. Help us to help all travellers.

FLAG Calls for Investment in Cumbria Lines

The Furness Line Action Group (FLAG) supported Cumbrian MPs, Councils and business groups in a letter to the then Transport Secretary Louise Haigh on 10th July, seeking to secure local rail investment. FLAG has issued a statement highlighting several key issues that to be addressed. The new Government should;

1. Ensure that Cumbria receives a fair share of funding released by the cancellation of the Northern leg of HS2.
2. Modernise signalling and automate level crossings north of Barrow. The economic justification will come from new nuclear reactor build at Moorside which will generate additional freight and passenger traffic. Cumbrian Energy Coast studies have been pushing Network Rail for the upgrade since 2005.
3. Improve service frequencies and times of first and last trains.
4. Improve integration between rail and bus with interchanges at railway stations wherever possible.
5. Improve passenger access between platforms at railway stations. Ulverston and Arnside are particularly poor; they group wants to ensure that the Access For All grant already obtained for Ulverston results in a step-free solution where all platforms can be accessed without reliance on rail staff.
6. Promote the Furness and Cumbrian Coast lines in all tourist literature
7. Replace the 40-year-old Sprinter trains with battery/hybrid units that reflect the needs of passengers
8. Re-examine the case for re-opening the Penrith to Keswick branch to provide a direct connection from the main line, reducing road traffic and congestion in the Lake District.

FLAG spokesperson Derek Walmsley said, "Whilst supporting the efforts of our local MPs and councils, our proposals go further, but are realistic and deliverable if the Government is serious about its mission to promote green economic growth."

Following their 10th July letter, a cross-party delegation of Cumbrian politicians met with Rail Minister Lord Hendy at the end of October to make the case for the Cumbrian Coast Line upgrade.

The delegation included Whitehaven and Workington MP Josh MacAlister, Penrith and Solway MP Markus Campbell-Savours, Carlisle MP Julie Minns, Westmorland and Furness MP Tim Farron, the leaders of Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness councils and Martin Walkingshaw (Nuclear Waste Services). Josh MacAlister said "We're working together on a cross-party basis to make the strongest case we can for investment in our railway because of its importance to the whole of Cumbria, our people and our economy. While the Conservatives governed by press release, announcing projects they didn't have a plan or any money to pay for, the new Labour government takes its fiscal responsibilities seriously. All projects are being reviewed and the Spending Review will lay out the investment this government will make in our railway infrastructure. Our meeting with the Minister was to make our initial pitch for the

Cumbrian Coast Line and discuss next steps to get a plan together ready for the government when the Spending Review has concluded.

Partners will now work together to refresh the business case for the upgrade in order to get that in front of ministers early next year so we are in the strongest position we can be to secure the funding we need.

The new government is reviewing all railway projects and will lay out its future priorities in the Spending Review, which is due to be announced in March 2025.

(FLAG Newsletter December 2024.)

Elsewhere in their newsletter, FLAG noted;

- plans for a new coal mine in West Cumbria have been quashed by the High Court
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority is refusing to hand over land on the Moorside site designated for new nuclear use for a small modular reactor programme
- The Dalston oil terminal south of Carlisle is set to close at the end of the year following the end of oil refining operations at Grangemouth in Scotland

These are all likely to affect the case for investment in the Cumbrian lines.

North West and Yorkshire Branches Joint Meeting ‘ How to Get Rail Great Again’

A very well attended meeting in Manchester (28 in the room and 13 online) discussed strategies for future campaigns with a very relevant presentation from guest speaker: Charlie French, who's the Investment planning Manager for Transport for the North.

Charlie gave a detailed presentation on TfN's strategy for rail development showing timeline charts which endeavour to connect

together the various different projects and ensure that investments are timely and fit in with the overall strategy.

Five key topics were identified before the meeting and Charlie outlined TfN's approach to looking at them in the context of TfN's Strategic Transport Plan, Transforming the North, setting out their ambitions and strategic transport priorities up to 2050.

The key topics were:

- Relieving congestion in Manchester Castlefield corridor, Leeds, Doncaster & Sheffield
- Northern Powerhouse Rail
- Connectivity to other regions
- An alternative freight route from Trafford Park
- Concerns about service reductions

Charlie addressed the first topic (congestion) with charts showing the states of play in Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, and emphasised that linking together a number of projects (workstreams in TfN language) needed to be looked at to see what value they can achieve and whether they fit in with overall development. These were:

- Trans-Pennine upgrade
- High Speed Services
- Bee Network Rail Services in Manchester
- Growth in Local services
- Do we need Platform 15 and 16 at Piccadilly
- Overground or underground, through or terminus for Manchester Piccadilly
- Northern Powerhouse Rail
- Midlands, Yorkshire and North East (MYNE)
- Does Leeds need additional platforms?
- Does it need the T-Shape Station?
- Can safeguarded land be released for development?

One questions from the floor expressed the view that TfN didn't seem to have much to say about Merseyside and West Lancashire. The essence of the answer given was that there were limited resources, but a task force should start work in these areas in the summer of 2025. Key issues such as the potential extension of the third rail Mersey

network from Ormskirk to Preston were on the radar for TfN though.

Charlie then looked at freight provision. Most freight to/from/through Manchester runs right through the centre of the city currently, which limits its expansion potential and also any passenger expansion, so TfN studying options including alternative rail freight distribution centres such as those proposed at Port Salford and Parkside.

The overall objective is to increase rail freight on the network by 2050 to 25.5% and that it's likely that interventions would be necessary including Calder Valley electrification, 4 tracking through the Castlefield corridor, 6 tracking through Longsight and remodelling, grade separation at Ordsall Lane and a new Cross Manchester passenger line.

Further Questions;

The Proposed re opening of the Skipton to Colne route was raised, no clear commitment was given but it was being looked at by TfN, similarly the proposed Manchester Airport Western link, giving connectivity to Manchester Airport from the West and North Wales via Northwich, Knutsford.

New Open Access services were raised, one is proposed to run from Rochdale via Manchester (Victoria) and Newton le Willows to London Euston . Charlie suggested that these have to be viewed in the context of the best outcome overall for passengers, i.e. the most overall benefit for the greatest number of passengers.

The issue of Great British Rail was raised. Charlie noted that it wasn't yet clear as to how this will work in practice, although it was felt that decision making should be quicker.

**Railfuture North West England
Annual General Meeting
Saturday 8th February 2025
Holiday Inn, 85 Talbot Road
Blackpool, FY1 1LL**



Railfuture North West England’s Annual General Meeting for 2025 is in the Holiday Inn, Blackpool.

If a speaker is confirmed, we will have a 1130 start, lunch at 1230 for 60 minutes with the speaker after lunch and a finish no later than 1530. If there is no speaker, we will keep the same starting timetable but simply finish earlier.

This will be confirmed by email and on the website or by checking with the Chair, Vice Chair or Secretary, contact on the back page.

The outline agenda will be the normal AGM business to start, we will also

have topics that will no doubt prove

talking points and do want to hear members thoughts on any issue you wish to raise.

PLEASE NOTE. Those who wish to take lunch, please advise our secretary Chris Norton, cjnblackpool@btinternet.com at least a week in advance, there is a basic menu of mixed sandwiches and chips available for £9.95 per person, please bring cash on the day.

**Nomination for Railfuture North West England Branch
Committee 2025/6**

Nominations are now invited for the 2025/6 branch committee, these can be made using the form below or via post or email, provided the information requested in the form below is included.

Nominee	Proposer	Secunder	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 Christopher Norton, either by post or email, address is 26 Handsworth Road, Blackpool, FY1 2RQ, email cjnblackpool@btinternet.com, the closing date is midnight on Sunday February 2nd 2025.

Please note the email address above won’t correctly copy from the pdf edition, this is to prevent spam.

Railfuture North West Branch Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2024

For members' information, please note the accounts for our branch in 2024 below (with 2023's accounts shown on the left for reference). Members also please note that this year is the second where we have virtual branch account i.e. that the branch has money allocated for us to choose to spend locally but money is held nationally, we simply ask for bills to be paid etc.

Income

	2023	2024
	£	£
Opening balance at 1 st January	55.93	0.00 ¹
Funding from national funds	800.00	920.00 ²
Total	855.93	920

Expenditure

Newsletter printing and distribution	350.71	391.07
Room hires	236.00	85.00
Grant to Travel Watch North West	50.00	50.00
Other expenses	0	35.25 ³
Campaign expenditure	0	186.00 ⁴
Total expenditure	636.71	747.32
Closing balance on 31st December 2023	219.22	172.68 ⁵
Total (expenditure budget plus any unspent balance)	855.93	920.00

Notes

1. Budget no longer has "leftover" from previous years
2. Budget submission for 2024, this is composed of £700 general funds and £220 for campaign
3. Travel cost for member to attend Branches & Groups Day in lieu of Chair
4. Joint meeting with Yorkshire branch November 30th
5. 2024 figure is closing balance from budget versus actual expenditure at 16/12/2024

Letters To The Editor

Peter Robins via email.
Chester

Thanks for bringing the Gibb proposal to my attention in Rail North West (Summer 2024 edition). If you've not seen it, there is a more detailed analysis in the Rail magazine (issue 1010, May 29 – Jun 11, 2024). This clarifies that 1 of the 3 Manchester trains each hour would go via Macclesfield/Stoke. I assume that Gibb doesn't mention the current Liv-BNS service as that is outside HS2.

Much of this depends on what priorities the new government has, which we should have a better idea of before too long. But I thought I'd give some reaction to the 'Plan B' you write about whilst it's fresh in my mind. I'd be interested in what you/Rf in general would like to see, but Gibb does try and incorporate all elements, and as such his proposal is very welcome.

As the article in Rail North West implies, Gibb's New Northern Line seems to be similar to the Burnham/Street proposal, i.e. providing extra capacity with a new line, higher-speed than WCML, with ETCS, but slower and hence cheaper than the HS2 proposal. Because the metro mayors will be influential in the new government, I actually think there's a good chance this will go ahead. However, Gibb stresses the importance of Crewe, which none of the info I've seen on Burnham/Street mentions. Trains would split there, and existing junctions would have to be revamped. He doesn't mention it specifically, but this should include the planned additional platform to enable Shrewsbury-Man trains to use the dive-under tunnel and remove the need to cross the main lines. I think Cheshire East needs to be included in the discussions for this line, as they were planning a

revitalised station as the core of urban regeneration in Crewe - left high and dry by the previous gov't's decision to remove HS2 phase 2. (Personally, I regard Crewe as NW Midlands, not North West England, but your remit seems to include Cheshire!)

Ian Brown in Railwatch 178 rightly criticised HS2 for emphasising high speeds, lack of connections to the existing network, and 'stub-end stations' ("as daft as it gets"), but I fear NPR is falling into the same trap. You describe the proposed Liv-Man line as 'high-speed', but this is ludicrous. Assuming stops in WBQ and Man airport, the distances between stops are some 20km in all three cases. What on earth is the point of a 'high-speed line' for 20km?? The previous gov did provide some funding for a new line between Huddersfield and Bradford, which is probably <20km, as is Leeds-Bradford. Burnham and Rotheram are planning snazzy new stations at Piccadilly and Central - which is all very well, but is this really the top funding priority in the North of England? Burnham is also planning 2 tunnels (NW-SE and NE-SW) as part of the proposed Bee Network enhancements, but I'm not sure how this fits in with the NPR plans - if indeed it does.

The Union Connectivity Review recommended better connections between the North Wales line and HS2, and its map implied an extension via Manchester to the Humber. This could be done via Crewe, but that would mean reversing, far from ideal. So better would be to join NPR at WBQ. But connectivity with other lines doesn't seem to be on the radar under current plans. I expect I'm not the only one who considers all this very half-baked. We will see what the new gov't comes up with

Future branch meetings.

Our next branch committee meeting after our AGM is planned to be on Thursday 10th April 2025 at a venue to be confirmed, either The Merebrook Pub at Bromborough or Runcorn station meeting room. This will be at our usual start time of 1300,

The following meeting will be on Saturday June 7th, 2025, venue still be secured. 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.lmr.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.

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](#)
- [Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group](#)
- [Friends of Castleton Station](#)
- [Friends of Denton Station](#)
- [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 \(FLAG\)](#)
- [Goyt Valley Rail Users' Association \(Stockport\)](#)
- [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](#)
- [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,



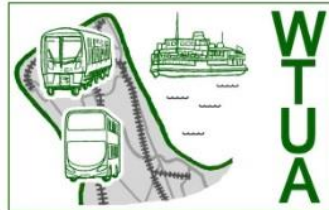
Join us, it's only £3/year, £5 for family membership.

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.

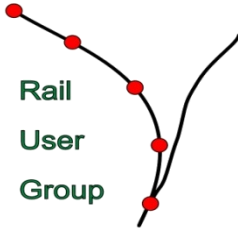
For more info, see website- www.wirraltua.org.uk,
email wirraltua@gmail.com, or phone Brian Grey on 0151 648 3070.

Annual membership- Individual: £8, Couple at same address: £10. 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.

Lakes Line



Join Today!

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

Membership: £5.00 Individuals,

£7.00 Family, £13.00 Corporate

LA9 5DA

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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
<i>Vice Chairman & Treasurer</i> Malcolm Conway	TBA	malcolmconway@aol.co.uk Tel 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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