

Rail North West



Northern Class 156 Super Sprinter, 156429, at Halton Junction on 11th July 2015, this line will become bi-directional again once the project is complete. Photo courtesy NCRUG.

Halton Curve go ahead

The date of Friday 15th April, 2016 will go down in NCRUG's history as a major milestone in their campaign to get the Halton curve re-instated. This date was the day when the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority approved the Full Business Case for the Halton curve major scheme. The scheme, has been developed and lead by Merseytravel with the involvement of other stakeholders as part of a programme of Local Growth Fund schemes.

Prior to seeking this approval the Full Business Case had been assessed by The Transport Advisory Group and the Local Enterprise Partnership Board who also recommended approval for additional funding of £5.67m from the Local Growth Fund. The Benefit to cost ratio is 1.9 which is assessed as 'medium value for money'. The initially proposed service will be 1 train per hour in each direction between Liverpool and Chester. Further onward services into

Wales, (Chester to Wrexham and North Wales Coast), will be considered at a later date subject to capacity issues on those two lines being resolved

The extra £5.67m has occurred for several reasons including:-

- Omission of re-railing the curve
- Omission of required Overhead Line Equipment at Halton Junction
- Omission of Network Rail Fee and Industry Risk Funds
- Assumptions on the level of savings driven by delivery with Weaver Junction/Wavertree scheme and the changing nature of that scheme
- Inflation

It could well be the case that these omissions and assumptions are just some of the reasons why Network Rail have been the subject of investigations by Hendy, Bowe and Shaw on the instructions of the Secretary of State, Patrick McLoughlin. There is a concern that Optimum Bias did not seem to be applied as in previous projects. Had it been applied at the usual starting rate of 60% then the extra amount subsequently requested would have been more than covered?

However, this is academic now and the main thing is that Halton curve moves into GRIP, (Guide to Rail Investment Projects), stage 4 'Single Option selection' which is targeted to start in July and complete in December 2016. GRIP 5 'Detailed

design', (January/May 2017), GRIP 6 'Implementation' and full completion May 2018. The start of services over the line is scheduled for December 2018.

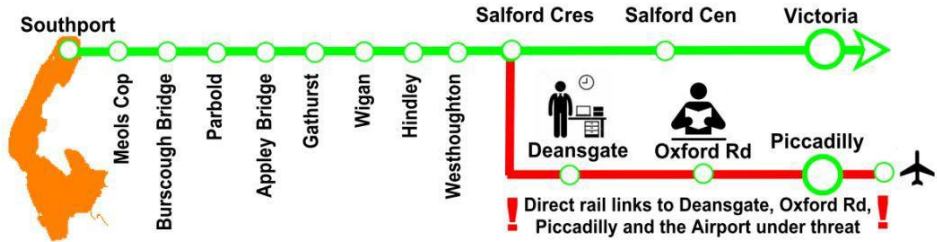
Importantly, the scheme has to be delivered to coincide with the upgrade of the West Coast Main Line between Weaver Junction and Wavertree as this will afford a saving of at least £2m. This saving has been taken into account in the above costs.

So by the end of this year, and hopefully sooner, the full specification of the scheme will be published which will lead to more detailed service planning and enable NCRUG to focus on making the travelling public aware of their new travel opportunities which a re-opened Halton curve will provide.

Finally, this progress on the Halton curve brings added impetus to two other projects NCRUG is seeking progress on, namely a decent service on the Hooton/Helsby line and improved linkages between Liverpool South Parkway and Liverpool John Lennon Airport. The group believes the business cases for both these schemes will be strengthened when the Halton curve is fully operational.

NCRUG hopes to have further good news for members and supporters in their Autumn Newsletter.

Cedric Green, NCRUG



Battle to keep Southport – South Manchester services

Arriva Rail North took over the Northern franchise from 1st April 2016 with a plan to divert Southport – Manchester Piccadilly and Airport services to Manchester Victoria from December 2017 and the Ormskirk – Preston - Southport Travellers Association, (OPSTA) has been running a campaign to reverse that decision through **Make Your Voice Heard** campaign in collaboration with the Southport Rail Transport Forum (SRFT), North West Manchester Stations Alliance (NWMSA) and station and community groups around Wigan.

On 1st July the four MPs for Southport, West Lancs, Wigan and Makerfield, the local authorities, OPSTA and SRTF met with Arriva, Northern and Rail North. OPSTA were seeking a positive outcome in which both services to Victoria and Piccadilly are retained and even improved.

The local MPs, who had set aside time specifically to work with rail managers to find a solution that would retain rail services for their

constituents, were left visibly infuriated and frustrated when it became clear Arriva had no real intention of finding a way of saving the Piccadilly-Airport link from being axed in Dec 2017.

Arriva's blunt justification, "we have a commercial contract with Department for Transport".

In response to the major concern expressed by travellers over the time loss and uncertainty in making a rail connection, especially at busy peak periods in the evening; "it will be all right", "it will not be a problem".

A lot more was covered at the meeting and OPSTA is maintaining the campaign on social Media as well as the traditional methods of press and posters, and will be posting more on the issue to keep the campaign moving. <http://opsta.org> Twitter (@opsta15 #gotopicc) and Facebook (southportrailtransportforum), <https://goo.gl/a4rmPd>

/cont.

OPSTA were hoping that the evidence of the high numbers of people using the services from their recent surveys would help in making the case if they were to convince the incoming train operator and the transport authorities, namely Rail North, Merseytravel, Lancashire County Council and Transport for Greater Manchester that the plan is wrong.

They asked rail users to petition individually by sending an e mail or writing a letter and hundreds have done so and there is a strong feeling that the rail company and transport authorities know they cannot simply ignore this.

At the commencement of the new franchise, in reply to passenger objections and a body of evidence, Northern (the operational management) stated they would look at timetables in detail and consult but made no commitment to modify the plan to retain the direct service to Piccadilly. The Chair of Rail North also committed to hold the operator to its promise to conduct a review of plans but he placed this in a context of benefits that will result from the Ordsall Chord/ Northern Hub, electrification and new franchise.

In the second month of its franchise, Northern became almost mute, with Northern (Arriva Rail North) seeming to be under heavy pressure to get the new franchise organised which may explain their lack of communication. Or is it possibly because many passengers comprehensively deconstructed their initial response, not least the suggestion that a change

at Salford Crescent would be reasonable?

In total contrast with the rail company and Rail North, Wigan MBC quickly flagged its concerns with the plans and noted its formal objection stating the case from their part of Greater Manchester. On 21st April Sefton MBC gave its full support to a motion to state clearly its objection to the loss of service, expressing concern at the serious economic impact if the plan went ahead.

On the same evening OPSTA presented to the Local Association of local councils which comprises all parish councils in traditional West Lancashire and they unanimously gave their full backing to the campaign; active support and interventions had already come from many of them.

Friends of Hindley station conducted a survey at their station in March; the communities east of Wigan were now getting concerned and involved. Recently completed platform surveys and counts by the Friends of Westhoughton station established that half of their travellers use the line for stations on the Piccadilly/ Airport route. It's now been identified that 650 daily commuters will be seriously and adversely affected by the loss of service.

On 9th June a passenger survey was carried out at Wigan Wallgate meaning that in conjunction with Southport Rail Transport Forum and North West Manchester Stations Alliance (Friends of Hindley and

Westhoughton) they have covered the morning peak period for the stations shown on the map.

The key point from the survey is that over 800 peak time commuters have been identified as users of the threatened service and need direct access to the stations on the red line - daily! It's also clear that there are hundreds more using the line throughout the day in both directions for business, education and leisure purposes, and will deny direct access to mainline services, domestic and International flights, the University and our jobs

The evidence is clear, loss of the service will have a very serious and adverse impact on all of these households and that is unfair. The adverse economic impact would be felt in north of the Liverpool City Region, West Lancashire and the north west of Greater Manchester, which is why Sefton MBC, all of the parish councils in West Lancs. and Wigan MBC are active in their opposition to the change.

Moreover, what needs to be recognised is the detrimental affect it will have on Manchester - dynamo in the Northern Powerhouse - through loss of a highly skilled and professional workforce. **Don't cut off the power supply** is the simple plea OPSTA is making to the transport authorities.

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) says the matter can be looked at but so far has made no commitment. Merseytravel has not offered much more although OPSTA has been working with Sefton Councillor Gordon Friel who is Vice Chair at Merseytravel and he should have influence and has continued to voice his support. Lancashire County Council has stated it will support us and evidently is taking some action in this respect.

OPSTA is keeping the focus of the campaign to the main issue - Northern, the transport authorities and Rail North must understand it is wrong to withdraw these Piccadilly service and OPSTA won't let it go.

OPSTA is keen for users to raise an objection now while they press for meaningful dialogue and resolution, you can visit their website www.opsta.org to see how you can make your voice heard - it is very quick and easy.

If you use Twitter, you can follow the group at [@opsta15](https://twitter.com/opsta15) please comment using the hashtag #gotopicc and Campaign for Better Transport's #railwoes.

If Facebook is your social medium, have a look at;

[facebook.com/southporttrailtransportforum](https://www.facebook.com/southporttrailtransportforum).

<https://goo.gl/a4rmPd>

Station	Station Facility Operator	Charge per year	Services in each direction	Station facilities
Bishop Auckland	Northern	£6466	2 hourly Clock face	Daytime ticket office, CCTV
Kents Bank	Northern	£6756	Mainly hourly but some 2 hourly	Nothing
Cathays	Arriva Wales	£14982	6 tph hour in each direction	Ticket office am & pm Ticket machine help & CCTV
Silverdale	FTPE	£14811	Mainly hourly but some 2 hourly	Will soon have CIS
Sandy	Great Northern	£24745	2 tph Clockface	Half day (am) ticket office CIS Help points CCTV
Carik	Northern	£24238	Hourly in each direction	CIS

FLAG highlights disparity in stations costs and facilities

Research by the user group FLAG (Furness Line Action Group) has found that there is large disparity between the annual charges that Network Rail makes to the TOC's (Train Operating Companies) to use stations, versus facilities provided at those stations.

The table above shows the charges made by Network Rail's to the train operator, the trains services that call and the facilities. There's a link which shows this at <http://goo.gl/sF7yIG>

scroll down to "Price lists updated for RPI," three examples are shown here, comparing stations in along the Furness line with another around the country.(comparisons in bold boxes show similar charges and the differing facilities).

In summary, passengers on the Furness line are paying the same price to access stations as ones with far superior facilities

FLAG is also challenging the new franchise holder Arriva to ensure it gets the rolling stock necessary to operate

services over the next 2-3 years until delivery of the new units. The May 2016 timetable shows a reduction in through trains between Barrow/Windermere and Manchester, and loss of some of the Class 185 100mph units which currently work those services.

Currently a class 185 runs the 08.50 Barrow to Manchester Airport which will be replaced by a 156 Sprinter at 09.17 to Preston only in May, requiring a change at Lancaster. This is very popular and often overcrowded with 3 coaches, its likely to be much worse unless its doubled up to a 4 coach 156. These units are 30 years old with a 75mph main line restriction, and it is unlikely seat reservations will be available.

Two other services are no longer through services to Manchester Airport, although there is an additional through service leaving at 09.29. The new services will leave intermediate stations Ulverston, Grange and Arnside with no through service after the 0648 ex Barrow.

BAFRUA and Railfuture North West look for service doubling on South Fylde line

BAFRUA (Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association) and Railfuture North West are writing to the new Northern franchise holder Arriva, to ask them to look again at the current hourly only service on the South Fylde line that runs from Preston to Blackpool South.

The current service is constrained by the fact that the line is single tracked throughout from Kirkham onwards with no passing loops, but both organisations believe that the installation of a short passing loop at a key location would unlock the potential for the line which they feel is un-met,

They noted that there is a larger population that live within 10 minutes of stations along the line than that to Blackpool North, and so believe there is strong case for improvements. The station usage figures from each station along the line belie the figures somewhat, and not including the terminal stations of Blackpool North and South, the station totals for the year 2014-15, are 583,738 for the North Line with 389,156 for the South Fylde line, but this of course is with the better service on the North line, i.e. with the current limited hourly service, the stations already achieve nearly three quarters of the patronage of the North line.

They also think that there is a case for moving Kirkham station west of Station Road in Kirkham, this is so that better access can be offered and would

suggest that this should be done before electrification sets the layout.

The final point is that they think there is a case for a re-opened station at Wrea Green and that it would make sense when the electrification work proceeds for this to include a double lead junction at Kirkham North Junction and the re-instatement of double track as far as Wrea Green.

Wrexham - Bidston

Back in January this year, the Wrexham Bidston Rail Users Association (WBRUA) responded to the Arriva Trains Wales proposed May 2016 Timetable for Wrexham – Bidston line which contained no change to the Wrexham-Bidston line or to its connecting services. The WBRUA identified this as a missed opportunity.

The need for modest investment in the Wrexham-Bidston line to realise a more frequent, reliable service together with a new station, Deeside Parkway, to support economic growth in North East Wales and adjoining North West England was a consistent theme.

The WBRUA sees young people, in particular, being potentially trapped as public transport may not be able to get them to work and, if they can afford to run a car to access employment, the cost of running one will represent a significant proportion of their pay. With congested roads, together with the percentage of employees travelling to work by rail in Flintshire less than half that for the whole of Wales, a robust case is now emerging to improve the train service on the Wrexham-Bidston line and its connections with other routes.

Lancashire County Council decision on new Skelmersdale station

Lancashire County Council will choose the location for a new station in Skelmersdale, after spending £71,000 on a study to help decide between its two favoured locations.

It is the next step towards connecting Skelmersdale town centre to the rail network, and could see local residents travelling by rail to places like Manchester, Liverpool and Ormskirk within the next few years, *reports the Southport Visiter*

Network Rail is carrying out the assessment, part of the industry's standard procedures, and it will compare the benefits of putting the station on land behind the Concourse Shopping Centre or on the site of the former Glenburn High School.

County Councillor John Fillis, cabinet member for highways and transport, said, "We've already demonstrated that the project can be delivered and should provide good value for money, and we now need to look in more detail at the practicalities, with one major consideration being where the station would be best located."

The study will look at access by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians following proposed changes to local roads, and the feasibility of providing a 250-space car park with the potential to extend it to 500 spaces.

Full accommodation for a bus/rail interchange at each potential site is part of the plans, with two rail platforms and four drive-through stands for buses, and a booking and information office.

A rail link for Skelmersdale is one of a wider set of proposals in the County councils highways and transport master plan.

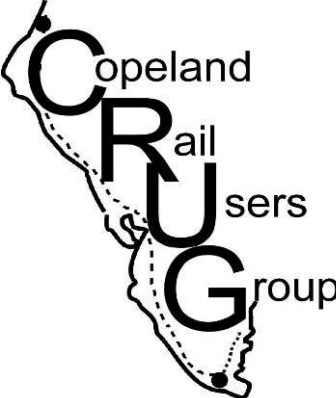
County Councillor Fillis said, "Our aim is for Skelmersdale's railway station to provide regular journeys to Manchester and Liverpool, which would have a real impact on the opportunities available to residents and businesses, which its hoped could be funded through a Growth Deal with the government.

The study is due to be completed later this year.

Railfuture North West pursues ticket anomalies in evening peak

Railfuture North West England has found that some stations outside the Greater Manchester area are wrongly applying the peak evening ticket price to what are marked on their maps as off peak journeys.

Journeys from Alderley Edge to Wilmslow/Handforth/Styal, New Mills Newtown to Disley, New Mills Central to Strines, Birchwood to Warrington Central, Newton-Le-Willows to Earlestown, and Burscough Bridge to Parbold are outside the peak area marked on the map published by Northern, but the ticket price charged at some stations and on the National Rail website show only the peak fare for travel during the evening peak time. Railfuture North West has raised the issue with the new franchise holder Arriva and the initial response was that they were very concerned. However they have subsequently said this is largely a "presentational" issue. Railfuture North West obviously disputes this and has followed up with further questions.


 <p><i>Promoting the Cumbrian Coastal Railway</i></p>	<p>If you'd like to join a group representing the interests of rail users in West Cumbria, and particularly on the Cumbrian Coast line from Carlisle to Barrow, Copeland Rail Users' Group would welcome your membership.</p> <p>See www.crug.org.uk where you will find all the details about us, our aims and aspirations, and how to join.</p> <p>Fees, £5 for individuals, £10 for organisations.</p> <p>We can make a difference, and with your help, our voice will be stronger.</p>
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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 next few committee meetings, open to members will be on 10th September 2016 at the Patten Arms, Warrington and on November 19th, venue to be confirmed check with Chairman/Secretary as below.

Both 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.

Wrexham-Bidston



Rail Users' Association

Cymdeithas Defnyddwyr Rheilffordd Wrecsam-Bidston

Representing rail users, potential rail users and the rail transport interests of communities along the Wrexham-Bidston rail corridor.

The Association seeks to identify, justify and promote:

- Opportunities to improve current service performance, passenger satisfaction and passenger numbers;
- Opportunities for an improved service frequency and an extension to current operating hours between Wrexham and Bidston together with improved interchange with other services at both Shotton and Wrexham during the course of the new franchise;
- The case for the introduction of a new station, Deeside Parkway, on the route adjacent to the Deeside Industrial Park and the A548. This new station would enable employees to get to the Deeside Industrial Park by train and at the same time provide easy access from the network of dual carriageways to park and ride facilities for rail services to Birkenhead, Liverpool, Wrexham and beyond;
- The introduction of a through service between Wrexham and Liverpool, if and when suitable rolling stock (such as IPEMUs) becomes available;
- A case for full electrification of the route.



www.WBRUA.org

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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

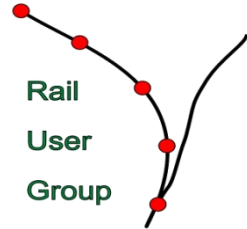
Send your subscription to our Membership Secretary today and receive a copy of our latest newsletter

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

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Membership: £5.00 Individuals,
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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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