

# Rail North West



*The new Ordsall Chord bridge over the river Irwell. This route is electrified, but it seems there may be few services making use of this electrification in the short term. Photo courtesy Network Rail.*

## Where to Now for Northern Wires

Like many campaign groups, Railfuture North West was shocked at the the Government's change of policy on electrification last summer, where they removed Oxenholme – Windermere route from the programme of electrification and placed significant doubt on whether the Leeds – Manchester via Huddersfield Trans- Pennine route would be electrified, and we have joined the campaign to get these reinstated.

The Government's justification for these changes, that the "intrusive wires and masts" for the Windermere – Oxenholme

route weren't necessary because bi-mode trains could deliver the benefits of electrification without it, seems, as noted by many of the many specialist railway publications, to be patent nonsense.

The Government's new approach on the Trans Pennine route, that implementing a "Digital Railway" by re-signalling the route instead of electrifying to provide more capacity, is perhaps also a diversion, as although it may deliver a small increase in capacity, it won't bring the step change needed to attract new travellers and retain existing ones through increased reliability.

---

## Awards for local Group

At the recent Railfuture National Conference in Leicester the RUG (Rail User Group), awards were handed out and local RUG, Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group won the Oliver Lovell Award for Best New Group.

They also received a commendation in the Best Campaign category, and it was noted that they joined others in focussing on step-free access campaigns.

## Rochdale fares squeeze continues

The further round of price increases from 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 exacerbates the discrepancy between fares from Bolton to Manchester and from Rochdale to Manchester, *writes Richard Greenwood from STORM (Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester line)*. This is despite the fact that the distance from Bolton to Victoria is slightly more than from Rochdale.

The difference for various tickets varies between 12% and 20%. Northern actually said they would address this anomaly in stages and made at least one increase from Rochdale on some tickets slightly less the increases from Bolton.

It appears that this knowledge has been lost in the new franchise however, and Northern are increasing off peak fares from Rochdale by 40 pence but from Bolton by only 20 pence. An exercise carried out two years ago showed that the commuter fares from Rochdale to Manchester are more expensive on a pence per mile basis for a similar length journey than any others in the country except between Bath and Bristol.

A twelve month season ticket from Bolton will cost £1,024 (an increase of £36) whilst from Rochdale it will cost £1,156 (an increase of £40) for a ten

and a half mile distance. The Rochdale season ticket fare will be exactly the same as Glossop to Manchester Piccadilly for a distance of thirteen and a quarter miles. This is a difference of over 20%.

Northern noted that stations in Greater Manchester are located in one of 3 fares zones, with Bolton in Zone 2 and Rochdale in Zone 3. This is a historic legacy which dates back many years and one which took into account that the GM boundary extends further to the west than to the east.

They also noted that the reason for the difference between the increase in Off-Peak Return (CDR) fares, is that the Bolton – Manchester CTLZ fare is at the maximum Northern can charge from 2 January (85% of the Anytime Day Return (SDR) as per their franchise commitment). The Rochdale to Manchester CDR fare at 80% is 50p cheaper than a GM Rail Ranger that will be priced at £6.80 from the 2 January.

Owain Roberts from TfGM thinks that the answer to adjusting the historic “zone’s” lies in the fares work which Rail North are undertaking and he plans to discuss this example with them at the next meeting.

---



Work continues to electrify the line between Preston and Blackpool. Photos courtesy Network Rail.

## Blackpool North to Preston Electrification

“Since the 11th of November 2017, Network Rail have descended on the Fylde to re- model and upgrade to Preston to Blackpool North line, *reports Paul Nettleton of Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association.*

Whilst some of these plans aren't to everybody's taste, you could never complain that the contractors aren't getting on with it, and the progress has, at times, been quite breathtaking.

For instance, the platforms at Blackpool North quickly became a distant memory, as indeed did all the semaphore signals that had become synonymous with the terminus. As with the platforms, all trace of track rapidly disappeared, and at the time this article was being prepared, just one newly laid line actually made it as far

as the buffer stops. The carriage sidings have also seen work to upgrade them unabated, with stanchions that will eventually carry the overhead power cables appearing what seemed to be overnight.

Kirkham station will be completely transformed once the work is completed. It will gain an extra platform and the track layout will look different, with a double lead junction for the Blackpool South branch.

All these improvements are very welcome and it has to be said the Fylde coast is well overdue for this kind of investment. The only regret is that Network Rail didn't see it appropriate to install that much needed passing loop on the South Fylde line while it still had crews in the area – surely that would have made, what would in engineering terms, be very simple to carry out, much cheaper rather than having to start from scratch in the future.

The down side to all this work is the disappearance of five mechanical signal boxes, some of which had served faithfully for over one hundred years. To see the way Blackpool North Number 2 box was demolished was, for a railway enthusiast, not particularly pleasant. The lever frame was pure Lancashire & Yorkshire – it was thrown away for scrap.

It has, so far, been very interesting observing all this work, and I've no doubt

that it will give Blackpool North a new lease of life. However, Network Rail, don't forget that there two rail routes into the number one resort in the country. The South Fylde line passes through a greater population than that of the North route, and it could turn in to a gold mine, but to do that you'll need to speculate to accumulate. An hourly service is no longer suitable and passengers expect better. BAFRUA wants Network Rail to 'get on with it'

## **SELRAP Campaign Goes to Westminster**

The executive committee of SELRAP (Skipton- East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership) decided that at the this stage of the campaign it was crucial that a meeting be hosted at Westminster by supportive MPs to 'EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR FAST TRACKING THE REOPENING OF THE COLNE-SKIPTON RAIL LINE' as there was now wide ranging acceptance that this line should be built.

This meeting was hosted jointly by John Grogan MP (Keighley) and Andrew Stephenson MP (Pendle) at Portcullis House on the 1st November 2017. MPs for Hyndburn and Skipton and Ripon together with the PPS of the MP for Burnley attended as did representatives from Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils. West Yorkshire Combined authority, Transport for the North and Network Rail also took part. Representatives from Drax Power, Peel Ports, Arup and Skipton Building Society were there too. This very positive one hour meeting was chaired by Peter Bryson from SELRAP together with Andy Shackleton and David Mawdsley who took part in the presentation. There was broad support from all who were involved and even after the meeting closed

attendees continued to discuss the project.

Since that meeting there has been excellent media coverage in The Yorkshire Post, Telegraph and Argus, Keighley News, Craven Herald and the Nelson Leader/ Colne Times Series of Newspapers.

This line was included in a Channel 4 'Dispatches' programme entitled 'Trouble on Trains' on the 6th November and on Sunday 19th it featured on the ITV Calendar News with Chris Grayling MP Secretary of State for Transport saying this re-opening was at the top of his list. The Rail Minister Paul Maynard MP has also been very supportive of the scheme.

This reinstatement has cross party support and the Labour Party have now given their backing to this low cost (in rail terms) project which would bring social and economic benefits to the area and really improve connectivity across the North of England. This would be good news for commuters but also potentially for freight by easing congestion on the rail network as well as on our roads. Project Development Team Meetings continue to be held every two months attended by SELRAP and the other

agencies already listed . It is hoped the next step would be funding for a further feasibility study after which it could then be included in the Transport for the North strategic transport plan 2018.

For more information please visit the website [www.selrap.org.uk](http://www.selrap.org.uk) or social media. Jane Wood Media Officer:  
[facebook.com/reopenskiptontocolne](https://www.facebook.com/reopenskiptontocolne)  
[twitter.com/skiptontocolne](https://twitter.com/skiptontocolne)

## **Cumbrian MP's Speak on North Transport Debate**

Railfuture's December 2017 Rail User Express reports that Barrow and Furness MP John Woodcock spoke in a House of Commons debate on "Transport in the North," but ironically the MP for Copeland, Trudy Harrison, couldn't attend because of transport problems. He said the world-class nuclear facilities in the area urgently need road and rail improvements. Both the Cumbrian coastal and Furness lines are in dire straits; almost daily, children are left

unable to get home. Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) said that Transport for the North's glossy publication devotes just three and a half lines to the tourist economy of Cumbria. Its low priority is a betrayal of the community, with electrification of the Lakes line cancelled, and Heath-Robinson bi-mode trains. Both the Furness and Lakes lines have poor quality rolling stock, and many delays and cancellations.

## **Trans Pennine Stations Skip Campaign**

Capacity problems between Leeds and Manchester have led to the current franchise proposals which introduce a sixth train between the two stations from May 2018, but at the expense of four stations along the line where services will be reduced, and Railfuture affiliate Stalybridge and Huddersfield RUG (SHRUG) is campaigning vigorously to ameliorate these changes. The stations affected have a total footfall of nearly one and a half million.

They believe 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 end skip-stopping and restore 2 trains per hour to these stations

New trains, some due in 2018, cannot come soon enough, but both SHRUG and Railfuture believe that this is a short-term solution and that four-tracking and passing loops should be considered.

## **Halton Curve and more**

Following the work currently underway, scheduled passenger services are due to re-commence over the Halton Curve in December 2018, but other developments continue apace.

North Cheshire Rail User Group (NCRUG) continues to champion the local user and lobby for improved facilities and services, and they have

been doing this at a number of levels over recent months: They have met with the four preferred bidders for the Wales and Borders franchise, the last of which took place in mid-September 2017. Included in NCRUG's wish list is improved facilities for passengers, timetable improvements, increased provision for cyclists and refurbishment of rolling stock. A degree of localised

control is also desirable; passenger information needs to be relevant to the user, which might not always be those of south Wales

NCRUG continues to lobby for improved services between Helsby and Ellesmere Port, and ultimately Hooton. This route has been identified as integral to connecting places of employment and

education linking with new development around Ince and Elton. They have met with Northern several times and some improvements are on the way including new services from Ellesmere Port to Leeds and more appropriate timetabling as part of the new Northern Connect services, however frequency on the line remains an issue.

## John Hobbs

Railfuture North West England was sad to learn of the death of John Hobbs of the North Cheshire Rail User Group (NCRUG) We know he will be missed and we extend our condolences to his family and those in the group (see the following obituary from NCRUG's Newsletter).

"Since the North Cheshire Rail Users' Group (NCRUG) started its campaign for improved local rail services, including the 'Halton Curve' re-opening, John Hobbs has been an active key figure.

John's childhood in Prestatyn gave him a detailed knowledge of the North Wales railways which was enhanced by his volunteer work on the East Lancashire Railway.

John led the NCRUG as Chairman for many years with great ability and

professionalism. It is an understatement to say that NCRUG will never be the same again.

He travelled widely both in this country and abroad, taking hundreds of photographs of all aspects of rail operations and infrastructure, which were carefully catalogued and often shown at informal gatherings.

John was an excellent organiser and played a key role at local events, often dressing up as the 'Fat controller' complete with top hat and tails.

More recently, he worked with local politicians and Arriva Trains Wales to transform the area around Runcorn East station from a run-down location into an attractive well used facility."

---

## No Answer yet on Southport - Piccadilly Direct Services

OPSTA (Ormskirk-Preston-Southport Travellers Association) still await confirmation that the May '18 timetable has been finalised and whether the two commuter services to Manchester Piccadilly proposed as a concession to the loss of all day through services to Manchester Airport will go ahead – Network

Rail was meant to have signed this off in 2017 but the New Year started with no announcements.

All of the MPs whose constituencies will be affected by the loss of service are behind the campaign. Frustrated with the lack of real progress from Northern over recent weeks, who claim they cannot speak with OPSTA meaningfully until they know the finalised May '18 plan, OPSTA agreed with the MPs, to work up their own business case for direct Southport to Piccadilly (and

---

Bolton) services through extension of the mooted Alderley Edge to Wigan North Western service.

This will require up to three additional Class 769 bi-mode trains to the small fleet Northern already plans to bring into service and it is now certain that the earliest date for having everything in place would be December 2018.

The business case makes an incontrovertible argument for this without giving up all of the improved Victoria services. A very high cost benefit ratio

means the small investment will be well spent. The case draws heavily on the analysis of passenger numbers, survey results and passenger/ business comments about how important this service is. Backed by the other MPs, Southport's MP Damien Moore is going to push it at the top level of (his) government seeking an early response.

Merseytravel planned to meet with Northern's Chief Executive David Brown on 4<sup>th</sup> January though this issue went to press before then.

---

## Data Protection

The regulations in the UK for data protection are going to change. In May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force, and we (Railfuture) are obliged to comply with that.

We now need to ensure that all members of Railfuture North West (RFNW) agree to having their data stored. This data was the information that you supplied on joining or subsequently – we do not create supplementary data. Nor do we pass on this information to other people, or other organisations.

To ensure we comply with the new regulations, we need positive opt-in consent from every member to process their data. This means that RFNW has your explicit permission to store it, and use it to contact you either by email or post with newsletters, the minutes of meetings, and other such information and notices as are appropriate at the time. If the data is incorrect, we will correct it; similarly, if you wish to have your data removed, we will comply with your request. **However, if this happens, we will be unable to send you your newsletter or minutes of meetings.**

You can copy the form below and post it to the Chairman, address is; 4 Butterfield Close Cheadle Hulme Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 7AE or you can email him with the below information [trevor.bishop@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:trevor.bishop@railfuture.org.uk).

I consent to have my data to be stored by Railfuture North West England.
I confirm that I am 18 or over. <input type="checkbox"/>
Signed.
Print Name

---

**Railfuture North West England  
 Annual General Meeting  
 Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2018  
 Southport Community Centre, 93-101, Norwood Road,  
 Southport, Merseyside, PR8 6HQ**

Railfuture North West England’s Annual General Meeting will take place in the Norwood Room at the Southport Community Centre, Southport as above, the venue is a short walk down Norwood Road from Meols Cop station. The business part of the meeting will start at 13-15 with a break around 1445 and we aim to finish about 1530.

Alan Fantom, Chairman of OPSTA (Ormskirk – Preston – Southport Travellers Association) will give a talk on his group’s campaign on retaining through trains from Southport to Manchester Airport.

There will be no pre-booked lunch available but its suggested members may wish to take lunch (before the start of the AGM at 1315), in the nearby Thatch and Thistle, ([www.thatchandthistle.co.uk](http://www.thatchandthistle.co.uk)) (147 Norwood Road, the AGM venue is 92-101) or elsewhere as they choose. Trains arrive at Meols Cop at 1150 and 1255 from Wigan direction, and at 1202 and 1256 from Southport direction

**Nomination for Railfuture North West England Branch  
 Committee 2018/19**

Nominations are now invited for the 2018/18 branch committee, these can be made using the form below or via post or email, provided the information requested in the form below is included

Nominee	Proposer	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 Christopher Norton, either by post or email, addresses is 26 Handsworth Road, Blackpool, FY1 2RQ, email [cjnblackpool@btinternet.com](mailto:cjnblackpool@btinternet.com) the closing date is midnight on February 12th 2017.

**Please note the email address above wont correctly copy from the pdf edition, this is to prevent spam.**

## **Rail User Groups within the North West area Affiliated to Railfuture**

(for those viewing in pdf format, there are  
embedded links to most groups websites)

- [Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association](#)
  - [Bolton Rail Users Group](#)
  - [Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group](#)
  - [Copeland Rail User Group \(CRUG\)](#)
  - [Friends of Denton Station](#)
  - [Friends of Littleborough Stations \(Lancashire\)](#)
  - [Friends of Reddish South Station](#)
  - [Friends of Rose Hill Station](#)
  - Friends of St Annes Stations email [tonyford19@gmail.com](mailto:tonyford19@gmail.com)
  - [Friends of Settle Carlisle Line](#)
  - [Furness Line Action Group \(FLAG\)](#)
  - [Goyt Valley Rail Users' Association \(Stockport\)](#)
  - [Lakes Line Rail User Group \(LLRUG\)](#)
  - [Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group \(LASRUG\)](#)
  - [Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association \(MCRUA\)](#)
  - [North Cheshire Rail Users' Group \(NCRUG\)](#)
  - [Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers Association \(OPSTA\)](#)
  - [Ribble Valley Rail](#)
  - [Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership \(SELRAP\) \(reopening campaign\)](#)
  - [Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester line \(STORM\)](#)
  - Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group
  - [Wirral Transport Users' Association \(WTUA\)](#)
  - [Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users Association \(WBRUA\)](#)
-

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

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

**Vice-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."**

# LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group  
[www.llmr.co.uk](http://www.llmr.co.uk) [www.lasrug.btck.co.uk](http://www.lasrug.btck.co.uk)

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

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

Membership costs £7-00 annually. You will receive a Newsletter quarterly and we invite a speaker from the Rail Industry to the AGM each September.



*Promoting the Cumbrian Coastal Railway*

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.

See [www.crug.org.uk](http://www.crug.org.uk) where you will find all the details about us, our aims and aspirations, and how to join.

Fees, £5 for individuals, £10 for organisations.

We can make a difference, and with your help, our voice will be stronger.



### **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**

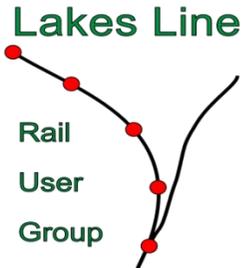
**Annual individual subscription £6.00; Family £8;  
Corporate Bodies £25.00, representative bodies £12.50**

*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.**



**Join Today!**

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

Membership: £5.00 Individuals,

£7.00 Family, £13.00 Corporate

LA9 5DA

Please note the email address below wont correctly copy from the pdf edition, this is to prevent spam.

## Railfuture North West Branch Officers

<i>Chairman</i> Trevor Bishop	4 Butterfield Close Cheadle Hulme Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 7AE	trevor.bishop@railfuture.org.uk Tel 0161 485 8426
<i>Vice Chairman &amp; Treasurer</i> Malcolm Conway	58 Greengate Lane, Kenda, Cumbria LA9 5LL.	malcolm.conway@railfuture.org.uk Tel 01539 725995.
<i>Secretary</i> Mike Breslin	35, Rudston Road Childwall Liverpool L16 4PG	michael.breslin@railfuture.org.uk Tel 0151 737 1061
<i>Freight Officer</i> Brian Grey	56, Coombe Rd, Irby, Wirral, Merseyside CH61 4US	0151 648 3070
<i>Minutes Secretary and Returning Officer</i> Christopher Norton	26 Handsworth Road Blackpool FY1 2RQ	cjnblackpool@btinternet.com 01253 623338

Specific further area contacts are:

East Cheshire: Chris Dale: 01625 428379, E-mail: chris-dale@talktalk.net

*Rail North West* is the newsletter of the North West branch of Railfuture. Contributions in the form of articles and letters are welcomed. Please send them to Arthur Thomson at arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk 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.

**www.railfuture.org.uk**

Railfuture Limited, Registered in England and Wales No 5011634, a Company Limited by Guarantee.  
Registered Office: 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.