

Rail North West



TPE Siemens Desiro Class 350 at Manchester Piccadilly Stations on a busy December Sunday. Photo Arthur Thomson

Over-crowding on TPE services

The Department for Transport (DfT) released statistics in September that revealed that two Trans Pennine Express Anglo-Scottish services are the most over-crowded in the UK, with another Anglo-Scottish service is in the top 10.

But those highlighted are just the tip of the iceberg, as overcrowding is a serious and widespread problem on TPE services, especially south of Lancaster on the Anglo-Scottish route and between Manchester and Leeds and Manchester and Sheffield, with many Liverpool to Scarborough services in the summer also experiencing high numbers of passengers.

This is not just a peak-time problem, as people were standing south of Lancaster on the Manchester – Scotland services, observed recently in the off-peak.

It's thought that in part this reflects the success of FTPE in developing their services, including advance ticket offers designed to boost ridership.

However there is a serious deficit of rolling stock as FTPE has the highest seat occupancy of any UK TOC except for London Overground and with 72% of TPE's revenue coming from leisure passengers.

A 123% increase in passenger numbers over the past 10 (cont on p2)

years (from 13m to 29m per annum) has been accommodated in a much smaller fleet size increase of only 20%. The situation will be aggravated in February 2016 when the four remaining class 170 DMUs move to Chiltern Railways. The long term issue (which Railfuture is addressing by making representations here and elsewhere) is that rolling stock capacity has to improve.

Northern Busy Too

Meanwhile the situation is as bad on some Northern services with passengers from Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston into Manchester being forced to abandon the trains for their journeys to work. Station numbers are down because commuters from stations further out such as Rochdale, Smithy Bridge, Littleborough and West Yorkshire stations are increasingly turning to rail travel because of recent weather problems and general road congestion, so morning peak trains at Mills Hill are arriving already full with many would-be passengers then left behind.

Cancellations or short formations mean that the passenger load has to try to squeeze onto the next train. Longer station stops whilst passengers try to board mean the trains start running late as well. Trains often arrive at Manchester Victoria after the time when they should have departed back to Leeds. Following an agreement with West Yorkshire Metro, (after discussions about disruption), Northern Train Control in York often then instruct these trains to miss out

most Greater Manchester station stops to get back on schedule. This can and does leave unhappy would-be travellers from Moston for example, who suffer an abysmal hourly service anyway, with a two hour gap.

Meanwhile work has at least started on the bay platform at Rochdale which should enable turn-back of some trains which currently terminate at Victoria. The work is expected to be complete by May 2016. (Richard Greenwood, STORM.)

Stop Press: TPE and Northern Franchise Winners Announced

Just as this edition was going to press, the Government announced the winners of the Northern and Trans Pennine franchises, with First group retaining control of TPE (without Keolis as a partner) while Arriva are to take over at Northern.

A key part of both franchise deals is that a total of over 500 new carriages have been announced for both of them, with around 220 carriages for Trans-Pennine (noted that some or all of these are to be 125 mph capable) and 281 for Northern, so the input that User Groups and Railfuture had at consultations with all bidders has clearly paid off.

Developments on Northern

At a recent stakeholder meeting, Northern revealed one part of the strategy of working towards their aim

of “on time” performance. Northern has been fitting GPS units to their fleet, improving the accuracy of train punctuality monitoring at intermediate stations. The objective is to re-write timetables based on these precise timings with Colne-Blackpool to be re-timed in December. To date, 214 units have been so fitted. This innovation is now operable on two routes with three others due soon, and three more routes in May 2016.

Northern Rail is the second largest TOC and now carries an average of 263k passengers a day. During the period of its franchise, fleet reliability has improved with investment, up from 4,000 to 11,137 miles per failure. This year there'll be an additional 75 extra carriages, but it's unclear whether this is a net figure with the sub-lease of class 156 DMUs to FTPE to compensate for the loss of 5x170 units to Chiltern Railways. The extra carriages mainly comprise refurbished class 319 four car EMUs plus loco hauled trains on the Cumbrian Coast.

Train crew related cancellations are down during the past twelve months, with such cancellations in period 7 down from around 500 in 2014 to around 100 in 2015.

Halton Curve Progress

In the latest issue of their newsletter, North Cheshire Rail User Group (NCRUG) reported on the progress on the re-opening of the Halton Curve for regular passenger services, with Merseytravel noting that “outline design is about to commence” to enable the submission of the Full

Business Case and whilst this has been delayed a little in presentation “we are still very much progressing the scheme with a view to the Curve becoming operational in 2018 as originally intended.” Meanwhile it looks like engineering work is already taking place in preparation for the re-opening, with contractors “Murphy” clearing undergrowth and laying drainage pipes on the north side of the line parallel with the Runcorn Express Way. The work site can be seen from the footbridge over the Expressway.

A Class 66 was spotted heading onto the curve early on Tuesday the 1st September. This, after investigation, was found to be a ballast working from Basford Hall (Crewe) to Frodsham Junction, the train returned empty to Crewe via Ditton.

Further workings occurred on the 2/3rd September with others the weeks after. Two excavators are also working on site. This is seen as really good news, in that major infrastructure working is occurring, ahead of work to reopen the line for regular bi-directional passenger trains, and does show that there is serious intent to proceed at all levels of the railway management.

The very latest NCRUG have heard on this is that the current activity relates to site investigation to firm up on cost estimates. However, this does not explain the large stockpile of ballast and the site depot set up by Murphys where the Expressway crosses the curve, with a notice stating ‘Busy rebuilding your railway’.



Locomotive hauled trains arrive on the Cumbrian Coast and Furness Line, seen here at Kirkby-in-Furness on 4th June. DRS loco 37402 "Stephen Middlemore" on the 0842 Carlisle - Barrow Northern Rail service. Photo: Alan Johnstone, FLAG

Cumbrian Coast Loco Haul delays

The Furness Line Action Group, FLAG, have cautiously welcomed the introduction of loco-hauled services on the line between Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle, but have been taking a keen interest in the running times as their observations are that trains are not keeping to time. These trains are currently timetabled around 20 minutes slower than Sprinters between Barrow and Carlisle, with door opening/closing contingency the main issue rather than acceleration/deceleration.

An analysis of Real Time Trains website (which shows running of all

trains) revealed this in more detail and they have since contacted Northern about this.

Northern's own figures from across its network showed around 91% in June, whereas the Cumbrian Coast locomotive-hauled trains managed only 78%, 74%, 59%, 72%, 94%, 72% and 75% for each of the seven weeks from timetable start to the end of June. In July, FLAG Secretary Tony Parker sent detailed tables of punctuality and cancellations to both Alex Hynes (Managing Director) and Craig Harrop (Client and Stakeholder Manager), imploring Northern to make stronger representations to the Department for Transport about the rolling stock situation.

Rail User Group wins.

The Friends of Settle – Carlisle line won the Gold award for the best Newsletter at the recent RUG awards made at the Railfuture autumn conference held in Bristol. Copies of their newsletters can be found online here; <http://www.foscl.org.uk/magazines>

The judges said "Very informative, packed with news, and the campaigning message stands out. There's always a stunning photo on the front and back covers."

The User Group for the Clitheroe Line, Ribble Valley Rail and the Lakes Line Rail User Group's newsletters were both commended too.

www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
Lakes Line Rail User Group
www.llrug.co.uk

Mid Cheshire Line Wins Top Rail Award

The Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership won the top prize at the National Community Rail Awards, held in the Riviera International Centre, Torquay on 1 October 2015. It is the first time in the history of these national awards that a Community Rail Partnership alone has won the Overall Winner trophy. John Oates, Chair of the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership, said: "I am absolutely delighted with this award which was

given for the outstanding delivery of our community rail strategy. The top award, which we were all surprised to win, now establishes us as one of the leading Community Rail Partnerships in the country. I would like to thank all those who volunteer for the Partnership, the funding partners and our Rail Officer, who made these awards happen. I also congratulate Sally on bringing home for Cheshire two awards for our Friends at Ellesmere Port Station. This is a record breaking achievement"

The judges said the award was for 'highlighting so well the value of a community for partnership'. By bringing together communities, working in partnership, they have helped to deliver a lasting legacy for their local area. The Partnership has worked hard to improve the stations with volunteer groups and helped to achieve significant growth in passenger numbers on the Line. For their project to improve Delamere Railway Station with Petty Pool College, the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership won the Award for Involving Young People. Sally Buttifant won, with Chester's Theatre in the Quarter, the special award for WW1 Commemoration Projects, for their Over By Christmas production. This station-based project was performed 47 times in 2015, at 25 railway stations throughout Cheshire (and at St Pancras Station in London) and involved over 400 volunteers and 1,250 school children. The judges

described the impact of the project as 'breath-taking'. Sally Buttifant, Officer for the Partnership said: "We are thrilled to have won the overall award! A huge thank you to all the people we work with. Creative partnership working makes things happen across Cheshire."

Metrolink Service Change

On Sunday December 6th 2015 Exchange Square tram stop opened. This now allows additional services from Monday to Saturday between Shaw and Exchange Square, providing a six-minute frequency service between Shaw and Victoria during "peak" periods (broadly 0700-1900 on Monday to Friday, 0900-1800 on Saturdays). Unfortunately Metrolink is changing the Sunday service to the inconvenience of travellers on the Oldham/Rochdale line.

On Sundays, they have chosen to split the Rochdale-Ashton service (from the 0815 from Rochdale until the 16.35 from Rochdale) so that there will be separate Rochdale-Exchange Square and Victoria-Ashton services. So anyone wanting stops beyond Victoria (including of course Piccadilly station) will have to change at Victoria. This has not been publicised yet, meaning many passengers will be caught out on Sunday (for example will those at Piccadilly Station wanting the Rochdale line know to get on a Victoria tram?). STORM Secretary Peter Dawson said "Whilst we fully support the opening of Exchange

Square stop as part of the new Second City Crossing project, we are sure that the Sunday changes will not be welcomed by local travellers, especially those going to Piccadilly railway station. It is unforgivable that Metrolink has not made this major change clear" Peter Dawson.

Ordsall Chord legal Challenge Falls – and Then Starts Again!

On the 14th of October, the legal challenge to the planning approval of the Ordsall Chord in Manchester was dismissed by the judge, only for it to be started again three weeks later!

Mark Whitby, the former Network Rail consultant who challenged the planning process that determined the route of the chord, (on the basis that that route would cause substantial harm to significant "historic railway sites") has since applied again to have the decision over-turned, though it is not clear at which court, as he was refused leave to appeal by the judge in the case in October.

It could be that he could apply to the Supreme Court or the European Court of Justice, though it's not clear what basis his appeal would be, as the judge in the original case, Mrs Justice Lang, was very clear she thought there had been no flaw in the planning process

Manchester Airport Western Link

Manchester Airport have proposed to

no longer safeguard the land required for the Manchester Airport Western Link line from Mobberley to the Airport.

The Western Link would revolutionise the train service on the Mid Cheshire line by providing a much faster route into Manchester.

The Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association, (MCRUA) have made representations to the Airport that the land for the line should continue to be safeguarded. The Airport argues that HS2 would effectively replace the Western Link, but MCRUA feels that this is clearly not the case because both would serve very different markets.



Pictures courtesy FORSS: Camera crew filming Paul Merton with Dot & Dave at Reddish South 1142 Dot & Dave with Paul Merton

Paul Merton's Secret Stations films at Reddish South

Members of Friends of Reddish South and Denton Stations were delighted to be asked to be interviewed for a TV series which focuses on request stop stations like Reddish South & Denton, and even more pleased when they discovered it was with Paul Merton.

Brown Bob Productions were commissioned to make 'Paul Merton's Secret Stations', 3 x 1-hour programmes which are scheduled for transmission in Spring 2016.

Initially there was a reconnoitre by the production team and they spoke to half a dozen members of the group to get an idea of who we were etc. then they asked two of our members, Dot & Dave Ashworth, to be interviewed for the programme.

Dot said that Paul was very personable and was impressed with what the Friends had done to refurbish the station. He was also interested in our campaign, with Friends of Denton Station, to reinstate a regular rail passenger service. After filming at Reddish South they travelled on our once-weekly train (which doesn't return!) to Denton and interviewed two rail enthusiasts who regularly go there to photograph the trains that go through.

Dot & Dave said that they enjoyed the experience; we also gave Paul and the crew fridge magnets with the name of our station on to remind them of their day.

Kim Burrows, Secretary FORSS



2016 AGM

The North West Branch's AGM in 2016 is to be held on the 6th February at the Solaris Centre, New South Promenade, Blackpool FY4 1RW (directions below) starting at 11-00 am, with coffee/tea available from 10-30 am and a buffet lunch at 1-00 pm. We are hoping to have speakers from the new Northern and TPE franchise holders in the afternoon.

Do please make every effort to attend; Railfuture is looking to its members to get more involved in activities.

This year we have booked a buffet style lunch with morning tea/coffee which will cost £8 per person, no payment is needed in advance (please bring cash on the day), BUT WE DO NEED TO KNOW NUMBERS by 23rd January, so please contact Vice Chairman Malcolm Conway either by phone, letter or email to advise of your attendance.

If you have special diet needs can you please advise when booking.

Malcolm Conway.
58 Greengate Lane,
Kendal.
Cumbria. LA9 5LL.

Telephone: 01539 725995.
email: malcolm.conway@railfuture.org.uk

Directions from Blackpool North station; from the main exit, take the subway then turn left, and then right at the top of the ramp to join Talbot Road, follow this to the sea front. Turn left onto Promenade and either get the Tram to Harrow Place or the number 1 bus to Harrowside (the tram stop is slightly south of the Solaris centre).

From Blackpool Pleasure Beach Station; from the station turn right onto Carlyle Avenue then immediately bear left onto Burlington Road West (the Big Blue Hotel is on your right). Take the second left Clifton Drive and walk approximately 400m then turn right onto Harrowside West, the Solaris Centre is on your left (about 10 minutes walk).

Nomination for Railfuture North West England Branch Committee 2016/7

Nominations are now invited for the 2016/17 branch committee as below, these can be using the form below or via post or email, provided the information requested in the form below is included

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

Please return to Ronald Schwarz, either by post or email, addresses on the back cover of this edition, the closing date is midnight on January 31st 2016.

Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association (Incorporating South Fylde Line Users Association)

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

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



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

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

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

Future meetings.

The 2016 North West Branch AGM is on 6th February and is at the Solaris Centre in Blackpool (see separate page in this newsletter)

The following committee meetings open to members will be on 16th April at the Merebrook Pub in Bromborough and at Carnforth Station Heritage Centre on 18th June 2016, (these venue's are still to be confirmed at time of going to press, please check with branch officers as below).

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

E-Mail of the bulletin

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

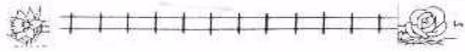
LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group
www.llmr.co.uk

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

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

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

North
WalesThe
Wirral

WREXHAM – BIRKENHEAD

Rail Users Association / Cymdeithas Defnyddwyr Rheilffordd

WRECSAM – PENBEDW

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

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

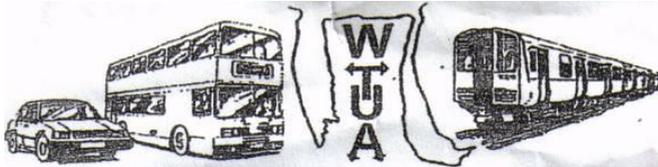
We encourage the fullest use and development of the Wrexham Central– Birkenhead–Bidston Line, to promote the Line's development and safeguard its future.

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

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

Individual membership £4.00 Family £6.00, Corporate £10.00

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



WIRRAL TRANSPORT USERS ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

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

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

We publish a newsletter twice a year and run coach excursions

Why not join us? Join today

Annual individual subscription £6.00; Family £8;

Corporate Bodies £25.00, representative bodies £12.50

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

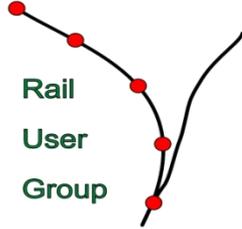
Brian Grey, 56, Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral, CH61 4US.

THE LAKES LINE RAIL USER GROUP

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

Lakes Line

Rail
User
Group



Join Today!

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

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

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

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