

Yorkshire **railfuture**

President: Alan Whitehouse Vice-Presidents: Mike Crowhurst & Alan Williams

Labour's View of Rail's Future

By Mark Parry



Rachael Maskell MP – photo by Mark Parry

We welcomed Rachael Maskell, York's MP and Labour's shadow Rail Minister at our branch meeting in York on 28 October. She looked to the future of rail and associated issues and how they could be developed under a Labour administration. She said issues such as poor air quality, congestion, the efficient movement of freight and people, the re-energising of our economy and who should have a voice on running the railways needed consideration. She sees the railways in the future as operating as one body including interchanges with buses and cycling. As franchises end, train operating companies would be taken into public ownership. The new public corporation would listen to both workers and passengers and would link in to other businesses such as a publicly owned post office.

However, Labour is only in listening mode at the moment and their plans have yet to be firmed up.

Labour is reviewing what passengers want from the railway, is it a mobile officer for example? Should stations be a retail centre or be focussed on travel? Why should only first-class passengers have access to a lounge? Labour wants to look at ticket pricing and are concerned that discounts tend to be available at certain times and often only via the Internet. They hope to have just one ticket for a whole journey and are considering if fares should be based by distance or by zone. They are especially keen on electrification and light rail for the likes of Leeds. ...continued overleaf...

Railfuture, Yorkshire Branch Annual General Meeting

Speaker: Paul Barnfield, Regional Director East, Northern Rail

13:00 to 16:00 hours, Saturday, 20 January 2018

The Carlton Centre, Harrison Road, Halifax HX1 2AD

See flyer for more details

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As new houses are built, their connectivity to the rail network should be considered. She is considering who should own the rolling stock.

Labour want the rail network to be as self-funding as possible, but consider the current 25% fare subsidy as too low. Rail not only benefits the passengers, especially when considering congestion reduction and improved air quality, which justifies a greater reliance on the tax payer. They will review how all transport is funded including the tax on cars. During questions, concern was raised over the limited funding the previous nationalised corporation, British Rail, had; it is too easy for the Treasury to cut investment. Rachael wasn't able to say if sources of private funding would still be utilised. She said that savings could be found by eliminating the legal costs of franchising. There was concern that some manifestos disappear once a party is in Government.

Mike Crowhurst said he thought the issue was fragmentation rather than ownership. Rachael commented that the railway network could be pulled together during the transition to nationalisation. She said competition shouldn't be between Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies, under the current set up it is meant to be between the Train Operating Companies.

Rachael was asked if there would be a "Strategic Rail Authority", keeping rail away from the politics. She confirmed that it was something they were considering, but it could affect the devolution deals with areas of the UK. The new industry would be structured around devolved bodies, but Labour are reviewing devolution and how it is structured as well. Rachael is keen that the local community should have an influence over rail and that it shouldn't be led top down, the railways should belong to the people and not the Government.

Hebden Bridge Station Café – The Best!

by Mark Parry

"The Coffee Station", the cafe on Hebden Bridge railway station, is the first ever winner of a prestigious national award – from Railfuture.

Station cafe customers across Britain were invited to vote on Railfuture's website for their favourite independent station cafe. "The Coffee Station" beat other popular cafes from across the country; of these, the Jubilee Refreshment Rooms at Sowerby Bridge came joint third.

"The Coffee Station" was taken over in 2005 by Heptonstall residents Lisa Crebbin and Antoinette Hunt. It is open from 6am to 2pm Monday to Friday, and for slightly shorter hours on Saturdays. It serves hot and cold drinks, light lunches, all day hot snacks, home-made sandwiches and cakes, and also newspapers and greeting cards. Service is warm, friendly and efficient, and prices are very reasonable – a cup of tea is only 90 pence, a filter coffee £1.

The award ceremony took place in the "Coffee Station" and was attended by the Mayor of Hebden Royd Councillor Pat Fraser, and Arriva Trains North's Stakeholder Manager Pete Myers and Communities and Sustainability Manager Richard Isaac. Presenting the award, Railfuture's Honorary National Communications Director and Board Member Christopher Hyomes, from Pontefract, congratulated Lisa and Antoinette for winning the award, and said they had beaten stiff competition from across the country. He said that good quality station cafes were greatly appreciated by passengers, especially regular commuters, and Railfuture had set up the award to encourage station cafes.

In response, Lisa Crebbin said "Antoinette and I would like to thank all our customers for supporting us during the past twelve years, and for voting for us. We are thrilled and humbled at this national honour. We'd also like to thank our hard working staff, without whom we couldn't offer the service we do".

The event also celebrated ten years since the founding of the Friends of Hebden Bridge Station, and their founding Chair Nina Smith is now Chair of Railfuture's Yorkshire branch and also of the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group. She said that the "Coffee Station" is a wonderful example of how a station cafe should be, with excellent food and drink at reasonable prices sold by warm and friendly staff. She added "I challenge anyone to find a better toasted bacon and tomato butty".

A second honour for Hebden Bridge's Victorian Railway station is that it is featured in a new Penguin Viking book "Britain's 100 Best Railway Stations" by Sir Simon Jenkins. It is being launched on the 28th and will be available at the ceremony. Friends of Hebden Bridge Chair Martin Whittell said "It is fantastic to be able to celebrate three great achievements. The 'Coffee Station' is a fantastic asset not just to the station but also to the town, whilst the Friends have done fantastic work with developing gardens around the station"

Round the Region

by Mark Parry

DONCASTER HITACHI VISIT

Terry French reported that recently, members of Selby and District Rail Users Group visited the Hitachi Train Maintenance Depot in Doncaster. The facility will be used to maintain the new fleet of "Azuma" Inter City Express Trains operating on the East Coast Main Line. Members were thrilled to be shown around and learn about the operation, and would like to thank Hitachi for their hospitality and making this visit possible.

KEIGHLEY STATION REPAIRS

Bradford's Telegraph and Argus, on 7 October, reported on a campaign led by Keighley's former Town Mayor and member of the Friends of Airedale Line Group, Graham Mitchell. He has been campaigning to for repairs to the Keighley Station building, which will be undertaken soon. However, renovation work is not due to start until 2019/2020.

RAILFUTURE ASKS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

At a meeting in September with Northern, our Chair, Nina Smith, asked that train conductors are given information on alternative travel arrangements during rail disruption and suggested that Rail User Groups could provide details for stations in their area. This would include bus information and taxi numbers. Nina also queried several details in the new timetables for three lines. This included Northern working with bus operators to ensure timetable changes were accommodated with connecting bus services.

IMPROVEMENTS AT BAILDON STATION

In the 23 October, the Telegraph and Argus said work to improve Baildon Station had started, providing a new ticket machine, plus a shelter with cameras. These were amongst a series of changes asked for in a survey of passengers run by the Friends of Baildon Station.

ELECTRIFYING THE NORTH

The Halifax and District Action Group is leading a campaign for a rolling programme of electrification across Northern England. An article in their newsletter of 7 November gives a detailed history of the plans and cancellations announced by Government. They are fighting to have sparks over the Calder Valley line as a starting point.

SKIPTON TO COLNE LINK

The Yorkshire Post reported on 8 November an advance for the long campaigned for Skipton-Colne reinstatement. The Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership attended a meeting in Westminster where they were backed by MPs from both Labour and Conservative. They hope to see the link in the Transport for the North Plan next year. The link would provide a new east-west link boosting the economy of the North.

Pass this newsletter to a friend when you've finished and help advertise Railfuture.

On 25 July, I attended the Public Consultation on the East Leeds extension and East Leeds Orbital Road in Cross gates. Large scale ordinance survey plans were on display, and I was surprised the dismantled railway from Cross Gates to Wetherby was not clearly marked, this is unusual on such maps. From the meeting I could not find out if provision for accommodating the dismantled railway in the proposed scheme was planned, this will occur at national grid reference 373.366 approximately.

The public at the meeting frequently raised the road congestion problem in the area and how the bad present situation will be made far worse with the East Leeds extension without a major improvement in public transport which only a railway can give. Once this area had railway stations at Penda's Way, Scholes, Thorner, East Rigton, Collingham and Wetherby. If re-opened it would be another Leeds to Ilkley line for passenger numbers. I did not see any MPs or local councillors at the meeting.

If we are not to see large amounts of tax payers' money wasted in the future when the Cross Gates to Wetherby railway is re-opened, it is most important the scheme is planned to accommodate the railway at the decision stage and not as happened when the Edinburgh to Galashiels Waverley route was re-opened. A 4 lane road was temporarily diverted, then a large trench tunnel was built through the road alignment. The road was then re-opened and the temporary road demolished with massive unnecessary expense to the tax payer. (Information courtesy of "The Waverley Route, Its Heritage and Revival" book by Dr. Ann Glen ISBN 978-1-911177-04-03 pages 96 and 97).

The Leeds City Council response will clearly illustrate how sincere the politicians are at reducing these problems. Since the formation of the Scottish Parliament, four closed railways have re-opened, all performing well above expectations and a long list of re-openings are in the pipeline. All re-opening work is carried out with electrification in mind.

Editor: The consultation on the East Leeds scheme closed on 29 November 2017.

NORTHERN

Firstly, can I welcome Pete Myers back to Northern's East Region as Stakeholder Manager. Pete is well known to Railfuture and Rail User Groups, having performed a similar role under the previous franchise before his temporary banishment to the north east. Pete has a well-deserved reputation as an outstanding communicator – certainly the most prompt replier to emails that I have ever encountered - and as someone who is approachable and does his best to make things happen.

Northern (Arriva Trains North) is going through a difficult time at the moment. Ever more people are travelling on its trains, but at present there is a desperate shortage of rolling stock, resulting from decades of under-investment in the railways, and exacerbated by the franchise requirement to refurbish all retained trains "as new" by 2020. Northern's much awaited new trains will start being delivered next year and should all be in service by the end of 2019. Cascades from elsewhere in the network have been delayed due to delays to, and retraction of, the Great Western electrification. I understand that Northern's class 170 DMUs to be cascaded from Scotrail will start to arrive early next year; when is dependent on how quickly Great Western replaces its high speed trains (HSTs) destined for Scotrail. These HSTs are now starting to come off-lease and I repeat my plea to Northern to acquire a small number of shortened HST rakes to use on the Leeds, Settle and Carlisle line. This would have three benefits. It would free up some 158s for use elsewhere, such as on the chronically overcrowded Calder Valley lines. It would give the Settle & Carlisle rolling stock the quality needed on England's premier scenic line, whilst at the same time eliminating the chronic overcrowding that the Settle & Carlisle has suffered at times this summer. It would also make it

easier to market the Settle & Carlisle to business users. Refurbishment should be on the basis of all seats lined up with windows, and comfortable seats that have backs not so high that they impede the longitudinal view. (Note that First Great Western made most of their HSTs high capacity to cope with London commuter demand).

Finally, by the time this column appears, it is likely that Northern will have published the May 2018 timetables. Railfuture and Rail User groups made a number of suggestions and recommendations on the drafts, and we hope that it will have been possible to have incorporated many of these in the final timetables.

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS

The capacity problems facing Northern have also affected TransPennine Express, with chronic overcrowding between Leeds and Huddersfield, and elsewhere; their new trains cannot come soon enough. Track capacity on that route is no longer fit for purpose, and it is to be hoped that the planned investment will include 4-tracking wherever possible, improved passing loops on two track sections, and short block sections between signals. The emphasis on inter-city Leeds-Huddersfield-Manchester traffic is currently to the detriment of local commuters, local communities and local economies. Railfuture's affiliate SHRUG (the Stalybridge and Huddersfield Rail Users Group) believes that just a slight flexing of the timings (maximum 5 minutes) of the four express trains between York and Liverpool, and York and Manchester Airport would enable the ending of skip-stopping. This would allow two trains an hour to stop at the four stations between Huddersfield and Stalybridge. Which between them have an annual footfall of almost one and a half million. How on earth can we achieve the modal shift required to reduce road traffic if the railway fails to provide an adequate service to important commuter stations?

ELECTRIFICATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

Mention of trans-Pennine naturally leads on to electrification. Electrification has so many advantages – less carbon emissions, better air quality in stations, better acceleration, quieter and less vibrating trains, longer train life – that puts Mr Grayling's concerns about unsightly overhead line equipment into perspective. The fully electrified Swiss railway system has not spoilt their spectacular scenery! The Secretary of State is on record as saying that passengers are not concerned how a train is powered as long as it transports them speedily and safely. He is wrong. People care about the environment and they care about passenger comfort. Adverse climate change (global warming) and air quality are very important. Lessons will have been learned from the Great Western electrification fiasco, and so it should not be seen as an excuse not to push ahead with a comprehensive electrification programme. Trans Pennine via Huddersfield must be top of the list. Midland Main Line electrification to Sheffield had a better business case than the Great Western electrification and should have happened first; political expediency decided otherwise. Its cancellation should be reversed and extended to its junctions with the East Coast Main Line. The implementation of the Electrification Task Force, which would result in a mostly electrified commuter railway into Leeds must be given a timescale, starting no later than 2025. I commend Stephen Waring, Chair of HADRAG, the Halifax and District Rail Action Group, on the campaign he is launching for the implementation of those recommendations, starting with the Calder Valley lines.

TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH STRATEGY.

This is now due to go out for consultation in January. Railfuture will of course respond and we expect rail user and re-opening groups will do likewise.

RAIL CAMPAIGNING

Something is happening in one area of rail campaigning, and Railfuture is on the sidelines. Dissatisfaction with train services is leading to the setting up of Facebook groups in which dissatisfied passengers vent their frustration or even fury with overcrowded, late or cancelled trains. They want reliable journeys in reasonable comfort. These groups are set up by passengers who by-pass Railfuture and Rail User Groups. Why do they by-pass us? Is it because the originator is unaware of us? Or do they see groups as being of an older generation that, with important exceptions, use traditional means of communication, that they

disdain in today's instant age? Although most Railfuture's communication is now done by email, we still have valuable members who do not have email; that makes it difficult to communicate easily with them. Many of us – me included – have been trying to resist Facebook and Twitter, in my case mainly because I do not want to spend ever more time in front of a screen. Yet we have to adapt to today's and tomorrow's world. Demography is important here. The Facebook groups are set up by commuters, usually by younger commuters. Social media is in their blood. It isn't in the blood of most long established rail campaigners. Most Railfuture members are or nearly retired, many being veterans of previous campaigns to stop closures, promote re-openings and seek better services. The future of Railfuture, and many established rail user groups (as well as many other traditional voluntary organisations), depends on their being able to attract young members. If they don't want to attend evening or weekend meetings, do we need virtual (social media) groups as well as traditional ones? One of the great advantages of Railfuture and of rail user and reopening groups is that we think strategically, as well as being concerned with the immediate issues of performance and next year's timetables. We have vision. We are, to some extent, a think-tank. However, we also attract people to public meetings when a service is threatened – as SHRUG has done over the proposed reduced services at Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite. The social media groups are mainly focussed on the immediate. How we do combine our talents? Or do we accept that we have different emphases? Answers on a postcard please – or more seriously, let's have some email contributions from readers on these issues.

FELIX THE STATION CAT

Short of Christmas present ideas? I see that the Penguin book commissioned by TransPennine Express about Felix, the Huddersfield station cat, has now been issued in paperback. If you haven't read it, I can recommend it whether or not you are a cat person! It also gives a fascinating insight behind the scenes at a busy large railway station.

Interested in Joining Railfuture for just £18 a year?

Members receive national magazines as well as this Yorkshire Rail Campaigner.

Find out more and join by clicking on www.railfuture.org.uk/join/ or by contacting our membership secretary Paul Colbeck, 14 St Giles Way, Copmanthorpe, York YO23 3XT, Paul.colbeck@railfuture.org.uk If you join online please let Paul know by email.

Rail User Groups affiliated to Railfuture within the Yorkshire Branch

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group	www.avrug.org.uk
Bradford Rail Users' Group	www.bradfordrail.com
Halifax and District Rail Action Group	www.hadrag.com
Esk Valley	http://www.eskvalleyrailway.co.uk/evrdc.html
Harrogate Line Rail Users' Group	Email: hlrug@live.co.uk
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	www.hullrailusers.co.uk
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	www.lasrug.btck.co.uk
Minster Rail Campaign	https://www.facebook.com/minstersrailcampaign/info?tab=overview
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: MarkAshmor@yahoo.co.uk
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: Nina.Smith@railfuture.org.uk
Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership (Yorkshire Coast Wolds Coast Line)	www.yccrp.co.uk

Branch Committee and the small print

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Membership News: **185** as at December 2017 Paul Colbeck – Membership Secretary

Welcome to our new member: Mr. N Harvey of **Hunmumby**.

On a sad note, we lost John Watson of **York** earlier this year.
Railfuture sends condolences to his wife Winifred, family and friends.

Diary

20 Jan 2018 13:00 – 16:00	Railfuture Yorkshire Branch Meeting and Annual General Meeting at The Carlton Centre Halifax, HX1 2AD. Speaker: Paul Barnfield of Northern. See flyer for full details.
12 May 2018	Railfuture National Annual General Meeting will be in Edinburgh, at the prestigious Holyrood Hotel.
23 June 2018	Railfuture Summer Conference to be held in Carlisle where, the Rail Minister, Paul Maynard, will be one of the Speakers.

Want to advertise your meeting here? Contact Mark Parry: Mark.Parry@railfuture.org.uk 07941 642349.

Our next issue (**Yorkshire Rail Campaigner 40**) will be out in March 2018. Please email material, news and feedback to: Mark.Parry@railfuture.org.uk to arrive by **Saturday 3 February 2018**.

Alternatively call or text 07941 642349. **Stories of campaigns and successes are especially welcome.**

Choosing to have your Yorkshire Rail Campaigner sent by email saves us time and money.

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