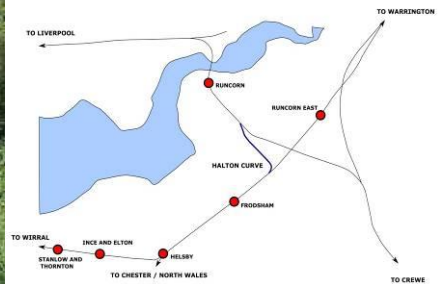


# Rail North West



*A photo of part of the Halton curve and its location. This section will become bi-directional again once the project is complete  
Photo/drawing courtesy Merseytravel/AECOM from the Outline Business Case report.*

## Halton Curve Progress Report

The local authorities involved in support for the re-opening the Halton curve line to regular passenger service, have published the report they commissioned on the Outline Business Case and is available on their website at;

<http://tinyurl.com/pvqgn3c>

The report studied ten possible service options for passenger services, the lowest service studied starts at 1 train per hour (tph) from Liverpool to Chester with stops at Liverpool South Parkway, Runcorn, Frodsham and Helsby. Option 8 has 1 tph from Liverpool to Wrexham and 1 tph from Liverpool to Bangor, both with stops at Frodsham and Helsby.

The other options covered various other options including Liverpool to Llandudno. The local Rail User Group, North Cheshire Rail User Group (NCRUG) has welcomed the report's publication and notes that all options

provided a positive outcome but inevitably some were better than others.

Merseytravel (who are the lead authority) are concentrating on the option that is likely to be quicker and simpler to bring to fruition, which is option 1 with the direct once per hour Liverpool to Chester service, because they know that stacks up well and has the best chance of success. The report shows that the cost benefit analysis for this is 1.8, i.e. a return of £1.80 for every £1 spent on the project.

NCRUG notes that revenue costs are a concern but are not insurmountable, but in the meantime they have been assured that the studies will be completed in time for work on site to commence when the CP5 West Coast Main Line upgrade between Weaver Junction and Wavertree starts in 2016. From a cost point of view, incorporation of the Halton junction work within the WCML upgrade is essential. The 2016 target date is, therefore, critical.

The capital cost element, albeit currently single track bi-directional, can be covered by the Government announcement in June last year and various other funding streams. It will, however, need revenue support, initially at least, and this can be critical.

Cheshire West and Chester Council has asked for the current business case study to include a section on the potential impact of a decent service on the Ellesmere Port to Helsby Line. NCRUG/GHD maintain their contact with Chester University who are keen to have a usable service on the line and are exploring the possibility of participating in a Community Rail Partnership, (CRP). The University may be a funding source. NCRUG would wish to join them if a CRP is formed.

The local authorities and other stakeholders in North East Wales are keen to have the Curve re-instated but the current Saltney/Wrexham re-doubling does not, NCRUG are told, create sufficient paths for additional new services.

In this regard NCRUG are pleased to report that, as a result of their submission last December to the Welsh Government, concerning rail matters in north Wales, they were invited to a meeting in Cardiff in March. This meeting was convened to allow them to explain in more detail their suggestions for improving connectivity between North East Wales, North Wales and Merseyside in order to expand economic activity between both areas and also to cater for the new Prison being built in Wrexham and due to open in 2017 with 2000+ inmates.

From the above, readers will deduce that overall, the news on Halton curve is good. Having said that, there are still significant issues to be overcome, e.g. revenue, paths, rolling stock, which means the pressure needs to be kept up. Cedric Green, NCRUG.

## **More Trains for Morecambe**

The Lancaster & Skipton Rail User group has welcomed plans for more trains between Leeds and Morecambe, and for improved train units on the line. A new Northern rail franchise is due to begin in April 2016, and three companies are bidding to operate the franchise - Abellio, Arriva and Govia. LASRUG has met with each of these to press the case for a more frequent service and for higher quality trains.

The Department for Transport's "Invitation to Tender" specifies the service required on each line. There are currently five weekday trains each way between Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe (one a very early train from Skipton); by 2019 at the latest these are to be increased to seven, timed to provide commuter trains to and from Lancaster and Leeds, a later last train from Leeds, and a roughly two-hourly service through the day. The Sunday service is to increase from four to five trains each way. These changes mean a 40% increase in the weekday service, and 25% on Sundays; they will make many more onward connections available at Leeds and Lancaster.

The ITT requires the operator to cease using "Pacer" trains, with their four-wheel carriages, by the end of 2019,

and to make improvements to all its stations..

LASRUG Co-chairman Hugh Turner said, "The prospect of an improved timetable for the Leeds to Morecambe service is tremendous news and I pay tribute to the hard work put in by LASRUG members to promote the line over the last 20 years and to press for a timetable convenient for a greater range of today's travel needs."

The ITT requires recognises the role and achievements of Community Rail Partnerships in promoting and developing rail services and in engaging with local communities. LASRUG is an active member of the Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe CRP. The new operator will be required to continue to work closely with the CRP and to support it financially.

Bid submissions for the franchise closed on 26<sup>th</sup> June, and the contract will be awarded by the end of the year.



*A class 150 enters the curve at Todmorden with a diverted Clitheroe – Manchester Victoria service. Photo Arthur Thomson*

## **Todmorden curve trains don't appear on station departures**

The Todmorden Curve duly opened to rail traffic on 17<sup>th</sup> May last, and the hourly trains from Manchester Victoria

to Burnley, Accrington and Blackburn also call (inter alia) at Castleton, Rochdale, Smithy Bridge and Littleborough.

Members of Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester line (STORM) visited these four stations on 7th June

and noted that there is no mention of the new service on the A to Z Departure sheets there. Castleton has no A to Z. At Littleborough station, a poster for onward connections advises travellers to Burnley to use the 589 bus.

The A to Z sheets are prepared by Northern's head office at York and the local user group STORM notes that they seem to either ignore (the local stations this side of the Pennines) or get wrong, Calder Valley train services in Greater Manchester and Lancashire. At all these stations and indeed at Manchester Victoria, the only timetable sheets for the Calder Valley line are those prepared by West Yorkshire PTE which cannot show the Victoria to Blackburn service as a through service since at Todmorden they change from being shown on the down train sheet to the up train sheet.

At Castleton, the physical hardware for the Customer Information Screens has now been installed, and at an inspection at Rochdale on June 7<sup>th</sup> of the sheet listing alphabetical departures, the "new" destinations of Burnley Manchester Road, Accrington and Blackburn were not shown. There is some unused white space, and also departures are shown for Selby and York, which have hardly any through trains and might have been omitted to make room for the new services. The sheet at Littleborough could well be similar. STORM is looking to take this up with Northern for the new timetable in December.

On A to Z sheets, the original parameters for station inclusion, is where there is a through service even

one train a week (usually on a Sunday). After a long battle, this was changed 20 or so years ago to include other stations with a significant passenger flow but without through trains such as Rochdale to Liverpool.

Castleton has no A to Z, Rochdale has A-Z but no mention of Burnley, Accrington, Blackburn or Clitheroe. Smithy Bridge has a one sheet A to Z and again no mention of Burnley, Accrington, Blackburn or Clitheroe. Littleborough has a one sheet A to Z but it's repeated three times, twice in adjacent poster frames. Again no mention of Burnley, Accrington or Blackburn trains. The Network Rail issued poster for "Onward connections" at Littleborough says for Burnley "get the 589 bus". By squinting at the small print you can see it's two years out of date. The well used practice of putting in full times for one destination on a particular line, (e.g. Burnley) and then saying for other stations, (e.g. Accrington and Blackburn) say "See Burnley trains, trains arrive xx minutes earlier/later, seems not to have been thought of here.

It seems neither TfGM nor Northern have sought to make any displays for the new services and its thought that Burnley or Blackburn Councils or Lancashire County Council could well be annoyed that they've put good money into a new service and there is poor promotion of it by the operator.

## **Study in to Skipton - Colne re-opening underway**

Lancashire County Council are leading a Working Group which is bringing

together and examining the existing evidence for re-opening of the Skipton to Colne Line and the campaign group, Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership (SELRAP) is playing their part.

The need for improved rail connectivity is not confined to the North West. 6 million tourists visit the Craven (Skipton and Dales) area of North Yorkshire annually. Their spending in the region exceeds £240 million which in turn supports 5,000 jobs. Many of these visitors will use the excellent service on the Airedale line. With no direct rail link to the North West the number of people arriving in Skipton by rail from that region will be very low indeed.

During 2014, two senior representatives from the Department for Transport spent a day with SELRAP representatives and were shown the Skipton to Colne trackbed and also the contrast in existing rail services in the area too. This led to a one day forum in January 2015 which was brokered by the DFT and hosted by SELRAP. Senior representatives from Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive attended, alongside those from Network Rail and Northern Rail.

This was a crucial meeting for the campaign group as it considered whether there was to be a future for the Skipton to Colne Line. That important forum has led to an Output Definitions Group being set up and it consisting of representatives of the agencies outlined above. A representative from SELRAP will also attend.

This Output Definition Group is being led by Lancashire County Council. They are tasked with considering the best ways of improving connectivity in order to promote economic growth, sustainable tourism, and increased access to employment, together with education and training opportunities.

Findings from this in-depth analysis, which must be completed by the end of 2015, will be fed into the North of England rail review to be carried out by Network Rail in 2016.

The outcome from that review could be a crucial factor in determining whether the Skipton – Colne scheme features within the DFT's long term planning process – for construction in Network Rail's Control Period 6 which would be between 2019 and 2024.

## **New Skelmersdale station plan moves ahead**

Bob Robinson of Ormskirk-Preston-Southport Travellers Association (OPSTA), reports in their latest newsletter on the progress of a new station and line in Skelmersdale.

"The Skelmersdale Rail Feasibility Study has been completed and the scheme moving to Grip 3 has been approved by Lancashire County Council – see

<http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/documents/s63651/AppendixA.pdf>

The rail scheme studied comprises two new stations at Kirkby Headbolt Lane and Skelmersdale, with 3rd rail extended to Skelmersdale. Basic scheme is 4 trains per hour (tph) to

Headbolt Lane with 2tph continuing to Skelmersdale and 1tph Manchester-Skem along with an enhanced option of 2tph to Manchester. Low/Medium/High capital cost estimates of £250m, £320m and £350m, have been been worked up, plus £10.2m for Merseyrail to purchase 2 extra 3 car EMU to operate the service in their fleet renewal. There is no extra leasing cost to the Northern franchise in the base plan, but the enhanced option requires leasing two additional DMU to operate to Manchester.

Kirkby-Skelmersdale would be 7.5 miles with a journey time of 13 minutes; Skelmersdale-Manchester would be 25 miles with a journey time of 60 minutes. 1tph would operate to Liverpool on Sundays and in evenings while no trains would operate to Manchester in evenings or on Sundays.

The forecast is that because of forced interchange in Skelmersdale, demand from Kirkby to other stations on the line would see a small drop of just over 2k each in existing passenger demand while other stations would all see increased demand arising from the change. Overall Moira, (the industry modelling tool used to predict patronage) forecasts a 10.5k reduction in Kirkby passengers and a 110k increase in passenger usage for the line (99k to stations between Wigan and Manchester) arising from the change to service pattern. Kirkby Headbolt Lane would also split the catchment population of Kirkby almost exactly in half, the new station is predicted to have a usage of 700,351 passengers per year while Kirkby would fall from 944,801 to 472,049, after abstraction this is a net increase

of 227,599 or 24%. Skelmersdale in the base service option is forecast to have annual passenger usage of 932,319, 73% to Merseyside, 8% to Manchester, 3% to Wigan and 17% to wider network.

The base service is expected to produce 1,234k extra passengers on the line generating revenue of £2.75m, the enhanced service package would produce 1,375k passengers, generating revenue of £3.069m. By 2023 the base package would have costs of £2.3m per annum and revenues of £5m generating an operating surplus of £2.8m, it would be profitable from the first year of operation. The enhanced frequency option would have operating costs of £4.6m and revenues of £5.65m producing an operating surplus of £0.97m.

Both options would produce a BCR range of 1.0-1.6 with an average of 1.3 purely on business grounds. Factoring in economic benefits such as time savings, regeneration, increase in jobs, etc. would produce a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £137m - £184m for the base service and £227m - £279m for the enhanced service. Once these are added the Benefit Cost Ratio of the base scheme becomes 1.6/1.7 while the enhanced package becomes 1.8/1.9. So far nothing has been said about redoubling from Fazakerley Junction to Rainford but I suspect that the absence of this is the reason for only 2 tph east of Headbolt Lane. Not quite a Metro level timetable but it is a start. The electrification method and service frequency should hold lessons for Burscough."

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OPSTA is following this process closely and would like to see better connected and more frequent services on the Wigan-Kirkby line with Liverpool and Manchester with Skelmersdale included. Despite recent DfT announcements OPSTA will be pressing for full electrification per the recommendation by the Electrification Task Force

## **Greater Manchester Rail News**

Northern Rail modified their Evening Peak restrictions on off-peak day tickets as from the fare change on 2<sup>nd</sup> January. The section of the Buxton line between Furness Vale and Buxton (inclusive) is now excluded from the restrictions. The Wayfarer ticket increased in price to £12 for adults and £23 for Groups from 2<sup>nd</sup> January but the over 60s version remains at £6. The GM Rail Ranger ticket increased in price to £5.20 for adults and £2.60 for children as from 2<sup>nd</sup> January.

The big news is the publication of the ITT (Invitation to Tender) for the new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises. The Department for Transport has obviously heeded the comments made by many of the 21,000 people who responded to the consultation on the franchises because the ITT is surprisingly positive. The Pacers cannot be used after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020, the successful bidder will have to order 120 new “self-powered” vehicles (either diesel or battery powered) and there are frequency enhancements on many routes. Both the Manchester-Buxton and the Manchester-Altrincham-Chester lines will have two trains per

hour in the off-peak from December 2017, the second train running (as a minimum) as far as New Mills Newtown and Northwich respectively. One train each hour from Leeds via Rochdale to Manchester Victoria will be extended to Chester via Warrington Bank Quay. This will be in addition to the Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) service from Piccadilly to Chester via Warrington. Sunday frequencies will be improved on many lines and there is no mention in the document of any reductions in station staffing. The document talks of a gradual move to what it calls “Driver Controlled Operation” whereby the driver would control the doors and the second member of staff would concentrate on collecting revenue (as has been the case around Glasgow for the last 20 years).

## **December Start for North Wales – Manchester Airport Services?**

Railfuture North West has learned that Arriva Trains Wales services from Llandudno/Bangor/Holyhead to Manchester could get the go ahead to be extended to Manchester Airport from the December timetable change.

Arriva have made no secret of the ambition to have direct services to the airport and currently a few early morning and late evening services already make the journey.

Capacity to turn around services at Manchester Airport was the issue however and Arriva had thought that the provision of the fourth platform there would provide that capacity, but it seems it wasn't that simple, as its



thought the Department for Transport (DfT) had earmarked the fourth platform to provide services for Calder Valley services which would be able to access the airport once the new Castlefield Curve, linking Manchester

Victoria with Manchester Piccadilly, was opened.

However there are still delays to this and related projects so perhaps the DfT have relented temporarily.



Poulton-Le-Fylde Junction during renewal works in 2007. Photo courtesy Poulton and Wyre Railway Society

## Electrification May Cause Loss of Fleetwood Line

Railfuture North West has learned that Network Rail are considering removing the junction at Poulton – Le – Fylde with the mothballed line to Fleetwood as part of the works needed to upgrade the signalling for when the line is electrified.

It is said this is part of the works necessary to straighten out the section to improve line speeds through the station, but Railfuture believes this can be achieved without severing the junction. Works to renew the junction were done as recently as 2007, as shown above.

Railfuture North West England is writing to Network Rail, expressing our concern.



## **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,



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**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 Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at Kendal Town Hall, but due to train timings, the meeting will start at 1330. Lunch for those that want it, will be either at a nearby Wetherspoons or the Rainbow Tavern from around 1230.

The November meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> is provisionally booked for The Moor Club, Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport, but note its not yet confirmed. Members wishing to attend this and any other meeting should confirm details with Chairman or Secretary closer to the time, details on the back page.

The 2016 AGM will be on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February, though the venue has not yet been confirmed.

### **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

## Shrewsbury Chester Rail Users Association

SCRUA has been promoting the Shrewsbury-Chester line for over 20 years since it was formed at Gobowen in 1986. Compared with the basic train service then provided, today's trains offer an hourly frequency and extended destinations. The need to continue to represent rail users' interests remains and we welcome support from new members to help convey the message about trains along the Welsh border

A quarterly newsletter *Severn-Dee News* provides up to date information about trains, stations and activities, not only on the mainline, but also for the heritage lines associated with it.

Regular meetings are held at venues in Gobowen, Chirk and Wrexham when speakers from the associated rail industry are invited to make presentations and take questions and answers. Membership details can be had by contacting:

Chris Jenkins, 1 Perry View, Gobowen, Oswestry, Y10 7UF

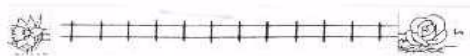
## LASRUG

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

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

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

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

North  
WalesThe  
Wirral

## WREXHAM – BIRKENHEAD

Rail Users Association / Cymdeithas Defnyddwyr Rheilffordd

## WRECSAM – PENBEDW

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

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

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

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

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

Individual membership £4.00 Family £6.00, Corporate £10.00

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



## WIRRAL TRANSPORT USERS ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

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

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

We publish a newsletter twice a year and run coach excursions

**Why not join us? Join today**

**Annual individual subscription £6.00; Family £8;**

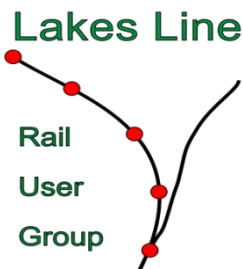
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and receive a copy of our latest newsletter*

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

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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](mailto: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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