

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

Number 62 Autumn 2023

More rail needed, not less

Passengers have been “returning in droves” to rail since the pandemic. In the week when government was preparing us for bad news on HS2, [Rail Business Daily](#) quoted a Rail Industry Association report showing “passenger numbers averaging 96% of pre-Covid levels, and growing”, requiring “more rail capacity in future, not less”. **Tell the DfT!**

We’ve had a summer of consultations (see *INSIDE*) not least the one about closing ticket offices. Have alternatives even been considered? Locally controlled Merseyrail seems to have most if not all stations staffed – safely in ticket offices – from before first train of day till after the last. A few stations combine ticket offices with convenience stores. Could this be a model for elsewhere? Or will Merseyrail succumb to the de-staffing mania that staff fear? We still hear rail bosses on about stations where staff do very little all day – **but less about the many stations we all know where ticket offices always have queues**. We are held captive by Treasury thinking. Talk is of “subsidy”, which, some say, must be cut. You might think rail was the only sector of the economy to receive state support. But we never speak of roads, schools, emergency services and the NHS, the arts, or waste collection as being “subsidised”. But of course, they all are. Rail is vital for a future clean economy that does not kill us all. So let’s get better value from state support by investing to open up healthy, climate-friendly travel to even more of the population. – JSW 28Sep’23

Thanks to Nina Smith, Yorkshire Railfuture branch chair, for this shot of Brighouse station. The train is a “158”, arguably beating the new “195” class for comfort – not to mention a view out of the window. We think stations like Brighouse need more trains, as do stations around the “Five Towns” area of Wakefield district.

All opinions in this newsletter are views of the writer, not necessarily of Railfuture or its Yorkshire branch.

railfuture

Yorkshire branch

President:

Alan Whitehouse:

Vice-Presidents:

Mike Crowhurst,
Alan Williams

Branch diary:

Meetings coming up – **be there!**

1 Railfuture Yorkshire branch autumn meeting Saturday 21 October 2023, Sheffield

- Starting at 13.00 (1pm)
- Hallam Room, Owen Building, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 2LX – directly opposite Sheffield rail station. (Location Google [Owen+Building](#). From station 5 minutes' walk: pass to left of water feature outside station. Turn right to cross main road and then bus road (care!), and continue up Howard Street. Owen Building on right (pictured). Enter and use lift or stairs to go up from 5th floor entrance to 6th floor where you will find the Hallam Room).
- **SPEAKER: Stephen Chaytow, Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP)**



Stephen Chaytow of MEMRAP will give an update on progress to restore and upgrade the 36 miles of the Peaks and Dales line between Ambergate Junction, along the existing Matlock branch and on over a rebuilt route to Chinley (via Peak Forest) and/or Buxton, creating a direct link from the East Midlands to the North West. On the Chinley route a central station at Chapel-en-le-Frith would be possible. We guess some interesting infrastructure work would be needed to get the branch into Buxton – bit it's all doable! Stephen will tell us more.

Reinstatement of this route through the Peak District would reconnect Derby and Manchester by rail, providing a significant increase in rail freight capacity to and from the Buxton/Peak Forest quarries, whilst relieving freight traffic on an increasingly congested Hope Valley Line.

New passenger services would also provide a more environmentally friendly means of access to the Peak District national park. Locally, new connectivity to link the rural communities along the line would enhance social cohesion and economic prospects. Aim would be to provide an equivalent Monsal Trail foot and cycle path, replacing the present route along the course of the old railway. Millions of car and lorry journeys would potentially be saved annually - opening the way to a central Derbyshire "net zero" for passenger and freight surface transport.

Stephen's presentation will look at what lies ahead for the Peaks and Dales Line, particularly in the context of the proposed East Midlands mayoralty and will be asking whether this new tier of Government will favour or hinder MEMRAP in its quest. Stephen will take questions from the Railfuture audience **so please come to the meeting and join the discussion!**

After a break the meeting will look at key issues facing the railway in the Yorkshire area, including the ongoing debate surrounding proposed ticket office closures and recent structural changes at Northern Trains and TransPennine Express.

Brief walking directions to the venue from Sheffield railway station are given above have been sent direct to members. For anyone who needs to drive, there are a limited number of disabled parking spaces by the building entrance – first-come, first-served. General car parking is available at the special University rate of £5 per day at the APCOA car park on Eyre Street, S1 4QW. On entering the car park you will receive a token. Bring this with you to the University and authorise on the chip coin machine on level 5 of Owen building. You will then be charged the £5 rate when you return to the car park to leave.

We look forward to seeing you in Sheffield on 21 October.



Sheffield. Are the people on their phones dialling for train information? (JSW)

2 Railfuture Yorkshire and North West joint branch meeting Saturday 25th November 2023, Halifax

- Starting at 14.30 (2.30 pm),
- Cornerstone Room, in Square Chapel Arts Centre, Halifax HX1 1QG.

Old part of building visible from rail station exit. 5 minutes' walk: bear right across road from station, pass to right of hotel. Turn left and continue up Blackledge. The old chapel is on the right; entrance to new building at top next to the famous Piece Hall. Bar will serve drinks and light refreshments and we have tea & coffee ordered for the meeting. Lift or stairs give access to the Cornerstone meeting room downstairs. **Why not make a day of it and enjoy lunch and sightseeing in Halifax?**

- **Speaker: Prof Paul Salveson**

of Rail Reform Group (RRG) ([Rail Reform Group - A Railway for the North](#))

Sometimes billed as the inventor of community rail, Paul Salveson will need little introduction for many Yorkshire and North West Railfuture members. We have given him a wide remit and topics covered may depend partly on what's in the news. Paul has a thought piece on RRG's website on ticket offices: [Opening the Railway's Front Door - Rail Reform Group](#) (open link to read). Whatever Paul's subject, this will be a thought-provoking afternoon!

Centrepiece of the meeting is expected to be a workshop session. We hope this will allow – even encourage! – everyone who wants to contribute to do so.

Yorkshire Branch looks forward to welcoming Railfuture friends from the North West branch. Halifax is accessible by rail from across the north with direct trains from Chester, Manchester, Blackpool, Preston, Leeds, Hull, York and Huddersfield. The meeting will finish no later than 5.30 pm.

Please be there, enjoy your day in Halifax, and support our two branches.



Square Chapel, Halifax – right outside the iconic Piece Hall (JSW)

PLUS: Railfuture East Midlands branch meeting coming up very soon:

Saturday 7th October 2023, starting 14:30 (to 16:30) at East Midlands Parkway First Class Lounge – easy to reach by rail. Speaker will be Simon Walton, UK Editor of pan-European news service RailFreight.com.

Railfuture Yorkshire members will be welcome at the meeting – as will East Midlands members at our meetings (above) in Sheffield and Halifax.

Through the hills we share: connecting communities, the aim is electric!

Northwest Railfuture member, researcher and writer **Richard Lysons** is active in Yorkshire's Halifax & District Rail Action Group as well as STORM in Oldham & Rochdale, and at least one station Friends group covering Littleborough and Smithy Bridge. Here, Richard updates us on the Calder Valley CRP and hopes that a community railway can also be an electric railway.

The Calder Valley Line Community Rail Partnership had a lengthy gestation. Passengers and user groups worked hard over the years to end any modern Wars of the Roses. Equally, Railfuture's North West and Yorkshire branches had built up cooperation on issues affecting the wider combined region. Along the line station adoption groups abound. Political and geographical division between Greater Manchester, Lancashire and West Yorkshire has not helped build a line identity nor encouraged leisure travel between the two transport authorities. The dreaded "tunnel tax" discourages those who travel across the Pennines.

The rail user groups had seen results of their ceaseless campaigning and lobbying. Halifax & District Rail Action Group (HADRAG)'s campaign to see Brighouse station reopen was successful 23 years ago (Elland next, we hope!). STORM (Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester line) managed to both keep the Oldham loop open, as well as see two new stations open at Mills Hill and Smithy Bridge in 1985, both of which have been hugely successful. The Oldham loop has now, of course, been converted to light rail, part of Greater Manchester's successful Metrolink system.

In summer 2015, Friends of Littleborough Stations (FOLS) held an open meeting to discuss the possibility of a Calder Valley Line Community Rail Partnership. The meeting was attended by station friends' groups and rail users from along the Calder Valley Line as well as representatives of ACoRP (now Community Rail Network) and Community Rail Lancashire. Further meetings and discussion followed.

Officers at Calderdale Council were already working on plans for a CRP when Discover Amazing Women by Rail was launched in March 2018. This booklet project was a collaboration between Mid-Cheshire Community Rail Partnership, Women in Community Rail, Community Rail Lancashire and FOLS. **The project has been, though I say it myself (I was the chief researcher and writer!), a huge success with no less than 50,000 copies of the free booklet distributed.** The project was welcomed by the rail industry, MPs, council leaders and historians.

As well as revealing many "hidden histories" of women's lives between Chester, Manchester, Leeds and Blackburn, the Amazing Women project did much to create this much-needed "line identity" for the three strands of the Calder Valley Line. Sometimes we rail campaigners daringly assume that the public understand the complexities of the various rail routes. The phasing out of printed timetables by most of the train operating companies has not helped this. Significantly, the Settle & Carlisle line still has an attractive free booklet, giving train times, route details and local attractions. This might catch on!

Charter launch – all those years ago!

In June 2018 the Electric Railway Charter was launched at Calderdale Industrial Museum in Halifax. The charter campaigns for the full electrification of the whole Calder Valley Line, as prioritised in the Northern Sparks report of 2014. This initiative is supported by both Railfuture's North West and Yorkshire branches, as well as the rail user groups.

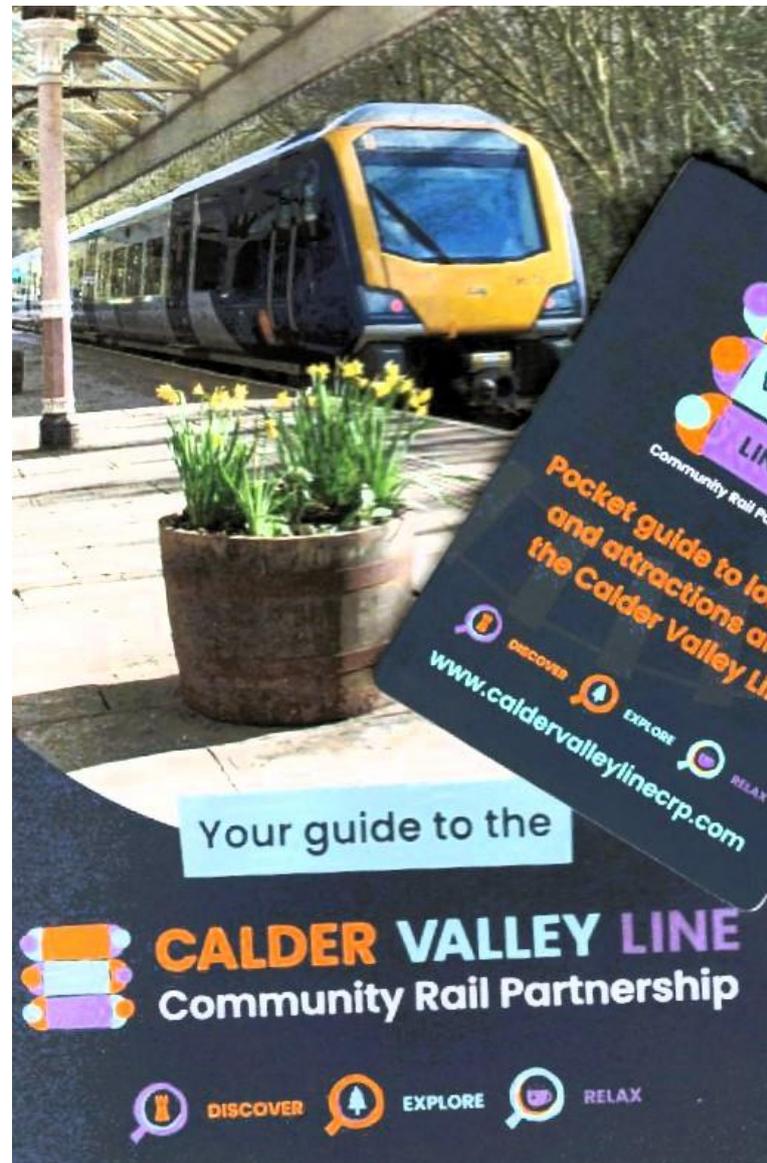
During lockdown, officers at Calderdale and Rochdale councils worked together on preparing a prospectus for the proposed community rail partnership (CRP). At present, the partnership covers stations between Mills Hill and Littleborough in the Rochdale borough and stations from Walsden to Halifax and Brighouse in Calderdale. Beyond Halifax, Low Moor in Bradford district appears on the CRP's map hinting at possible future expansion. An excellent prospectus was published in September 2021 and soon after the first steering group meeting of the Calder Valley Community Rail Partnership was held. The following spring, a retired Network Rail manager, Karen Hornby, was appointed. Karen has been busy building relationships with station friends' groups in Rochdale and Calderdale, holding meetings and working with other groups and with the two transport authorities and the train operating company. The partnership now has a website ([Home - Calder Valley Line CRP](https://www.caldervalleylinecrp.com/) or [caldervalleylinecrp.com/](https://www.caldervalleylinecrp.com/)) and has published a tourist guide, pocket map, and a drone film of the route. (We hope to have printed copies of some of this material at our Halifax meeting on 25 November.

Meanwhile, work on the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) continues on the line between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York. Details of this extensive, decade-long programme can be read at [Home - Transpennine Route Upgrade \(thetrupgrade.co.uk\)](https://www.thetrupgrade.co.uk/). Remember the two lines – Calder Valley and Transpennine – converge near Mirfield in West Yorkshire before going on to Leeds and York.

Rail user groups – and indeed rail passengers – along the Calder Valley Line hope that on completion of the Transpennine Route Upgrade, the wiring will then move straight on to link Leeds, Bradford, Halifax and Manchester. Leeds-Bradford is already on the government's list (such as it is). At the Manchester end there is interest in extending the wires towards Rochdale. In 2018 user groups along the line, including the Upper Calder Valley Sustainable Transport Group as well as STORM and HADRAG, joined with the two Railfuture branches to launch the [Electric Railway Charter](https://electriccharter.wordpress.com/charter) in 2018 (see also <https://electriccharter.wordpress.com/charter>).

The Calder Valley Line Community Rail Partnership shows the support for rail by both Calderdale Council and Rochdale Council.

Now the pressure must be maintained to ensure that community rail also means electrified rail!



Chair's column

by **Nina Smith**, Chair Railfuture Yorkshire Branch

What a summer!

If this turns out to be a shorter column than usual it's because I am trying to get my life back after spending much of July and August writing, receiving comments and finalising consultation responses. ***What a ridiculously busy couple of months!*** Our Railfuture branch in Yorkshire has responded to consultations on ticket office closures, the final draft of West Yorkshire Combined Authority's rail strategy, and the Transport for the North strategic transport plan. The TfN response, which I led, was a coordinated response from Railfuture's three Northern regions. Stephen Waring compiled, edited and finalised the response to the WYCA strategy, but I drafted a significant section of that too.

Lots of Yorkshire Railfuture members wrote responses from their own groups across the county or as individuals. ***Thanks are due to all Yorkshire committee members who added new points, details and value to our branch's responses.*** All Yorkshire members who are on email have been sent copies of the Railfuture responses.

Ticket office closure proposals

I led the Railfuture Yorkshire's response¹ to the Northern ticket offices closures consultation. Andrew Dyson led the branches response to the TransPennine consultation.

The inappropriate proposals to close most ticket offices were fronted by the Rail Delivery Group and train operating companies, but let us be in no doubt under whose orders they were operating – the DfT which is now micro-managing our railways, and HM Treasury, which is trying to reduce public expenditure following the ideologically driven economic mismanagement of the regime of Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng regime, and the cost of supporting the railway during the Covid lockdown periods. Unfortunately, the Treasury seems to look at everything as if it were a bookkeeper – knowing the price of everything but seeming not to understand the value of much public expenditure. The ticket office proposals are part of the Treasury's demand to slash £2 billion off the revenue cost of the railways yet continuing to effectively subsidise car travel by freezing vehicle excise duty (car tax), as well as maintaining support for air travel.

The real cost of train travel rose by 132% between 1997 and 2020, whilst the cost of car use has only increased by 58%.

The ticket office consultations have generated nearly 680,000 responses. We may safely assume that most of these oppose the plans, speaking volumes for public opinion on this issue. According to the London Economic, Rishi Sunak, questioned during his trip to the G20, said that the proposed mass closure of ticket offices is "the right thing for the British public [as it] recognises the fact that I think only one in 10 tickets are currently sold in ticket offices". That shows how out of touch our helicopter-loving multi-millionaire Prime Minister is! Has no one briefed him that the national figure is 12%, whilst for Northern it is 18%, equivalent to over 12 million transactions at their ticket offices a year? That does not take account of the information giving, passenger help and stations security roles that many ticket office staff perform.

Transport for the North strategic transport plan

Our response to TfN's strategic plan reflected the aspirations of Railfuture Yorkshire, North West and North East branches.

The TfN plan has much to recommend it, not least because it is underpinned by a trio of necessary outcomes – economic, environmental and social. We highlighted the need for TfN's plan to be more specific in terms of the infrastructure needed to create a bigger and better railway that benefits small and medium-size towns and larger villages, for example by:

- extending the size of the network
- and opening new stations.

TfN's ambition that most settlements should have two trains an hour in each direction is to be welcomed, but we also need to open new services both over existing lines and by building/reinstating relatively short chords or

¹ Plus the response from Upper Calder Valley Sustainable Transport Group!

stretches of lines to directly reconnect places by rail. This will help to achieve TfN's ambition to significantly reduce the 25% of the North's population who live in high-risk areas for exclusion and benefit many other people as well.

Good news on new Northern trains – but let's get them right!

Northern has announced the start of a procurement process for up to 450 "units comprising of multiple vehicles". The total number of vehicles is not stated at this stage. The deliveries are likely to be in phases, with at least some of the first trains being diesel powered that "could be converted to become battery multiple units or electric multiple units", with "future phases being electric/battery powered from new". If this country had embarked on a sensible, continuous rolling programme of electrification twenty or thirty years ago, these new trains would be electric ones from the start. Quieter, greener, smoother, faster accelerating, requiring less maintenance and having a longer life span.

But successive governments over the past 25 years have failed miserably to electrify our railways; the current government has gone very quiet on the issue, and we do not know what Labour's plans are – but that very lack of information makes me worry that they will fail on this just like the Blair and Brown governments did. **We need an electric railway revolution**, instead of a situation where a major freight operator is reverting to diesel traction on electrified routes because of the cost of electricity. Why is the government not providing heavily subsidised electricity to the railway to help in the vital task of getting significant modal shift to rail for both freight and passengers?



It is vital that the new train orders do not repeat the mistakes of the otherwise excellent 195 and 331 units. These new trains must have **end corridor connections**, so that both on-board staff and passengers can access all parts of the train. They must have **more than one toilet**, at least on those units that will be used on journeys longer than about 40 minutes. It is outrageous that train sets used for the 3-hour journey from York to Blackpool, for example, only have one toilet – which means none if that one is out of order. There has been a shift to leisure travel and leisure passengers are more likely to be older, or to be parents with young children – two of the groups most likely to need the toilet. And, of course, there are those who have had too much to drink whether tea in Betty's café, pop at the railway museum or beer at York races!

And the new units must:

- have both 3-pin sockets and USB ports, that are easy to access – something that the sockets on the current CAF units are not²;
- encourage **active travel**. Current trains only have room for two bikes, space sometimes filled with other items – or people! – and not enough on many routes;
- have adequate space for children in **buggies** – equally vital, as is...
- ... space for **luggage** – sufficient for demand, and this again suggests flexible configurations in part of a train set;
- vitally, provision for **wheelchair users**. There should always be at least two spaces that can be used by people travelling in wheelchairs, and where wheelchair users have priority;
- finally, we need to get **parcels traffic** back on trains. Maybe we need to re-invent the old Red Star service.

But where to put those bikes and those parcels without taking out too many seats? The answer is probably to

On the level!

Look at the access to this train! **It's level**. That is not only good for people with wheelchairs – for obvious reasons – but also for those of us who for whatever reason have even minor difficulty with steps. Is it just me, or are the entrance/exits on Northern's newish class 195 and 331 units decidedly awkward? There's an intermediate step that's only slightly lower than the train floor and seems too small for this commentator's size 11 foot.

Pictured is one of the new Merseyrail electrics. Platform is standard height, but the floor is lower. Of course, station platforms across the country have lots of different heights so this is no easy problem to solve, but there must be a programme to deal with it, and new trains such as those about to be procured by Northern must be designed to be compatible.

Picture with thanks [Campaign for Level Boarding \(www.levelboarding.org.uk\)](http://www.levelboarding.org.uk), interesting read! – JSW

² It is awkward to access sockets between seats, especially when sitting next to someone you don't know.

have a larger crew area for parcels and an area of flexible seating that can be folded for bicycle storage on some routes and at certain times of day.³

Grand Central

Four Railfuture Yorkshire committee members were joined by Keith Simpson, chair of Railfuture NE branch, for a productive meeting with **Sean English, chief operating officer of open access operator Grand Central**, in August.

We learned what GC is doing to combat the serious cancellations problems that have affected both routes in recent months, caused by one train set awaiting major repair after an accident and other sets also needing mechanical repairs. GC is hiring two 180s on an eight-week lease, and two ex-Avanti Voyagers for 12 months. However, it will not be able to procure new units until January 2027,

Looking smart!

Former Avanti West Coast "Voyager" enters Wakefield Kirkgate, newly bedecked in Grand Central colours. Look out for these on Bradford to Kings Cross trains – at least for the next year. (Thanks to GC for image.)



assuming its access rights are renewed by ORR, unless it can negotiate early release from its leasing arrangements for the 180s. Ideally, until 2027, cascaded Voyagers/Meridians from Avanti and East Midlands Railway would lead to a more reliable service, with the preferred solution after 2027 being new bi-mode trains, to end using diesel "under the wires".

More from our meeting with GC written up our Yorkshire vice chair **Graham Collett** in the new issue of Railwatch.

Grand Central has opened up new markets for rail by running through services to London from towns that had no direct services, places like Halifax, Brighouse and Mirfield in Yorkshire, and Hartlepool and Sunderland in the North East. Their fares have always been competitive, their trains comfortable, and their staff friendly. Grand Central receives no subsidy, many of us are very grateful for their existence, and it is critical that the ORR renews their access rights on both routes.

Director level changes at Network Rail and Northern

There have been recent changes at senior level in our region at both Network Rail and Northern Trains Ltd. **East region director Tony Baxter** leaves Northern to become the chief operating officer at Chiltern, whilst **Network Rail's eastern director Rob McIntosh** is transferring across the Pennines. Rob impressed us with the speed he sorted out the life-expired points issue at Horbury that threatened to cause several weeks disruption to passenger and freight services, whilst Tony has always been approachable to Railfuture and has listened to our concerns. **We wish Rob and Tony well in their new roles**, and welcome **Kerry Peters** as director (east) at Northern and **Jake Kelly** at Network Rail.

Winter webinars

– your ideas for speakers, please!

Over the past two winters we have held more than ten webinars with speakers from the rail industry and local government. We plan to hold more this winter, and **members' suggestions for speakers and/or topics would be most welcome**. NS 13.9.23

³ But let's not forget wheelchair and bike users also travel to work!

TPE on hold...

SO TransPennine Express, Government-controlled since late May following First Group's performance, is to withdraw its "Nova 3" trains this December. These are new trains (introduced 2019), much more modern than the "outer suburban" style Class 185 diesel units (2005 – so 14 years older) that will replace them on services Scarborough. The cross-Pennine route through Sheffield to Cleethorpes (which did have Nova 3s for a time), along with Man Airport to Saltburn will also keep their 185s for now. The Nova 3 Mk 5A coaches are expected to go into store at Beacon Rail in December this year. Whether they will ever return to TransPennine or any other train company is not clear – surely not a good outcome. (Doubtless we could all think of uses for them.) Issues included:

- not having enough crews trained to operate the Class 68 diesel locomotives that power the "push-pull" Nova 3 trains. Presumably the crew training will now stop.
- complaints about noise from the big diesels disturbing residents at night – for example at Scarborough.

Nova 3 withdrawal smacks of government imposition and is, according to Rail News (Sep'2023), "part of a wider DfT review" of TPE. Modern train operators, not least (but not only) ones that have been renationalised, seem to be much more closely controlled by the DfT and HM Treasury than "good old bad old" British Rail ever was⁴. Is someone trying to give public ownership a bad name? (Surely not!)

Of course, nobody expected renationalisation of TPE to be a magic bullet. Clearly issues to do with staffing and working practice can not be swept away overnight. Cancellations, more or less daily basis, have continued. But those of us lucky enough enjoy Northern's services have also suffered days when cancellations have been more than should be acceptable.

From December TPE will introduce a modified – reduced – timetable. This may be

prudent, will hopefully only be temporary, but is worrying given ministers' and civil servants' attitudes. (Dare we say that?) So the Manchester-Leeds fast service will be cut to just two trains/hr. These will be Liverpool-Newcastle, operated by the Hitachi hybrid sets (Class 802 "Nova 1"), and Manchester Airport to Saltburn the latter still presumably stuck with outer-suburban⁵ 185s. Manchester-Hull trains will call all stations Huddersfield-Leeds. Peak hours the service is slightly better.

Intermediate stations Hud-Stalybridge will continue to have a basic hourly service with extra trains stopping around the peaks. Scarborough will mainly be served by shuttles from/to York. This could help reliability.

One much-needed innovation is that some – nothing like all – TPE's Manchester to Huddersfield stoppers will continue to Wakefield, Normanton, Castleford and York. As we write, it looks like just five trains per day, which is infinitely better than the present Huddersfield-Castleford service which is zero trains/day. The previous Northern service was hourly before Covid, and the new service clearly needs to be. Extended to York and Manchester it provides valuable new connectivity for Wakefield district. The York service will use the new platform recently built at Castleford. (Some of us would like to see a second service each hour connecting Wakefield through Calderdale.)

It is certainly to be hoped that:

- the reduced timetable in December delivers a positive transformation of reliability and punctuality. If it does not, the exercise will have been disgraceful waste of time;
- in due course service enhancements will be introduced. More trains at local stations on the Hud-Stalybridge line as well as a full Hud-Wakefield-York service – which should be seven days/week. And a decent service Huddersfield-Leeds given that the December timetable has only three an hour off-peak unevenly spaced.
- We might add that Scarborough-York needs improving – at least hourly through trains to West Yorkshire plus the extra services promised by the Northern and TPE franchises.

Covid has not gone away. But for how long can the railway carry on using it as an excuse? The honest answer is

⁴ Tell us if we've got that wrong!

⁵ Sorry, if you've travelled from York to Scarborough on a crammed 2-car 185 that should have been a 5-car Nova 3 you will understand!

we don't know.

On rolling stock, TPE, Northern the whole of the North needs a programme of decarbonisation with more electrification and elimination of fossil-fuel powered trains.

West Yorkshire rail strategy let's make it work!

Talking of electrification, West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA)'s new draft rail strategy calls for the Harrogate and Calder Valley lines plus the link to Sheffield via the Dearne Valley line as first tier of a scheme that would eventually see all routes in the county wired. Railfuture Yorkshire (RfY)'s branch response welcomes WYCA's ambitions, which need political and business support at local, regional and national level. Service development ideas include transformation of service in the Five Towns area around Pontefract. WYCA wants half-hourly trains Leeds-Pontefract via both Wakefield and Castleford, a proper hourly service on the Sheffield-York line through Pontefract Baghill and a proper service Leeds-Goole. First task might be to get the Huddersfield-Wakefield-Castleford service back to at least hourly with extension to York and Manchester (as in TPE's partial December plans). There is also mention of the need to improve Pontefract-Bradford linkage – maybe this could be via the Calder Valley line?

RfY asks for this approach to be extended to the Calder Valley line not least the link through Brighouse. A bit like Pontefract, Brighouse suffers from having two different routes serving different places Bradford-Huddersfield and Leeds-Brighouse-Manchester(-Wigan). We say both these corridors need to have service frequency at least doubled. WYCA's document suggests doubling Brighouse-Leeds via Dewsbury. But how long will we have to wait for this given that several years of work are in the pipeline for the TransPennine Route Upgrade – including Huddersfield-Dewsbury 4-tracking with flying junction at Ravensthorpe? So we ask for development of other corridors such cross-Pennine towards Huddersfield, Bradford-Huddersfield-Manchester, Bradford-Wakefield and the Greengauge 21 proposal for a Bradford-Halifax-Barnsley-Sheffield service. We estimate this last suggestion would yield journey times Bradford-Sheffield 75 minutes (avoiding the hell that Leeds can be), Brighouse-Sheffield about 50 minutes – the latter particularly attractive. We think stations served could include Halifax, Elland, Mirfield and new railhead at Horbury (for Ossett),

The Bradford-Sheffield proposal is one of several possible reopenings mentioned in the WYCA draft strategy. It would involve reinstatement of the "Crigglestone curve" near Horbury. This short route was closed in the late 1980s, one of the "five curves" used by summer-dated passenger trains. The WYCA draft strategy also mentions the following possible reopenings, some of which we say might be mass transit (tram/light rail) rather than heavy rail. We support all of them and call for more development work:

- Spen Valley route through Cleckheaton – which could provide an even more direct route Bradford-Sheffield/Wakefield (though omitting stations in Calderdale and Mirfield) or more local mass-transit.
- Otley branch.
- Oxenhope-Keighley (Worth Valley), connecting for Leeds.
- In South Yorkshire, extension of proposed Deepcar/Stocksbridge reopening to Penistone. This could potentially restore a Huddersfield-Sheffield journey time of less than an hour. A good example, surely, of cross boundary thinking.

I am grateful to Nina Smith for her first draft of a big section of our response with lots of detailed points. Thanks also other committee members including Graham Collett and David Hagerty for further comments and ideas. Keep an eye on the Yorkshire section of Railfuture's website where we hope to post copies of the branch responses to recent consultations.

High-speed, regional rail, mass-transit – all are needed.

Our comments were not uncritical. Our position is we want more. More detail on timescales, more proposals for improving services on existing routes and the suggested reopenings. And more sense of a strategy to convince government (=DfT, =HM Treasury) that investment in rail can enable wider economic growth – notably green, climate-friendly, healthy growth that does not cost us the civilised Earth.

As we write this, we hear, yet again, government questioning the big projects including HS2 for the North. And what about NPR? We want the high-speed routes to connect Yorkshire with other parts of the country in a way that respects and protects the environment. New passenger routes release capacity for freight, and just maybe better passenger services for locations off the big cities map. The fear, however, is that political argument and business pressure for high-speed rail could be a distraction from smaller, more local rail projects **that could yield much quicker benefits for more and more local transport users at a much lower price**. We're thinking of Pontefract, Brighouse, Bradford-Sheffield, Sheffield-Penistone direct, Otley... And of places where mass-transit needs to move ahead. But improving and extending our existing rail routes must not be squeezed off the agenda between long-distance, long-term high-speed, and local mass transit – whether tram-train, light rail, ultra-light rail or advanced bus.

The WYCA strategy is a bold manifesto for rail development. Let's campaign to make it even better. Let's campaign to get it funded!

When things go wrong: three snapshots

Yorkshire Railfuture president **Alan Whitehouse** wrote in our summer issue of rail as “best and most civilised way of getting around”.

Sometimes however, things going wrong seems to be an inconvenient institutional habit. Read Alan’s comments on recent experiences here.



If one's not running, the other... might be. Buses meet the train at Barnsley Interchange. (JSW)

June 15th. I am off to Sutton Coldfield for day (no need to ask why, it was all perfectly legal...). The trip involves three trains from Silkstone Common with changes at Sheffield and Birmingham New St. So, not a straightforward trip but not the Trans-Siberian Railway either.

I have booked my ticket online as Silkstone Common lost its staff in 1959 when it closed. It has been unstaffed since re-opening in 1984.

So I present myself on the platform to find the

Sheffield service is running two or three minutes late. Which become three or four minutes late. And it will, apparently, be a four-carriage train. When it arrives, about five minutes late, it is three carriages, as I knew it would be⁶. This matters because if this simple fact cannot be got right it leaves passengers wondering if the rest of the information they are being given is accurate.

My connection time at Sheffield is reduced but perfectly do-able and, because lunch is uncertain, I buy coffee and a croissant to carry onto the train. Which turns out to be one of the handful of HST sets working out their last few months on the Cross-Country network.

My initial gratitude that this is not a Voyager quickly turns to dismay when it quickly becomes apparent that the air conditioning is not working in Coach E. It is like a broken sauna: too hot to be comfortable, not hot enough to have any therapeutic value. But I do feel smug that I had the foresight to grab my second breakfast because for the entire one-and-a-quarter hour journey to Birmingham, there is neither sight, sound nor mention on the public address system, of the catering trolley. This train, by the way, is travelling from Leeds to Plymouth.

Stumbling gratefully into fresh – well, fresher – air at New Street, I begin the confusing search for my connecting train to Sutton Coldfield. And it is confusing with one train mysteriously disappearing from the screens and another changing platforms.

At the end of the day one of my companions who joined us from Hampshire and is going on to Sheffield asks if I would like a lift home. You bet I would...

Six days later, June 23rd, I am off into Barnsley, two stops down the line, for an afternoon’s social drinking with my brother and a friend. I do not want to be going anywhere near a steering wheel. The train from Silkstone Common is bang on time and after a minor wrestle with the ticket machine I am on board and enjoying the ten-minute trip.

⁶ A matter of platform lengths! (JSW)

The afternoon goes according to plan and at 17.30, the better, not the worse, for drink (as the Irish saying has it), I go for the bus home at 17.45. It staggers across town before expiring. Undaunted, I leap off and walk back to the station with minutes to spare before the 18.03 to Huddersfield is due.

It's cancelled. So a £10 cab ride home beckons.

July 7th. Mrs W and I have a lunch date in Leeds with old and dear friends, one of whom has not been enjoying the best of health. We could drive but prefer not to do battle with Leeds city-centre traffic, so we opt for the train. As it is pointless even expecting the connecting TransPennine Express to be running on time or at all from Huddersfield, we travel via Barnsley instead. The Sheffield train from Silkstone Common is running only a few minutes late and after a five minute connection in Barnsley, we are whisked up to Leeds in 34 minutes. ***Running every half-hour, this is a cracking good service*** – when it runs.

Which it does not on our way home. 'Cancelled' says the giant indicator board in the station concourse. Might we get home via Huddersfield instead? Not a hope as the relevant TPE service to Huddersfield is also cancelled. So we get home on the following service half an hour later which is convenient for neither the train nor the bus back to Silkstone Common. Another £10 cab ride. Our friends fare no better, their Cross Country service to York is showing progressively later and later causing them to miss their bus connection home.

Three weeks, give or take, three journeys spoiled.

This is the real damage that has been done to what we might call the North's railway spine over the past few years. The service is now not to be trusted; it has become something you use when there is absolutely no alternative. It need not have been this way and everyone responsible – from the DfT down – should hang their heads in shame.

In the interests of balance and fairness I should add that three other local journeys – not further than Sheffield – all went well with minimal delays and no more than the usual frustrations with the ticket machine.

But, if the emerging stories about the railway's finances, and cuts being demanded by the DfT and their hapless Mark Harper, Secretary of State for Transport, are to be believed, these are still just about the good times before the storm ahead. ***So, am I just plain unlucky when I travel by train, or are things already in a worse state than we're being told?***

Working towards “OBC” in South Yorkshire – wider region projects still on agenda

by **Andrew Dyson** (additional material by JSW)

WORK continues on the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Barrow Hill line reopening. One current task is looking at potential for reducing costs and increasing revenue. The service would link Chesterfield to Sheffield Midland⁷.

Separately but linked, a government decision is awaited on Waverley station, on the Sheffield-Gainsborough-Lincoln line. Between Darnall and Woodhouse, Waverley would serve extensive new housing development and a new technology park. Trains on the Barrow Hill route to Chesterfield would also – we assume – stop there. In the absence of Government commitment, work is commencing on a SYMCA⁸-funded OBC for the station.

Over the border in Lincolnshire, Gainsborough Central is still a victim of broken promises with a very limited service on the Sheffield-Brigg-Cleethorpes line. An hourly service to Sheffield was a “commitment” under the abandoned Northern franchise. Instead, it is beginning to look a bit like closure by stealth.

Work towards a main line station at Rotherham is also moving towards OBC. This would be sited on the Midland route close to the Parkgate retail centre, not at the old Masborough site. Through journey opportunities lost when Masborough closed in 1988 would be regained. These could include services on the west-east Manchester-Doncaster-Humberside route and maybe improved inter-city services on the Wakefield Westgate and Leeds route. Readers will recall mention of this in our piece in YRC 60 (Spring 2023) on Greengauge 21 consultants' proposal for doubling frequency of fast services Leeds-Sheffield and other corridor upgrades.

A study has recently been completed by SLC Rail into the feasibility of providing a second train per hour on the Penistone Line between Sheffield and Huddersfield. Several options have been developed, but the overall benefit-cost

⁷ There has also been talk of the service running to a reopened Victoria station.

⁸ South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.

ratio is relatively weak.

Decisions on whether to progress to OBC the Don Valley line Sheffield-Stocksbridge, and Askern Line between Doncaster and Knottingley, are expected shortly. The Don Valley Line project could potentially enhance the longer-term prospects for improved services Sheffield-Huddersfield. Journey time Huddersfield-Sheffield⁹ could be as little as 50 minutes via a reopened direct route from Penistone. This would involve a major rebuilding scheme and is thought not to be part of the present project. It is, however mentioned as a possible future scheme in the recent West Yorkshire draft strategy.

We must not omit to mention here that another WY-SY scheme could be Bradford/Calderdale-Sheffield via a reopened Crigglesstone curve (Horbury) and Barnsley. Again, this may seem to be a long(ish)-term scheme, but it is mentioned in the WY strategy. Greengauge 21's report seemed to suggest it could come about within a decade.

Similarly, the Askern Line would provide much needed new journey opportunities for communities on the route between Doncaster and Leeds via Pontefract and would require relatively little infrastructure investment as the tracks are already in situ. Again, the West Yorkshire link is important here with a package of desired improvements for lines through Pontefract and Castleford mentioned in the WY strategy.

Hub was a flop, but Yorkshire still needs better cross-Manchester connectivity:

by Andrew Whitworth

THE NORTHERN Hub, so called, has, to put it mildly, been rather a flop.

The Ordsall chord opened in December 2017 with 2-hourly Calder Valley trains to Oxford Road (hourly on Sundays). The Calder Valleys should have become hourly through trains to Manchester Airport, but they disappeared in May 2018 when two TransPennines

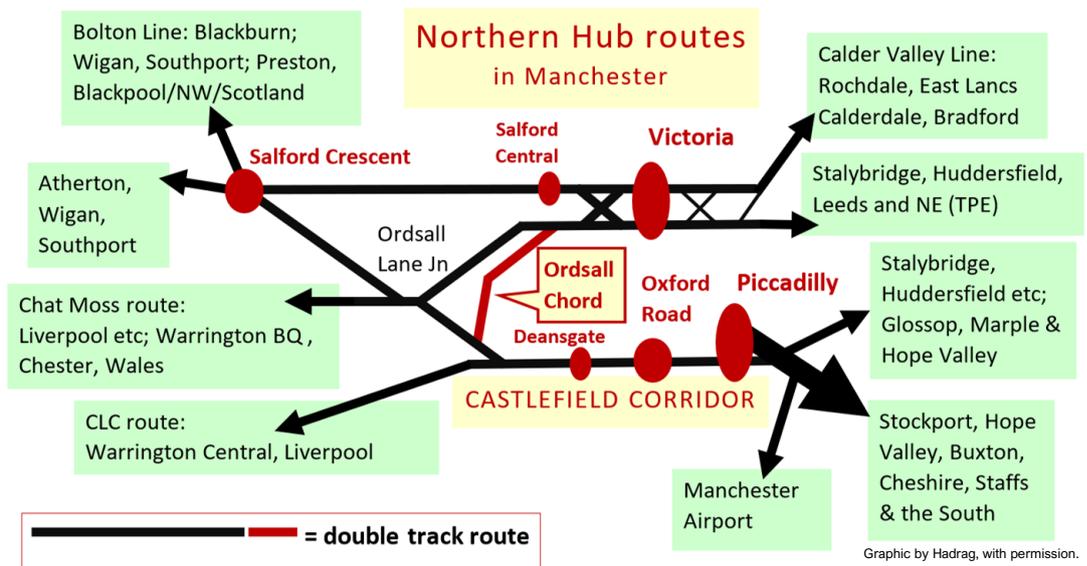
(Huddersfield line) started to run hourly via Victoria and round the chord). This of course coincided with enormous disruption to rail services around Manchester and further afield across the North. It was soon clear that using the chord effectively needed extra capacity in the Castlefield corridor, which had, indeed, been planned for later completion. So the chord's use is now very limited.

Not only were promised services not delivered; even those that had briefly run over the line were cut back. Plans to seriously increase capacity are being implemented at a snail's pace, with a timescale measured in decades.

So it is still difficult now to access the south side of Manchester from much of West and North Yorkshire. This isn't just a problem for passengers wanting the airport; Piccadilly and Oxford Road are useful for onward rail connections, universities, NHS and cultural sites.

However, there are other ways of conveniently getting to the south of Manchester from Victoria, such as Metrolink. Journeys would be so much easier if rail ticketing allowed simple transfers using Metrolink, and this would give better distribution around Manchester city centre than the Ordsall chord.

For example, adding PlusBus tickets for Nottingham, Birmingham and Sheffield allow use of those cities' tram



Graphic by Hadrag, with permission.

⁹ Victoria!

networks. Why not Manchester also, maybe for a modest increase in the PlusBus add-on?

In fact, passengers from stations within Greater Manchester can buy a ticket to 'Manchester Central Zone' (CTLZ) which allows onward tram travel in Metrolink Zone 1 - there seems to be no extra cost. However this cannot be bought online - TfGM say it is only available at booking offices or ticket machines in Greater Manchester. In fact, Northern's clever machines allow me to buy a ticket to Manchester Central Zone from, say, Rochdale at my local station in North Yorkshire. It was tantalisingly available as a through destination from my local station, but I wasn't allowed to complete the ticket purchase despite investing time selecting journey dates and times. So I could travel from Yorkshire and split tickets at Rochdale or possibly Stalybridge (if my trains stopped there). As well as upgrading PlusBus, why can't Central Zone be available to buy through all sales channels from every UK station, even if at a small premium compared to Manchester (All Stations)?

Split tickets!

Further, the TfGM website says that rail tickets within Greater Manchester that involve a transfer across the city automatically include Metrolink use at no extra cost. This is another reason to split tickets for some journeys if you travel from outside GM.

If it's Piccadilly you need to get to, then there's the free bus route 2 from Victoria which is handy but poorly publicised and not well patronised. Its hours of operation have recently been reduced to finish at 1930 (1830 Sunday). This also serves other useful city centre locations. There are also through services on the Huddersfield line, of course, as well as from Sheffield.

It seems fixing Manchester's heavy rail capacity shortfall will take decades and cost hundreds of millions. However, there are simpler ways of improving journeys for passengers that could be actioned cheaply in a matter of months. Arrangements are convenient for Greater Manchester residents, but not for other travellers across the North. Wasn't the aim of TfN to break down this silo mentality and move towards One North¹⁰?

Let's have decent trains for all! Northern must set example.

by **Simon Geller**, Rail-Cycle Forum

It's great news that Northern are tendering for new rolling stock. (<https://www.railwaygazette.com/uk/northern-trains-plans-framework-contract-for-450-multiple-units/64671.article>)

A key requirement of these new trains, however, must be that they meet the needs of today's passengers.

The days of treating people as economic units to be shunted from home to work have to be over. More people are travelling for leisure. They want to sit in comfortable seats, and find room on board for bikes, heavy baggage and children in buggies. All of this without having to worry that they might have to impinge on the space needed by disabled people.

It is not beyond the wit of train designers to provide all this, as we can see from many examples on the continent. Let's hope that Northern can step up to the mark and provide an example for other operators to follow.



Finished with this newsletter? Please pass on to a friend or colleague who might be interested in campaigning for better transport or even joining Railfuture. Or you could leave with other second-hand books and magazines where these are placed e.g. in station waiting rooms; please ask for permission if appropriate.

Why not send us a piece for next issue? It's not too early to start thinking. Editor's details on next page.

¹⁰ Wasn't **One North** the original name for Transport for the North? Did London find it too threatening? It has now reappeared as headline on TfN's webpage: [One North | Strategic Transport Plan - Transport for the North](#)

User groups affiliated to Railfuture within Yorkshire area

Askern Station, Friends of	Contact Graham Moss on graz.moss@sky.com or 07510 555722
Bradford Rail Users' Group	www.bradfordrail.com
Esk Valley Railway	http://www.eskvalleyrailway.co.uk/evrhc.html
Halifax and District Rail Action Group and Electric Railway Charter	www.hadrag.com and www.electriccharter.wordpress.com email js.waring@hotmail.co.uk
Harrogate Line Rail Users' Group	Care of billymms@btinternet.com
Harrogate Line Supporters' Group	www.harrogateline.org
Hope Valley Rail Users' Group	www.hopevalleyrailway.org.uk
Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association	Email: hpsrua@btinternet.com
Hull and East Riding Rail Users' Association	davidpennierail21@gmail.com
Hunmanby Railway Station, Friends of	https://e-voice.org.uk/friendsofhunmanbyrailwaystation/
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	
Minsters Rail Campaign (Beverley-York)	http://www.minstersrail.com/
Pontefract Civic Society Rail Group	https://en-gb.facebook.com/PontefractRail/
Selby and District Rail Users' Group	http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk/useful-links/selby-district-rail-users-group/
Settle-Carlisle Line, Friends of the	www.foscl.org.uk
Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership	www.selrap.org.uk
Stalybridge to Huddersfield	Email: markashmore@yahoo.com
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: Nina.Smith@railfuture.org.uk
Upper Wensleydale Railway	https://upperwensleydalerailway.org.uk/
Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership (Yorkshire Coast Wolds Coast Line)	www.yccrp.co.uk

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Please send us your contributions for next issue: Deadline last day of November.
It's not too early to think about what you want to say!
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