

# *Rail North West*



Manchester Piccadilly Underground Station as proposed by Weston Williamson, image courtesy Weston Williamson

## **Manchester Piccadilly Underground “Too Costly” claims challenged.**

The Architects Journal (AJ - a sister title to the New Civil Engineer), reported recently on a Public Accounts Committee session looking at HS2’s proposals. Readers may recall plans to combine HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail’s stations to create a fully integrated hub underground at Manchester Piccadilly were not included in the Government’s Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) published in November 2021.

This is despite leaders in the northern city insisting it would maximise the potential connectivity and value of the new HS2

station and boost connectivity across the North.

Manchester City Council leader Bev Craig and Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham have both urged the government to reconsider the case for an underground HS2 station, rather than bringing trains in over viaducts, which they argue would result in the loss of 123 acres of development land.

However, Transport secretary Grant Shapps ruled the station out, saying the

government had concluded its investigation into the value of an underground station at Manchester Piccadilly and determined that it 'doesn't work out'. Instead, the government has opted for a surface level 'turn-back' station.

New Civil Engineer (NCE) reported how High-Speed Rail director general Clive Maxwell and other rail chiefs appeared in front of the Public Accounts Committee to give oral evidence on HS2 Ltd.'s spending.

Maxwell said their analysis showed the station would have cost an estimated £5 billion: "The Department has looked very extensively, with HS2's help, at what the alternatives were and at doing that underground."

"It would have meant digging a very large underground box and cavern to accommodate all those platforms, and that would have cost very large sums of money. It would also have led to huge amounts of disruption in central Manchester."

However, speaking to NCE, AREP director of innovation – and formerly of engineering consultants Expedition Engineering who worked with Weston Williamson + Partners on the Piccadilly underground concept – Alistair Lenczner pointed out several holes in Maxwell's claims.

"It is not clear how the alleged £5 billion extra for an underground station solution has been arrived at." He said HS2's current Euston station plans, (essentially underground), has around a £3 billion

budget, so the £5 billion figure therefore appears to be highly questionable.

Weston Williamson's proposed scheme for Manchester is similar to that currently being built at Old Oak Common in west London for HS2, which itself has a budget about £1bn.

However, in recently released papers which the government used in making its assessment, all the underground options considered would have involved boxes or caverns underneath the existing station at a rough right angle to the existing tracks, rather than the proposal shown on the front cover, where the new part of the station would be constructed in parallel by the side of the existing one. This would very much simplify the approach from the HS2 tunnel portal just to the south with no need for expensive viaducts (the route could be in a "covered" cutting) and would obviously mean the NPR route "north" to Leeds could continue underground, although of course that would be more costly than an overground route via Guide Bridge that seems to be one of the options for NPR (re-instatement of the four tracks to Guide Bridge). It's thought costs for such a structure could be less than one underneath the main station, as it should be far easier to access and spoil removal could still be done largely by rail.

Lenczner, also a former member of the HS2 design panel, said: 'The turn-back solution proposed by HS2 will severely limit the number of trains per hour than could use the station. Compared with an underground through-station with the same number of platforms, a turn-back terminus station would allow only 40 per

cent to 50 per cent in terms of trains per hour.

Lenczner told NCE: 'There would be substantial passenger benefits of a through station (rather than a terminus station) in terms of connectivity, convenience, and journey times. This explains why, elsewhere in Europe, many major terminus stations have been converted to allow through running train services over the past 20 years or so.'

Similar issues are currently facing Bradford across the Pennines, where the authorities are also urging the government to help fund a through-station to replace its problematic turn-back terminus.

Earlier this year, Weston Williamson + Partners said its plans for Manchester were 'oven-ready' and that the council was right to ask the government to reconsider its plans.

Responding to the Maxwell's evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, Weston Williamson + Partners chief executive founder Rob Naybour told the AJ he endorsed Lenczner's comments, particularly about future connectivity,

adding: 'Another benefit is the reduced severance on the approach to Piccadilly, which has benefits over a much wider area, and longer timescale, than the specific value of development above the station.'

'Numerous cities across Europe have built high-speed through-stations for these reasons and there are useful lessons that we can learn.'

The impact of a solution that limits future connectivity will be felt for a long time

Naybour continued: 'One of the key arguments of opponents to our proposals is that to alter the design, approvals and construction plan at this stage would cause undue and unacceptable delay. The tension between the right solution and the expedient solution is always present in these projects. The more significant the project, the greater the tension.'

'I can understand the desire not to look the gift horse of much-needed investment in the mouth, but the impact of a solution that limits future connectivity will be felt for a long time and over the whole of the country.'

### **Future branch meetings.**

Our next branch committee meeting open to members is planned to be a midweek one, its on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September, we are in the Merebrook pub in Bromborough (next to the station - Greenfields Ave, Bromborough, Birkenhead, Wirral CH62 6DD) starting at 1300, we will be in the partitioned side room to the left as you go in the front door. Lunch is available the committee will be there from 1200 on.

Further dates/details will be on our website but do please get in touch with your branch committee, (details on the back page) if there are any issues you wish to raise.

## Mike Breslin



Branch Secretary Mike Breslin pictured at a Branch AGM in 2004

Trevor Bishop, Chair of Railfuture North West England writes, “The branch is very sad to record the passing of Mike Breslin, our long-standing Branch Secretary and committee member. Mike passed away on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April after a short illness and had served as Secretary of the branch for over 10 years and was an active member of the branch committee for many years before then.

We greatly valued his very methodical work in organising our meetings and correspondence with other organisations and he took on the role of Freight Officer to bring us reports from the industry and give feedback. He also was liaison with the Merseyside local transport authorities, acting as our rep at many meetings as well as pursuing local issues in his home area, we will miss his input greatly

Railfuture’s national magazine Railwatch noted that Mike was the man who had a brainwave when rail campaigners were looking for a more inspiring name for the Railway

Development News to match a more forward-looking image.

Responding to Mike’s suggestion to replace the Railway Development Society magazine’s “cumbersome name”, the then editor John Barfield published the March 1985 issue with the name Railwatch which it still carries today. Railwatch also carried a new Railway Development Society logo designed by Lyndon Elias.

## Cedric Green



Cedric Green from NCRUG, photo courtesy of NCRUG

We are also deeply saddened to hear of the death of another rail campaigner in the North West. Cedric Green from the North Cheshire Rail User Group (NCRUG) passed away on March 19<sup>th</sup>, we extend our sincere condolences to all his family and those at NCRUG.

Cedric was a key campaigner in re-opening the Chester to Liverpool via the Halton Curve route for regular passenger services, resulting in new journey opportunities on that route that were previously impossible.

## Three New Stations for Rochdale

Rochdale Borough Council have voted for a motion to investigate a proposal for three new railway stations in the borough, with the aim of improving public transport links for underserved areas

The proposed three stations are at Belfield, located between Rochdale and Smithy Bridge stations where the line passes under Albert Royds Street / A664), Heywood station near to the East Lancashire Railway station (which its understood would be built in a way that doesn't interfere with the work of ELR) and Slattocks between Castleton and Mills Hill, close to Stakehill Industrial Estate. A park and ride station could be part of the plans for Slattocks which would also

serve nearby Stanycliffe and Hopwood Hall College. Council leader Neil Emmott, said these could be wooden 'pop-up' stations, that are not necessarily massively expensive to build.

TfGM have already stated they wish to see a station at Slattocks; it was part of proposals by them in 2019 for new stations on both Metrolink and the rail network. Those plans stated there would be a "business case" being developed over the following 12 months for Slattocks.

Heywood is also one of those places bidding to become the new HQ for Great Britain Railways

## Study into Bentham Line's Future Released

The Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership (CRP) has just released the Executive Summary of its Bentham Line Development Study. It examines the possibilities over the next two decades to continue the healthy growth the line has experienced over the last twenty years with passenger growth more than doubling in that time.

The study, completed by Consultants Stantec and AllanRail, was the culmination of six months research and analysis, with contributions from over forty stakeholders, and over 500 responses from the general public, and covers all aspects of the line from Leeds to Morecambe: the route itself and local services and interactions with other routes.

The executive summary highlights several key themes:

- the possibilities for the early decarbonisation with the use of battery

technology, and low-cost electrification of the Lancaster to Morecambe section

- the opportunities to increase the service delivery with a longer operating day
- the importance of the line for both its connectional possibilities and new through and faster services.
- specific targeting relating to the demand for active leisure and tourism travel including the proposed Eden North Project in Morecambe.

The plan for all of this is to result in an overall improvement of customer experience and travel offer.

The CRP now looks forward to further substantial engagement with the rail industry, local councils, and other stakeholders, to bring the ideas in the study to fruition.

The report is available online at <https://thebenthamline.co.uk/2022/04/29/22-04-the-future-of-the-bentham-line/>

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## **Reddish South/Denton and Fleetwood Lines Move Ahead With Re-Opening Plans**

The currently unused/part closed line from Poulton-Le-Fylde to Fleetwood and that from Stockport to Stalybridge which currently has only one return service a week, are among a number of north west schemes to receive funding for further development to re-open.

The Friends of Reddish South and Denton stations group (FORSADS) whose stations are on the route of the latter line are very pleased that this has already resulted in a survey being launched by Stantec on behalf of Transport for Greater Manchester and although the survey has now closed, it had received over 1200 responses from local residents. The survey was conducted to gauge interest in use of the line if it was to have regular passenger rail services restored from Stockport to Manchester Victoria via Reddish South & Denton Stations.

Stephen Canning from Stantec who are overseeing the feasibility study said the response was unprecedented for an urban line and the responses were telling a sensible story.

FORSADS have been canvassing whenever possible, leafleting the residential areas around both stations and have been largely met with enthusiasm and positivity about the possibility of a local rail service.

The Group hopes now that there is enough evidence to support having a reintroduced rail service that has been long needed by Reddish residents.

Stantec will be submitting a report on based on their investigations, meetings with the Friends and Stockport & Tameside Councils and the surveys, and the group expects to report on those findings and next steps when they are informed.

A parallel survey, about bringing a rail service from Marple Rose Hill to Stockport via Reddish South has also been successful with over 1500 responses.

### **Fleetwood**

Meanwhile the government have announced that the proposals to re-open the line from Poulton – le Fylde to Fleetwood, on the route from Preston to Blackpool North has moved beyond the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC)

In a statement, Minister of State for Transport, Wendy Morton said: “Following funding to support submission of a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the scheme, it has been assessed and I am pleased to say that the Department would like to support the further development of the scheme by providing further funding from the Restoring Your Railway Fund.

The key issues identified in the SOBC to be considered further are the demand potential and cost risks and funding will be provided to Network Rail to lead a limited and focused study on these issues, working in collaboration with Lancashire County Council (LCC) and other key stakeholders including Blackpool Transport to progress the scheme to the required standard. The Department will continue working with the Council and Network Rail on the development of this scheme and are in touch with Philippa Williamson (LCC) regarding next steps.

The local MP, Cat Smith welcomed the news, following years of campaigning with a three thousand signature petition from Fleetwood residents to Parliament part of the campaign.

## Lakes Lines 175 years celebrations



Picture caption L-R - Martin Keating, communities & sustainability manager and Jane Murray, station manager at Northern with the Pride of Cumbria at Windermere station. Photo courtesy Northern

The Community Rail Partnerships of the Furness and Lakes Lines, the Lakes Line Rail User Group (LLRUG) and Furness Line Action Group (FLAG), Northern with station adoption groups have marked 175 years since opening of the Furness and Lakes Line Railway at a special event at Windermere station on 27th April.

The Furness Line from Carnforth to Barrow-in-Furness opened in 1846, while the Lakes line was initially opened to Kendal from Oxenholme and then through Burnside and Staveley to Windermere in 1847.

One of Northern's Class 195 trains, which was renamed Pride of Cumbria, proudly displayed its new nameplate at the occasion. The train's new name was unveiled at a ceremony at Barrow-in-Furness station last year, with other events taking place in Kendal, Windermere, Oxenholme, Burnside and Staveley,

Ian Conway, chair of the Lakes Line 175 committee: "I have been delighted to welcome guests to the finale event of our 175 anniversary celebrations at Windermere station.

The past two years have seen a tremendous number of hours and effort put in by an amazing array of station volunteers, community organisations and

rail industry colleagues. Their passion, enthusiasm and collaboration has brought about a wonderful year of celebrations for both the Lakes line and Furness Railway.”

## New Cottam Parkway Station

Lancashire County Council’s cabinet has now given the go-ahead for the advertisement of a contract to deliver a £24m scheme to build a new railway station close to the site of the old Lea Green station on the route from Preston to Blackpool.

Funding has already been secured for the project, but the council are looking to get a contractor on board before submitting the final planning application, so that the contractor’s input can be sought on final designs with the aim of saving money overall

Cottam Parkway is the proposed new station on the north-west side of Preston, situated between Preston and Kirkham & Wesham stations on the line to Blackpool.

The new station would deliver journey times of around 5 minutes to Preston and around 20 minutes to Blackpool.

The project aims to:

- Provide access to rail transport options for travel to jobs, business, and leisure to a catchment area of around 12,000 homes
- Reduce congestion into Preston city centre by providing a 250 space Park & Ride facility with electric vehicle charging, mobility and motorcycle spaces, along with cycle storage and safe pedestrian and

cycle routes to and from the station, as well as a bus stop,

- Increase rail access between Preston and other parts of Lancashire, as well as the regional and national network
- Connect directly to the new Preston Western Distributor - a Road scheme currently under construction – the new station will have good access to new housing areas and a new junction on the M55

The planning application will be submitted in 2022 and the station could open in 2024 or 2025 depending upon the approval timescales.

Funding comes from a successful bid to the Department for Transport’s Transforming Cities Fund, as well as a local contribution and through the Preston, South Ribble, and Lancashire City Deal.

The station would include a fully accessible station building with waiting areas, a staffed booking and information office, vending machines and toilets with a footbridge and lifts linking platforms.

The station building itself will feature a 'green' roof to encourage wildlife and solar panels.

Its expected that the new station /...cont

will encourage a shift in journeys from the road to rail, which is predicted to help to reduce traffic at key congestion hotspots on Preston's Road network, with direct access from the new station to the Preston Western Distributor Road (scheduled to open in 2023) via a new Cottam Link Road being part of the scheme.

This will also improve access to existing and new employment opportunities at the Enterprise Zone at Warton, a centre of advanced manufacturing and high productivity.

The proposed station will provide more options for people to travel in and around the city and beyond, especially via Preston Railway Station which is a regional and national hub.

The main access to the station and a new car park would be north of the railway line with pedestrian, cycle and bus access from Lea Road.

# 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.

## **Rail User Groups within the North West area**

(for those viewing in pdf format, those underlined have embedded links to the group's websites or pages)

- [Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association](#)
- [Bolton Rail Users Group](#)
- [Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group](#)
- [Friends of Castleton Station](#)
- [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 (no website currently)
- [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 – Malcolm Richardson  
Chairman 135, Branstree Road,  
Blackpool,  
FY4 4SR,



Join us, it's only £3/year, £5 for family membership.  
Contact; Membership Secretary, "Hamlet" 2B, Meadow Park,  
Wesham Preston PR4 3DN. Contact through our Facebook page at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/Blackpool-Fylde-Rail-Users-Association-1266722540018377/> and click on "Sign Up"



### **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 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

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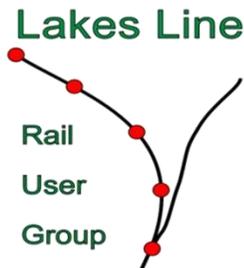
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Brian Grey, 56, Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral, CH61 4US.

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<i>Secretary and Freight Officer</i> (vacant)		
<i>Minutes Secretary and Returning Officer</i> Christopher Norton	26 Handsworth Road Blackpool FY1 2RQ	cjnblackpool@btinternet.com 01253 623338

*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. 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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