

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

May 2019 Rail Timetable Changes

By Toby Hart



Photo: Waiting at Knaresborough Castle for a refurbished class 170, when this arrived. At least it wasn't a Pacer! – Mark Parry

Editor: Our member, Toby Hart, wrote to Barry Doe at Rail Magazine on problems he has spotted in the May 2019 timetable: memories of last year?

First, it's that time of year for the twice-yearly event and, beyond there being some welcome additional services, the state and quality of the Network Rail timetable is pretty poor. The example that wins the award, for me, in terms of utter incoherence is the stopping service between York and Leeds/Blackpool on Sundays–Micklefield has lost its hourly Sunday service to York after 25 years – but in ONE DIRECTION ONLY! Given there are no other alterations to the timetable

between these two stations, all the more bizarre...no doubt Network Rail have something to do with this! Not far behind is the additional hourly Northern service from Newcastle to Carlisle whose departure times vary by up to 18 minutes from one hour to the next. Ludicrous alterations to individual services include:

- The lunchtime journey on the hourly service from Stoke to Manchester that omits Stockport call for an empty stock refurbishment move that runs a few times a year
- From May 2018 (not sure about 2019) one of the hourly Calder Valley services between Leeds and Manchester dwells for 10 minutes at one of the 'small' stations en route – but ONLY on a THURSDAY!

Railfuture, Yorkshire Branch Meeting

Cllr Kim Groves, Chair of West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Committee

13:00 to 16:00 hours, Saturday, 6 July 2019

Central Methodist Church, Newgate, Pontefract, WF8 1NB

See flyer for more details

In addition to this, there has been needless further erosion of standard clock-face timetables on a number of routes – the most farcical dimension to this is that when the timetable deviates from what is the default standard hour at certain stations, they actually create – even more – conflicts, whereby two services – often both Northern – share the same timetable slot!

All of this, of course, is likely to be down to Network Rail in Milton Keynes who, whilst they have taken on more staff, have not got to grips with the ongoing issues – I'd say they are still significantly worse now than they were 3 years ago.

Talking to operators off the record, they remain very frustrated and more. Having also spoken to the very few 'old hands' in Milton Keynes, they say that while there is a recognition that they need to focus on building operational knowledge and experience up again, the organisation is becoming top heavy with those who come through at Train Planning Clerk level wanting a promotion to one of the newly created supervisory or management roles.

On the publicity front, it probably won't surprise you that all operators apart from Northern have had their timetables available: when I enquired in the local travel centre in Leeds recently, I was wrongly informed they wouldn't be available until May 20th until I pointed out the change date is actually the day before.

HADRAG'S Disappointment with New Timetable

by Mark Parry

The Halifax and District Rail Action Group (HADRAG) are disappointed at the latest headways in the Calder Valley timetable. They quote the example of timings from Halifax to Leeds with departures at 00, 07, 15 and 43 minutes past the hour; little better than a half hourly service. They have written to Northern's managing director, David Brown, pointing out this problem. Rumours suggest improvements to this ridiculous situation could be made in the December timetable.

Joint North West & Yorkshire Branch Meeting

by Mark Parry

In a first joint branch meeting, members from Railfuture's North West Branch and also from the Yorkshire Branch, met together in Huddersfield on Saturday 6 April. Several key issues, affecting both branches were discussed.

Our Response to the Williams Report

The following points were agreed to be communicated to the Williams review:

- The report should include all public transport modes such as light rail and buses as these should be integrated with heavy rail.
- The interoperability of trains should be considered for future purchases, and a greater will to exchange rolling stock between franchises. Also, agreed minimum levels of comfort on trains is needed, for example more than one toilet per train.
- Bus replacements should be avoided wherever possible.
- "Value to the Tax payer" needs to be defined. We think it should include social and environmental benefits as well as financial benefits.

We considered if the Review identified the key issues constraining the success of the railway and also the outcomes stated in the call for evidence. The issues discussed were:

- Passenger and freight customers should come first. There is a lack of public trust, the network should be accessible and simple to use, offering the journeys people want to make. Freight should be considered separately.
- A simple strategic direction is needed.
- The railway is not sufficiently accountable and cohesive.
- The railway needs to be more cost efficient.
- The network does not adequately innovate and adapt to change.
- We want affordability and marketing to be added to this list.
- Safety and security are important.

Cross Border Issues

Key issues that both branches want to press to Transport for the North were:

- The chair of the North West Branch, Trevor Bishop outlined a suggestion to ease the Castlefield corridor congestion around central Manchester. This is to divert the hourly freight trains from this route onto a re-instated line, which will be needed for HS2 anyway. Although an expensive option, it could avoid the need for the even more expensive extra through platforms at Manchester Piccadilly.
- That option aside, the proposed platforms 15 and 16 at Piccadilly were part of the plan to build the Ordsall curve, and we should have them built.
- The Trans-Pennine service should not be increased to 6 trains per hour, but kept at 5, with longer trains.

Railfuture's Blueprint for the North

Nationally Railfuture has produced this report without consulting the northern branches. Overall, we consider this report to be negative about the future of railways in the north and it should focus on how we can grow the railway. It should be called a vision rather than a blueprint. Many errors were spotted in the report, including the mention of Doncaster being in North Yorkshire! A working group of members from each branch is to be set up to re-write this.

Williams & Other Reviews - a personal view

by Mike Crowhurst

We must avoid getting bogged down in a “*to nationalise or not*” debate. Renationalisation will not solve the real problems and will create some new ones. It may well be in the frame, but it is unlikely to be endorsed. By the same token there are those who propose yet more fragmentation and competition a panacea. *Just a bit more bleeding and the patient will be miraculously cured – the leech doctor's prescription!* Both are equally wrong and dangerous.

What matters is not ownership but a **less fragmented, more integrated** structure. The key need is to *get the railways out of the hands of politicians and civil servants* who are no more equipped to run the railways than they are to run schools, the health service and all the rest. This became obvious in last May's havoc with the timetable! In British Rail days they set the budget and the broad objectives, and no more. There is actually **more** state control under franchising than there ever was under British Rail. Happily, there seems to be general agreement on this point, given that Grayling seems on course to overtake Ridley as the worst Secretary of State for Transport since Marples! We need an arm's length agency, call it Railway Agency, new Strategic Rail Authority or whatever, and give it – *and its head*, real authority, but above all **let railway people run the railways!**

As for franchising, I am inclined to think that the Concession, or Management Contract, is more suited to rail. It seems to work well on Merseyrail and London Overground, although the jury is perhaps still out on Thameslink! Long haul lines may need different treatment.

Right now, Network Rail is almost the only body holding the system together, so don't push devolution too far. But closer alignment with the operating side clearly makes sense. The map now being proposed however, perhaps bears a bit too close a resemblance to the old regions, especially in the core of the country, and does not have regard to the emerging regional oversight bodies such as Transport for the North and Midlands Connect. Having said that, there are clearly some of the prime intercity routes that do not fit well into a regional map that is not focussed on London. I therefore suggest a **national** route, which would comprise the East Coast and West Coast main lines, including HS2, the **original** cross-country routes and freight. (Note that I exclude the Midland Mainline and I am in doubt which if any parts of the Great Western should be included). That's all the main Anglo-Scottish routes. The Midlands and North would be divided north and south rather than east and west. Politically Wales might desire the same autonomy as Scotland, but as ever, the large overspill into England probably precludes that, and if it has to be in an English region, then Western is the logical option. One could also make a case for Anglia to be autonomous. But it is probably too small. So, my map would be:

- Southern Region: Kent, HS1, Sussex, Wessex.
- Wales & Western Region: Wales, Western.
- Anglia & Midlands Region: East Anglia, East Midlands, West Midlands.
- Northern Region: North East, North west, Yorkshire.
- Scottish Region: Scotland.
- National region: East Coast, West Coast, HS2, Cross Country, Freight.

The 2019 branch budget bids included £8,000 to print and post newsletters, averaging £4 per member that could be avoided for some members (on top of the £8 to provide members with Railwatch, legal papers, membership administration and hold an Annual General Meeting). An increasing number of members are willing to receive newsletters by email and therefore branches are asked to encourage members to agree to this for branch newsletters. **For Yorkshire you can change to email distribution by contacting andrew.dyson@platform5.com.** The Railfuture website has been enhanced to provide a facility for emailing "Railaction", "Rail User Express" and other items, including branch newsletters, to everyone on the database matching the relevant criteria. Further enhancements are being developed to allow branches to login and, in one easy process, email a newsletter to those who have opted for it and obtain a list of names and addresses for everyone else so that they can be posted a printed copy – stuffing fewer envelopes will be a timesaving for branches. Full functionality will take time to provide but a few branches will pilot this.

Because of declining attendance numbers, Railfuture will now focus on arranging a single annual conference from this year. The first will be in Bristol on Saturday 21 September 2019 and entitled "Every Passenger Matters". Sponsorship has been secured from Cross Country to enable the attendance fee to be lowered to £20 for the member 'early bird' (book by 31 July) and £25 after and for non-members. Anyone who would be willing to join our Conference Organising Committee should contact Wendy Thorne at wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk The team will be responsible for organising the Annual National Conference and the Annual General Meeting each year, so if you are able to help arrange venues, speakers, sponsors etc. please get in touch.

Alternative HS2 Route for South Yorkshire Suggested

by Mark Parry

A huge controversy was created by the need to demolish so many recently built residential properties in Mexborough to allow the official route of the high speed 2 service to be built. A group called the Combined Campaign Group Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire have suggested an alternative route for High Speed 2 through South Yorkshire, which they claim will be cheaper than that officially proposed and involve less demolition. This was reported in the Sheffield Star on 16 May.

They claim their scheme would save £9bn and would reduce journey times between Sheffield and Manchester. Their plan involves using the old Victoria Station in Sheffield. The controversial demolitions in Mexborough could be avoided. The Group says the following journey times could be achieved:

London to Sheffield Victoria in 64 minutes;
Birmingham to Sheffield Victoria in 37 minutes;
Sheffield Victoria to Leeds in 19 minutes;
Sheffield Victoria to Manchester in 23 minutes;
Sheffield Victoria to Liverpool in 43 minutes; and
London to Doncaster in 74 minutes.

The route involves entering south Sheffield and following the line passing the Rother Valley, Beighton, Woodhouse and Darnall terminating at Victoria Station. The Woodhead Line and tunnel would be utilised to link to Manchester and Leeds. The scheme was presented to MPs, council leaders and officers in South Yorkshire, as well as Sheffield City Region Mayor Dan Jarvis. It would involve only two residential demolitions and under 20 commercial demolitions.

Railfuture has not been involved in this proposal and members in the area consider the timings suggested as very optimistic. Our member Mike Rose wrote an article for our previous edition, outlining his significantly different suggestions for the HS2 route.

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I am typing this on the day the **new timetables** come into effect, so fingers are crossed that the changes go smoothly this time. Improvements include through trains from Leeds to Chester for the first time in living memory, routed via the Calder Valley and Warrington. This also provides a simple transfer to North Wales trains, although I haven't checked how well the timetables dovetail or whether the interchange will be cross-platform. Other important improvements are an additional (and limited stop) Harrogate Line service, making trains three per hour; the extension of the Huddersfield-Wakefield service to Castleton; the Wolds Line Hull-Scarborough service becoming hourly (extraordinary that it wasn't already!); and a new service from Sheffield to Gainsborough Central. However, there is still no proper service on the York-Sheffield direct route, Goole still does not have a regular service to Leeds, and the timetables on both the Skipton – Carlisle and Skipton-Morecambe services remain less than hourly.

INVESTMENT NEEDED. The railway in the north of England continues to suffer from decades of cuts and under-investment, which is holding back the step-change in services that is needed. Inadequate capacity between Manchester Oxford Road and Piccadilly, and east of Leeds station, both limit much needed additions to the train timetable.

Any look at a map of existing railway lines in Britain, and a corresponding look at timetables will show that there are many through services that could but do not exist. These include both services within our region, and those that connect us to other areas. Examples of the former include a regular passenger service from Huddersfield to Doncaster via Pontefract and Askrigg (new station), and a direct service from the Upper Calder Valley to Huddersfield, starting in Blackburn or Rochdale. Eventually, I would like to see a bi-directional service from Manchester Victoria through the Calder Valley to Huddersfield and westwards back to Manchester. Longer distance service gaps include Scotland to South Wales via Leeds, the East Midlands, Worcester and Hereford, with an interchange at Nuneaton for Milton Keynes and other West Coast Main Line stations. It is time Transport for the North, Transport for Wales and the Midlands Engine got together to press the Department for Transport to include such a service in the next Cross Country franchise (or whatever may replace franchises)

THE EAST MIDLANDS FRANCHISE has been awarded to Abellio, but the specification is a major disappointment for Yorkshire. The opportunity to run hourly through trains between Leeds, Loughborough and Leicester, and between Leicester, Stoke and Manchester has somewhat incredibly been missed, despite pressure from all the concerned regions. The Liverpool- Norwich service is to be split into separate eastbound and westbound services at Nottingham, but is not yet clear who will run the Nottingham to Liverpool service, although Trans-Pennine Express remains the sensible option so as to reduce the number of train operating companies running passenger services on the Hope Valley Line. The new franchise will provide a very welcome hourly direct service from Doncaster to Lincoln, but regrettably not until 2021. This will make it much easier for people from North of Doncaster to travel to Lincoln, and should boost that beautiful city's tourist trade. It should also increase train travel from Lincoln, Saxilby and Gainsborough to Leeds, Wakefield, York and Durham.

ON-BOARD TOILETS. I have written before about the importance of adequate toilet provision on trains, in the light of Arriva's mistaken decision to order new trains with only one lavatory compartment. I gather this is an issue with some other franchises as well. The culprit seems, yet again, to be the Department for Transport with their demand for maximum seating capacity. Some of these new trains will be used on a number of over one hour journeys, some over two hours. Given how often toilets become out of order, or just soiled to make them unpleasant to use, this is a disaster waiting to happen. Passengers will have accidents, especially those who have been drinking and train seats will be soiled. The problem of insufficient lavatories (there should be one per carriage on all but inner-suburban stock) is exacerbated by the design of toilet bowls which, not to put too fine a point on it, have not been shaped with hygiene in mind. I have written to Northern about this but, because this is a wider issue, I have requested transport Focus to take this up as one of their campaigning issues.

This leads neatly on to how the new diesel units should be deployed. It is (was?) Northern's intention to use them on all their Northern Connect routes (except the Tyne Valley), but I urge them to rethink their use on Blackpool-York trains. The full journey takes over 3hours, and many Blackpool passengers travel over all or much of the route; it is essential that lavatory accommodation is adequate. I therefore urge Northern to use refurbished 3 car 158s on this service, rather than the new 195s.

REDUNDANT HSTs. The replacement of Great Western Railway and "LNER" High Speed Trains (class 43 engines with Mark 3 carriages) with Azumas means that there are a lot of redundant High Speed Trains. Many of us believe they are far too good to scrap, so what should be done with them? Rumour has it that there is interest in some of them to be

converted for long distance parcels. Let's hope that is true, and also one can hope that Royal Mail may show an interest, so that mail can be returned to rail on the routes such as to and from South West England, South Wales, Yorkshire, East Anglia, North East England, Dundee/Aberdeen and the English Midlands. In some cases, the power cars would be replaced by electric or hybrid locos. Many passengers would also like to see them replace the disliked Voyagers on many Cross Country services, and for shortened High Speed Trains to be used on the Settle and Carlisle Line, giving England's premier scenic route rolling stock fit for purpose. The conversion would include sufficient accommodation for bikes.

CLIMATE CHANGE. Finally, this country (and others) seem to be waking up to how grave a threat global warming poses to life on earth. This is particularly thanks to three contemporaneous happenings – the report of the United Nations Governmental Panel on Climate Change, the actions of Extinction Rebellion and David Attenborough's new series on Netflix. Yet 50 years ago, the Ecologist magazine (Blueprint for Survival) and the Club of Rome report (Limits to Growth) were stressing the grave dangers facing the planet unless ameliorative and avoiding action was taken. Certainly, those reports made a young me an environmentalist and a campaigner for public transport. The significance of this for transport policy is that it emphasises just how important it is to achieve substantial modal shift from the private car to an integrated public transport system; from lorries onto rail freight; and for parcels to be trunked by rail to relatively local distribution hubs for local delivery by electric vans. Of course, this will require massive investment, but can we afford not to?

Stop Press – Sad News

by Mark Parry

We are saddened to learn of Reg French passing away in late May. Reg led the Selby and District Rail User Group for many years. We received this news from his son, Terry, who said that *Reg passed away peacefully during the night. He had been very unwell for some time.* Our chair, Nina, said: *Reg was a lovely man, and had been a great advocate for a better railway for many years. I only knew him for a little if this time but I will miss his chuckles, his warmth, his humanity and his wisdom.*

Diary

22 Jun 2019, a fee is charged.	Railfuture National Conference. Dolphin Centre, Central Hall, Horsemarket, Darlington DL1 5RP. See https://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#2019_cardiff for more details.
6 Jul 2019 @ 13:00	Railfuture, Yorkshire Branch Meeting, Speaker: Cllr Kim Groves, Chair of West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Committee. Central Methodist Church, Newgate, Pontefract, WF8 1NB. See flyer for more details.
8 Jul 2019 @ 19:00	SELRAP Community Centre, Earby, BB18 6XA
15 Jul 2019 @ 19:30	Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group. Meeting at "Veritas" 43-47 Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3BB.
2 Sep 2019 @ 19:30	Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group. Meeting at "Veritas" 43-47 Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3BB.
9 Sep 2019 @ 19:00	SELRAP Crown Hotel, Albert Road, Colne BB8 0QD.
21 Sep 2019, a fee is charged.	Railfuture Annual National Conference, St. Michael's Church Centre, The Green, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8PD. Registration opens at 10:30 and conference from 11:00 until 16:30. See https://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/ for more details.
28 Sep 2019: 13:00	Railfuture Yorkshire Branch Meeting in Sheffield. Details to be confirmed.
Want to advertise your meeting here? Contact Mark Parry: Mark.Parry294@gmail.com 07941 642349.	

Interested in Joining Railfuture? Subscriptions vary from £14 a year. Members receive national magazines as well as this Yorkshire Rail Campaigner. Find out more: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> or by contacting our membership secretary Andrew Dyson, contact details on the back page. If you join online please let Andrew know by email.

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

Our next issue (**Yorkshire Rail Campaigner 46**) will be out in September 2019. Please email photos, news and feedback to: Mark.Parry294@gmail.com to arrive by **Saturday 10 August 2019**. Alternatively call or text 07941 642349. **Photos of new trains will be especially welcome. Having your Yorkshire Rail Campaigner sent by email saves us time and money. Contact Andrew Dyson to request this.**

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
Esk Valley	http://www.eskvalleyrailway.co.uk/evrdc.html
Halifax and District Rail Action Group	www.hadrag.com
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	
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	www.lasrug.btck.co.uk
Minster Rail Campaign	http://www.minstersrail.com/
Pontefract Civic Society Rail Group	https://en-gb.facebook.com/PontefractRail/
Selby and District Rail Users' Group	http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk/useful-links/selby-district-rail-users-group/
Settle-Carlisle Line, Friends of the	www.foscl.org.uk
Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership	www.selrap.org.uk
Stalybridge to Huddersfield	Email: 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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