

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

Number 58

Autumn 2022

Come to Tod by train!

CLOSE to Greater Manchester and Lancashire borders, Todmorden is a frontier town for Railfuture's Yorkshire branch. And "Tod" is a great spot to visit by rail, with viaduct overlooking shops, market hall, fine classical Town Hall and bus station for local connections. All in the heart of fine walking country in the shadow of Stoodley Pike monument.

An open market operates Wednesday to Sunday (second hand and craft, Thursday). Indoors, there's a stall that is one of the best Yorkshire outlets for Lancashire cheese – in several varieties. Other counties are available!

Trains come three times an hour each way on the Calder Valley Leeds-Manchester route (2 via Bradford, 1 via Brighouse). The Blackburn-Manchester-Wigan "Tod curve" service is slightly irregular at present but due to be restored to hourly this December, along with lots of other services cut back in the Covid era. (December improvements subject to continuing pandemic.) York-Blackpools connect at nearby Hebden Bridge. Hebden may be more famous, but Tod is more... real!

Railfuture Yorkshire holds its first in-person branch meeting post-Covid at Todmorden college on Saturday 24 September at 13.00 (see *Diary*: page 9). Former West Yorkshire Combined Authority transport chair Kim Groves, now on our branch committee, will be our speaker.

So after you've had a wander and visited the market, come to our meeting. Make a note to visit Tod! – JSW

railfuture

Yorkshire branch

President:

Alan Whitehouse:

Vice-Presidents:

Mike Crowhurst,
Alan Williams,
Chris Hyomes

HM Queen Elizabeth II

Railfuture Yorkshire branch joins the national expression of sadness following the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II, who was deeply respected for her national and constitutional leadership, a living symbol of our nation.

Amid comment about recent lack of use of the Royal Train, it is worth noting that the Queen was also a user of ordinary trains. No grandeur on the way to Sandringham at Christmas, but often as not a trip by electric multiple unit from London to Kings Lynn for onward road transport. And she paid the ordinary fare - first class of course! Rest in peace, Your Majesty. (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/dec/17/queen-train-travel-sandringham>)

Yorkshire Railfuture welcomes new committee members

Railfuture's Yorkshire committee co-opted three new members in recent months. They strengthen our committee with massive experience of campaigning and local government action.

Kim Groves (pictured) was Chair or Deputy Chair of West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Committee from 2018 to 2022 when she stood down as a Leeds councillor. Kim was lead member on WYCA-TC for public transport, chaired *inter alia* a zero-carbon working group, and founded the rail expert panel. An inspirational and passionate leader, Kim brings to Railfuture a massive range of management skills, wealth of experience and a sustained record of success, based on board-level positions in public and private sectors. Kim is an adept communicator and influencer, with a concern for issues such as the economy and inclusive growth.



From her role at WYCA, Kim is able to list numerous achievements across the spectrum of West Yorkshire Transport, working with local leaders, MPs, bringing in contacts outside politics. Successful bids included:

- £317m Transforming Cities Fund
- £828m City Regional Sustainable Transport Fund
- £70m Bus Service Improvement Plan
- £24m Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area Scheme.

The West Yorkshire Connectivity Strategy, West Yorkshire Rail Vision, and future Mass Transit Plans are WYCA-TC successes where Kim's played a leading role.

Kevin Swift is a local councillor in Wakefield. He joined Railfuture several years ago. Kevin strongly believes that railway revival isn't just good for the economy and the climate, but it also makes our towns and communities better places to live.

Kevin is no fan of HS2 – and not just because it was projected to carve through Wakefield without stopping! Kevin believes we need new rail investment to be well integrated with our current systems. This must give us genuinely enhanced connectivity, not just reinforce current trends towards hub-and-spoke concepts of urban geography.

David Hagerty first joined Railfuture in the 1980s in the NE branch. He was newsletter editor for a spell in the late 1980s and early '90s. Now well embedded in the Pennines, David is currently Chair of Slaithwaite & Marsden Action on Rail Transport and Deputy Chair of Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail Users' Group, a regular commuter from Slaithwaite to Greater Manchester for 21 years and more occasional commuter for the past 10 years.

David wants to see the Transpennine Route Upgrade done in such a way that it decarbonises the route, increases route capacity and benefits not just passengers going between city centres but also the smaller communities along the route.

Timetable development:

“Back to pre-Covid” timetable is not good enough – we need ambition for development

As a new platform is built at Castleford, and planning for Askern line reopening moves forward, **Stephen Waring** focuses on the cross-county routes from the Calder Valley and Huddersfield lines to Wakefield, Pontefract, the Askern line and beyond – with thanks for help given by Mark Ashmore, David Hagerty, Kevin Swift, Paul Cartwright and David Hogg

MOST of Northern’s “pre-Covid” services are expected to be restored this December. So (as examples) Calder Valley, Wharfedale, Harrogate, Leeds-Knottingley and Middlesbrough-Whitby should get gaps filled. And the Hull-Bridlington line is set to keep its 2-trains-an-hour service. Elsewhere the situation is more worrying. The franchise promise (remember that?) of an hourly service Sheffield to Gainsborough Central appears have become just peak hours. Hourly fast extras Leeds-Harrogate seem to be off the agenda.

Likewise Huddersfield-Wakefield-Castleford remains cut back to just 3 trains a day – morning, tea time and early evening. This is a service that used to connect to Wakefield Westgate for inter-city trains. Wakefield has good north-south links but is poorly served east-west: as things stand if you want to go from the district, including the “Five Towns”¹, across the Pennines or towards York you have to go into Leeds and double back. So what is the future for the lower Calder Valley Mirfield-Wakefield-Castleford line?

Wakefield travellers would welcome better east-west links.

Good news is TransPennine Express intend to run a service from Manchester Piccadilly to York via Wakefield and Castleford, expected to start in May 2023. This is thought likely to be an extension of the present Stalybridge line stoppers that now terminate at Huddersfield. Present single-platform Castleford station – where trains from Leeds to Sheffield (stoppers) and Knottingley reverse – is at present having a second platform built, allowing trains in to call on the way to **and from** York via Church Fenton. See picture of work in progress.



Work in progress at Castleford, Sep 2022. Platform 2 under construction. We saw what looked like foundations for a footbridge, with similar presumably inside opaque compound (out of shot) on existing platform 1.

The works are substantial and include a new footbridge.

This seems to more than would be expected just for diversions – which will happen during TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) works.

Less good news is current performance on TPE services, where staff and industrial relations issues have had a big effect. Cancellations have been rife.

With recent diversions for early works on TRU there have been complaints from the Stalybridge-Huddersfield group SHRUG about confused stopping and departure times of substitute buses at intermediate

station such as Marsden, as well as generally dreadful reliability. On certain weekends trains have been diverted via the Calder Valley line, using Brighouse station as substitute for Huddersfield. Halifax & District Rail Action Group (HADRAG) saw this working well earlier in the summer with staff on the station to help shepherd

¹ Normanton, Castleford, Featherstone, Pontefract, Knottingley

people between train and the bus link to Huddersfield. On a more recent Saturday we saw no bus links, no staff present, and a lot of TPE trains cancelled. **And a lot of passengers wondering what to do.**

TPE hopes to improve things in December 2022, with what is hoped to be more reliable pattern. The second service from Liverpool each hour will go to Hull and the hourly fast from Piccadilly will go alternately to Scarborough and to Newcastle, with a York-Scarborough shuttle filling the gaps. Manchester Airport will continue to be served by the Middlesbrough trains extended to Saltburn. With the Huddersfield stoppers and Liverpool-Newcastles that will add up to five (not 6) trains per hour on the Huddersfield route. Let's see how it goes. Remember TPE and other services will be disrupted during the route upgrade.

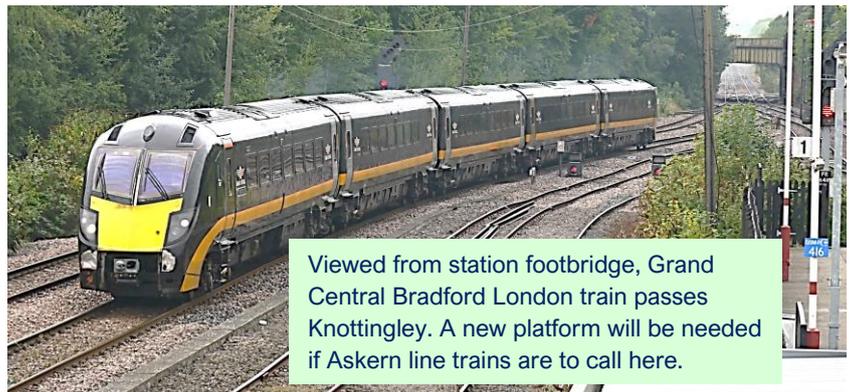
We hear there may be more trains to Scarborough next year for leisure traffic. The proposal for local York-Scarborough extras was dropped by Northern.

HADRAG argues that that Brighouse station gets a poor deal, as do Sowerby Bridge and soon to be built (we hope) Elland. Each of these three towns, the group says, serves a population that justifies a better service matching that at Hebden Bridge and Todmorden. HADRAG says the hourly service on both Bradford-Huddersfield and upper Calderdale-Mirfield (to Leeds) routes should be doubled. Connections, like a mini Swiss taktfahrplan, linking the two routes and meeting demand for upper Calderdale-Huddersfield and possibly also Calderdale-Wakefield-York. That last option would provide an additional service on the Mirfield-Wakefield route and additional connectivity for Wakefield district.

The group would like to see one service an hour running from Bradford via Huddersfield to Manchester Piccadilly providing connections to Manchester Airport, employment, education and leisure sites along the southern edge of the city. This would be a part-substitute for the broken promise of a Calder Valley service to the Airport via Rochdale and the Castlefield – for which HADRAG will continue to argue.

The Piccadilly-Huddersfield-Bradford stopper would hopefully be supported by SHRUG campaigners, who would like a link to Bradford, though present plans seem to be for linking to Wakefield, Castleford and York. **Either way not everybody wants to go to Leeds!**

East of Wakefield the rail group of Pontefract Civic Society has good news on progress towards its top priority reopening of the (Leeds-) Pontefract-Doncaster under Restoring Your Railway. That would include a station at Askern and restore a southward link with connections at Doncaster. The group has welcomed a recent Strategic Outline Business Case and publicised a supportive letter sent to the Government (see next page). The SOBC sets out possible alternative routes



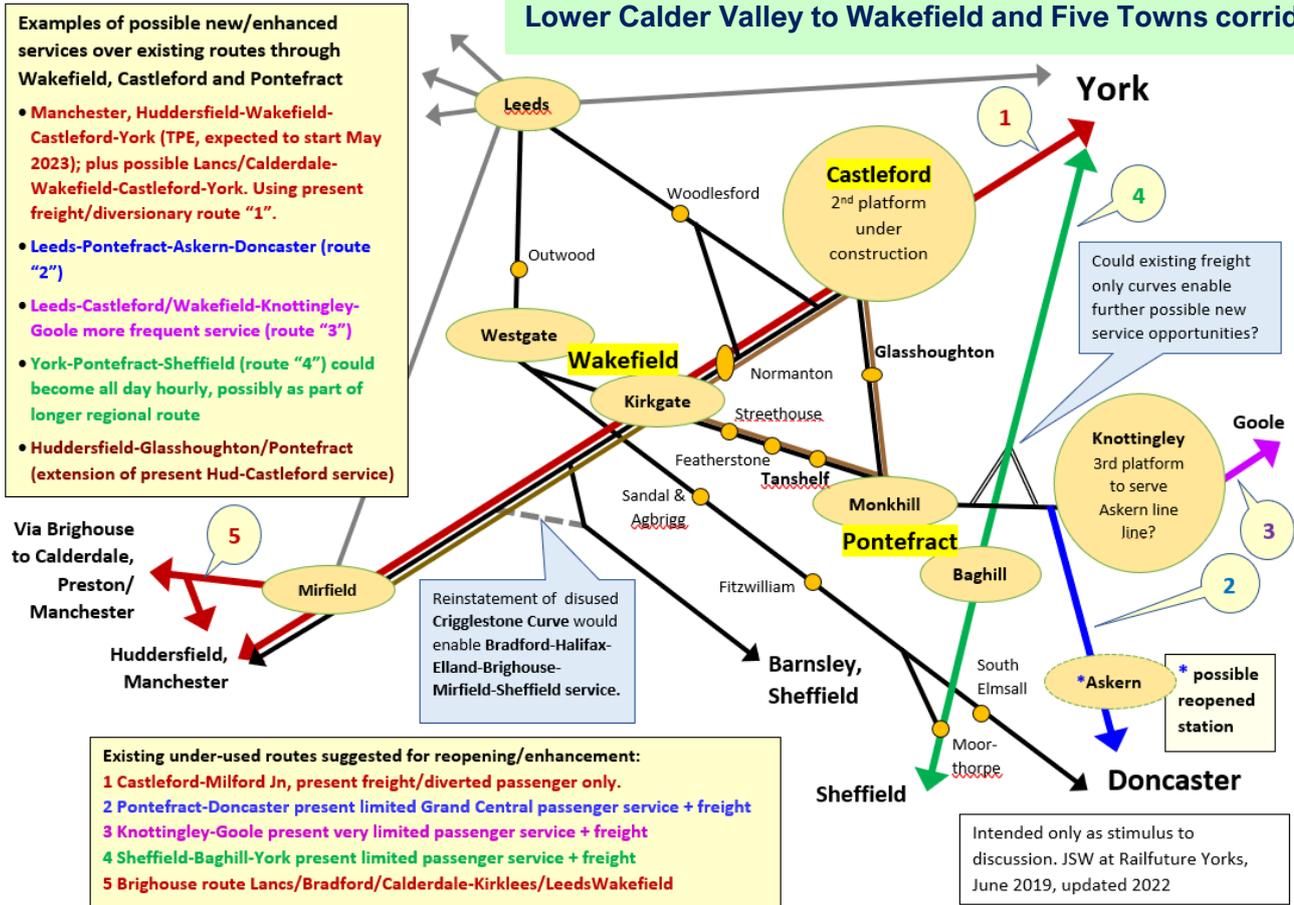
between Askern and Doncaster but the existing route via Shaftholme Junction offers obvious benefits in terms of cost and journey and potential journey time. At least one extra platform would be needed for the trains to serve Knottingley, but getting the service running is the main aim. A longer term objective could be extension of the service maybe as a Leeds-Pontefract-Doncaster-Lincoln through service.

The Pontefract group's second priority is the York-Baghill-Sheffield line which currently has barely a handful of trains daily with a particularly unusable pattern on Sundays. To state the obvious, more trains would attract more users. Dare we suggest an hourly service? Third priority would be more trains on the Goole line – which could connect with Doncaster-Hull-Scarborough trains as well as turning a little-used handful of trains each day into a useful service. So we are talking about a complete Five Towns package.

Corridor improvement as alternative post-Covid despair! Rail is good for the environment, the easiest form of transport to make zero-carbon. We have sought to illustrate possibilities for future development of rail as a post-Covid alternative, maybe with less commuting, but more people using rail for leisure and personal business. This means improving services through places like Brighouse, Mirfield, Wakefield, Castleford and Pontefract; and it means new services over existing routes such Askern and Castleford-York. A regional package of benefits. Work at Castleford could be just the start.

Our diagrammatic map (next page) sums up some wider possibilities. Everyone pays for our rail system through taxation. **Let's give everyone a service they want to use.**

Lower Calder Valley to Wakefield and Five Towns corridor



Restoring your railway: Askern line strategic outline business case (SOBC)

– letter (slightly edited) to then rail minister at DfT Wendy Morton, from Pontefract Civic Society. Letter authored by **Peter Cookson**, Honorary President of Pontefract Civic Society and member of its rail group, and signed by **Paul Cartwright**, PCS chair.

"This Society strongly supports the reopening of the [Askern] line to passenger services, as proposed in this SOBC. It must be seen as a much wider scheme than simply reopening Askern station to connect it with Doncaster.

An analysis of the rail services radiating from Leeds, the economic centre of West Yorkshire, shows a remarkable discrepancy. Every service capable of doing so runs out of West Yorkshire to important destinations in other regions. The only exceptions to this are the services from Leeds to the Five Towns, which terminate at the county boundary in Knottingley, even though the tracks ... are in daily use to Goole, South Humberside and Doncaster.

This artificial and unnecessary termination of service at Knottingley causes the Five Towns district, with a population of circa 120,000, to be severely disadvantaged by being cut off from the wider rail system to the east. To access destinations to the east and south, intending passengers must undertake travel in the wrong direction to Wakefield or Leeds, incurring extra expense and considerable waste of time.

The opening up of the Knottingley-Doncaster Line would enable a Leeds-Five Towns-Askern-Doncaster service to be introduced and allow the populations of this district, Askern and Doncaster many new through travel opportunities, to access employment, education, leisure and health benefits in both South and West Yorkshire.

We see this as an excellent opportunity to greatly improve the connectivity of this part of the North of England. We regard such a service as a minimum and as soon as is practical, we would hope to see the service extended to Lincoln, which would prove to be an important route and greatly improve connectivity over a wider set of communities across West and South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.

We have no hesitation in commending to you the plan to reopen Askern Station."

Chair's column

by **Nina Smith**, Chair Railfuture Yorkshire Branch

Use rail to tackle climate crisis

Unless there is urgent action, increasing amounts of our planet will become uninhabitable within a century, and our grandchildren and great grandchildren will regard our generations as amongst the most selfish and short-sighted ever to inhabit the earth. Action is urgently needed, and reforming and decarbonising transport must be part of the solution. The transport sector is a major contributor of carbon emissions, and most of that comes from road vehicles, although aviation is the biggest contributor in terms of emissions per passenger-mile or freight tonne-mile.

THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY is just that – an emergency of global scale in which wealthy nations such as ours might be expected to take the lead. It is very disappointing, to put it mildly, that Liz Truss, our new Prime Minister said little about it in her campaign. Action cannot wait, however pressing the cost of living and Ukraine crises are. The climate emergency is a product of human profligacy. Recent weather events at home and abroad have made it clear that we are increasingly suffering disastrous consequences. Even if the

decision makers and people of this planet succeed in keeping global warming to below 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, we will experience far worse weather events than those that have been so devastating over the past decade. On the current trajectory, we will not succeed in keeping temperature rises below 1.5 °C and probably not even below 2 °C, above mid-19th century levels. The impact is unthinkable (the scenarios are easily researched on Google).

What has this to do with railways? The UK must play its part – and take the lead – in pursuit of the target. Our Climate Change Act points the way, but it is inadequate. 2050 is too late to achieve net-zero. Government figures of UK emissions exclude the emissions we have effectively exported to China, Vietnam, India, Indonesia and other countries that produce many of the goods we purchase, and who use much coal – a fuel that is nearly pure carbon and therefore produces nearly pure carbon dioxide when combusted – to power their economies. If the UK is to get serious about reducing carbon emissions, we must tackle emissions from transport.

Railfuture's concern is railways. We campaign for

Greenwashing?

We've all seen buses and vans with mottos boasting zero emission. But how is the energy produced? How much hydrogen is really clean? What if it is made from fossil fuels with CO₂ as by-product? Electricity is relatively clean but so far at best about 60% comes from zero-carbon sources (including nuclear and questionable renewables such as biomass; see energyguide.org.uk/electricity-generation-uk-sources). So the zero-emission bus – or train – has some way to go but is already a lot better than a diesel. Embedded carbon in manufacturing electric road vehicles also applies to trains. But rail vehicles have longer lives. Should we be looking at extending further the lifetimes instead of scrapping perfectly good electric trains? Conversion to diesel or multimode is an alternative making them more complex, heavier, less reliable, less efficient. Dieselised electric Class 769s are an example. Pure electrics by comparison are cheap, simple and reliable. Beware of commercial greenwashing and **get the wires up!** – JSW (editor's note)

a bigger and better railway, and by goodness, we need it. The transport sector is the biggest single contributor to greenhouse gases in the UK, and most of this comes from road vehicles. Even electric vehicles contribute, through the carbon embedded in their manufacture [see *also* Greenwashing box - Ed]. The way forward has to include not only more walking and cycling, and more electric vehicles, but a significant modal shift from cars, vans, lorries and aeroplanes to trains, and to buses and to active transport.

For this to happen, there have to be changes in policy, and changes in mindset. HM Treasury has to stop thinking of railway investment in narrow financial terms. The unions must realise that there will be more jobs in a bigger but more efficient railway than in a stagnating railway beset with outdated practices. The public must think “is there a practical alternative to using a car for a journey and, if not, do I really need to make this journey?” All this requires large scale, high priority investment in the railways, beginning even at this time of economic crisis.

We now have a new Prime Minister and a new Secretary of State for Transport. Tragically, the previous transport secretary appeared to favour investment in roads, and duty cuts for airline passengers, above investing in the most environmentally friendly form of mechanised transport – the railway. Will Shapps’s successor Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP for East Coast Main Line constituency Berwick upon Tweed do any better? The Treasury’s narrow economic view shows little interest in rail’s environmental benefits, nor in its role as a facilitator of social mobility and the regeneration of “left-behind” areas. ***Tackling the climate emergency needs to be at the centre of public policy, and major investment in public transport needs to be central to that.***

For rail, that means a mass and urgent programme of electrification, route enhancement, extra (and sustainable) rolling stock, and the opening of new routes and stations. Public and private transport modes need to be integrated at stations, with phased introduction of selective road pricing and workplace parking levies. Phased and selective, because such initiatives are only fair and practical when there is a good public transport alternative to the private car. Public transport fares must be affordable too – low enough to encourage use, but not so low that overcrowding results. Fare levels must be flexible, with bargains at times when there are plenty of spare seats on trains. ScotRail has recently offered cheaper fares on some trains from Inverness to Edinburgh to discourage discretionary use of a very popular mid-morning service.

Modal shift to freight is of great importance too. The government needs to take urgent steps to facilitate this. Amongst these are the electrification of key freight routes; increasing the number of routes suitable for W12 containers; building new chords and infill lines; and changing planning law so that all new mainland mega warehouse/distribution centres and logistics centres are rail served. This would, for example, stop the granting of planning permission to the proposed Amazon “fulfilment centre” near Cleckheaton. Furthermore, new parcels consolidation centres are needed throughout the country where rail (and road) trunked parcels can be transferred to consolidated electric delivery vehicles and cargo bikes.

Plague of strikes

We are in the midst of a plague of strikes. ASLEF members on Northern and TPE have just voted to strike. Some Railfuture members may disagree, but to me the strikes are deeply ill-advised. The median salary of a train driver is £59,000 a year. That is almost twice national median earnings of full-time workers.²

Train drivers’ pay has increased disproportionately due to competition between train operators since privatisation. Drivers should not expect an inflation equalling pay rise that would maintain or even increase

² See, for example, [Rail workers and what they earn: who are the real fat cats? | Rail industry | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jun/23/railworkers-and-what-they-earn-who-are-the-real-fat-cats) (www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jun/23/railworkers-and-what-they-earn-who-are-the-real-fat-cats) and [Train strike: How much are rail workers paid? - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-61840077) (www.bbc.com/news/health-61840077). ONS quotes £611/week (= £31772/year) as median earnings of UK full-time workers, April 2021. [Employee earnings in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2021) (www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2021)

their advantage over many other groups. An 11% pay increase would give them around an extra £6000 a year. A similar pay rise for a conductor/guard would be worth around £3000. The income of many train passengers, both commuters and leisure travellers, is much less than that of train drivers. Many leisure passengers are pensioners on fixed incomes. Where is the old working class solidarity? It seems to have been lost in a free market era of powerful vested interests.

Pay points

Northern ASLEF train drivers voted 96.6% in favour of strike action (turnout 86.5%). For TPE the figure was 97.1% (turnout 82.1%). (Figures from union website aslef.org.uk/publications/aslef-ballot-results-more-train-drivers-overwhelmingly-vote-strike).

In June the Guardian reported rail pay levels including (k=1000):

Station assistant £23000

Ticket office worker £24000-£26000

Maintenance worker £31000

Conductor £32000

Average RMT £36000

Signaller £42000

Train driver £59k average (£51k Wales to £71k LNER)

TOC middle manager £55k-£95k

TOC director £100k-£200k

TOC managing directors £200k-£300k (inc. bonuses)

Network Rail chief executive Andrew Haines £588k

HS2 CEO Mark Thurston £625k

RMT union general secretary Mick Lynch £84k + pension/benefits.

For more see reference 1. **With inflation at around 10% and predicted to rise further, it is of course not only rail workers who are campaigning for better pay.** – JSW (editor's note)

There is another, even more important issue here. Inflation equalling or exceeding pay rises fuel a dangerous spiral of inflation. The people who lose in an era of inflation are those who can least afford to. The low paid. People on universal credit or disability benefits. Pensioners on fixed incomes. Small businesses that lose customers in an era with less disposable income. Exporters. People who took out over-large mortgages when interest rates were almost zero. Rishi Sunak was right in recognising that a wage (and profits) driven inflationary spiral will just make the impact of Putin's war, Covid and Brexit even worse than it need be. And where will the money come from for much needed investment in public transport, the NHS, education, the police, or social care – especially if the government sees lowering taxes as a priority? We live in difficult times.

Ticket offices

Rumours abound that the government wants to see a mass cull of ticket offices. Closing them all would probably be a step too far even for the DfT, but it is clear that many are at risk, despite being main point of contact between passengers and staff. This is not acceptable.

Many people still buy tickets from ticket offices. They value the expertise and advice of booking clerks. Not everyone has a computer or printer. They may be unable to use ticket machines. They may not like the idea of having a ticket stored on their smartphone. And not everyone has a smartphone. They may need information about journey planning. The ticket office at my local station, Hebden Bridge, is often busy, with a queue.

Ticket office staff perform other roles too. They open and check up on waiting rooms and toilets. They help disabled passengers board and alight from trains. Many disabled and other people could not use trains without these valuable staff, and disability organisations will challenge reductions under equalities legislation.

It's time the DfT realised that closing ticket offices would be a step too far, and thus it is heartening to learn that the new Transport Secretary is on record as opposing ticket office closures in her Berwick-on-Tweed constituency. **Let's hope Anne-Marie Trevelyan acts accordingly in office.**

Select committee reports on IRP

Many of us in Yorkshire have been highly critical of the government's Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) report for the North and Midlands, whose main benefit to Yorkshire is the long delayed support for a comprehensive upgrade of the Trans Pennine main line through Huddersfield (the Diggle route). The IRP's shortcomings were

amply laid out by Gareth Dennis in the Railfuture Yorkshire webinar earlier this year.

Now, the all-party Transport Select Committee (TSC) has published its report stating that thorough reassessment of the IRP is essential to ensure this once-in-a-generation investment in rail is not a missed opportunity to address regional imbalances.

The TSC's report states that alternative options have not been properly tested. The committee calls for a full analysis of the wider economic impacts, with full benefit-cost analysis, for the different Northern Powerhouse Rail options. If the results demonstrate that other options offer better value and outcomes for the taxpayer, economy and the communities directly impacted, MPs say the government must grasp the nettle and make the necessary changes.

It is essential that the government accepts the TSC's recommendation. Liz Truss said in Leeds that "We will build the Northern Powerhouse Rail to link up communities and unlock potential across the North". This is potential good news. We must hope that she means the full proposals put forward by TfN, and that she sticks to what she has said.

The most urgent mistake to correct is to agree to a through underground station at Manchester Piccadilly, as that will open up the possibility of a whole raft of new through services from North to South, and ease the intractable pressures on the Castlefield route. Constructing TfN's preferred new Leeds-Bradford-Manchester NPR route would naturally follow from this.

Bad news from Eurostar

More bad news for sustainable transport. Eurostar does not plan to stop trains at the mothballed international platforms at Ebbsfleet and Ashford until 2025 or 2026. It wants to concentrate on core London to Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam traffic. So if people living in Kent want to travel to France, they have first to go backwards to St Pancras! Now we learn that the current UK government wants to sell its 45% share in Eurostar, leaving it entirely foreign owned and removing any non-commercial British influence.

We are going backwards and retreating from the wider continent. The Government should be facilitating through travel from northern and western cities to and from the services for the continental mainland through the tunnel. This would reduce the demand for polluting short-haul air travel, and expand the sustainable travel market. – NS



Ticketing Futures?

Here's the ticket office at Whitby, snapped just before our copy deadline. You can buy National Rail tickets, but the office is run by the North Yorkshire Moors heritage railway. That raises other questions, but the idea of combining ticket offices with other functions – preferably without making staff redundant – makes sense. Increased on-line ticket sales and likely future pay-as-you-go travel make the role of traditional ticket offices uncertain. But **as Nina says in her Chair's column**, booking staff do can much more than sell tickets. And it's right to consider new ideas with wider retail roles – selling more products. Could staff be more "out and about" on stations but able to sit down to help passengers when needed – not least with complex bookings? Using ticket vending machines or internet is often more difficult than asking a fellow human being – whether it's just for a day return to York or planning for a lengthy itinerary.

"Machines" do not guarantee the cheapest or most flexible fares. – JSW

DIARY – be there!

Saturday
24
September
2022

Railfuture Yorkshire Branch meeting, Todmorden. Starts 13.00 at Tod College (Todmorden Learning Centre and Community Hub), Burnley Rd, OL14 7BX. From train station drop down to main street and head north past market and under viaduct. Venue is on LH side, after Aldi. 10 min walk, max! Meeting will finish by 16.00. **Speaker:** Kim Groves, RfY committee member and former chair of WYCA transport committee.

Feedback – reactions to YRC summer items

Levelling off “Levelling Off” ?

Andrew Oldfield picks up some themes and thoughts

Rail has a wonderful capacity for shooting itself in the foot, and surely the current strikes provide an example of this. The fragmented rail industry is looking extremely vulnerable against a background of rising energy prices and the cost of living crisis. Rail could be an early and easy target for new Prime Minister Liz Truss MP who may – for all we know at time of writing – deem it expendable in the overall picture.

Is the new PM about to level off *Levelling Off* and pause *Restoring Your Railway* (RYR)? Are cut-backs to existing services inevitable?

Recent signals from government smack of short-termism – extracting political capital out of rail with restrictions on negotiations leading to little prospect of progress. Complete lack of urgency. All parties, including HM Treasury, must adapt and adjust to the prevailing climate and this demands a change of culture and mentality.

Privatisation spurned a fragmented industry, but rail is needed in the future to combat the parking pandemic that encroaches onto pavements across the UK. Not only are there more cars on the roads, but they are bigger too. Don't be fooled (or fuelled!) by all the spin covering electric cars because they will still need the same amount of road space for pedestrians and vehicles. ***This screams out for rail to come to rescue.***

Where is the rail voice?

So should we brace ourselves for something nasty coming down the track? The selection of Doncaster as the HQ of GBR would complement Levelling Up and restore public confidence in an idea that many take to be nothing more than a gimmick. Jim Brewin, Hitachi Rail UK, is in favour of Doncaster.

Rail will need support because it remains fragile, just like the buses. Various Metro Mayors made calls for bus support to be extended before October. ***So where is the rail voice?*** The first 100 days of South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard have been dominated by buses and aviation, with hints of possible closure of Doncaster/Sheffield airport (DSA).

Equal attention must be applied to costs and revenue. Unfortunately there appears to be little sign that the

Treasury boasts the necessary skill set required by the latter. Occasional offers alone are insufficient. The Treasury is demanding savings because it has failed to develop a rail recovery strategy.

Good headlines? Good examples from overseas!

Early in the RMT dispute reference was made to a station booking office issuing just 17 tickets in a single day. This made a good headline implying that the facility should be closed. But more details are required. What are the opening hours of the ticket office? What is the frequency of the services at this station? Is it subject to a reduced timetable? How representative is this of all booking offices?

In Yorkshire booking offices are a threatened animal.

This depressing episode smacks of Treasury negativity. Is it not the case that the UK needs measures comparable Germany, Luxemburg and Spain geared to attracting more passengers to rail through affordable fares, addressing environmental aspects and reducing fuel consumption? Passengers want attractive and affordable fares. ***A ticket to ride, not ticket to ruin.*** Without that, the outlook for rail is grim.

Who spotted this?

Recent news showed July commuter figures in London increased by 96% compared with July 2021, but only representing 27% of pre-COVID-19 levels. Could this not be significantly improved by a “return to the office” policy – subject to the threat of further strikes being lifted? Civil servants could warm to this considering the energy price rises that penalise them for working from home (especially given the low pay rises in the public sector).

Radio 4 (August 20th) referred to passenger numbers still 30% below pre COVID-19 levels. – AO

Summer 2022's record-breaking temperatures are further evidence of the threat posed by climate change. The rail network needs capacity enhancements alongside any expansion of private transport. Potential passengers are not stupid and will only make a modal switch if the alternative is regular, reliable and offers good value.

Penistone, Stocksbridge, Barrow Hill – still hope for Sheaf Valley?

The Huddersfield Daily Examiner (August 4th) outlined an £80M Kirklees Levelling-Up bid which featured the Penistone line as part of wider package. The line should be seen as the gateway to the south for Kirklees and be developed accordingly. The Penistone Line has so much more to offer than the depressing skeleton railway that exists at present. We want a ticket stamped success – not just survival. The latent demand of the Penistone Line identified by Metro many years ago must be addressed to allow it to play a much greater role along the corridor that it serves. Infrastructure investment and imagination are crucial to the future of the line.

Time is pressing with the Stocksbridge Restoring Your Railway bid. Arup have been appointed to develop a strategic outline business case (SOBC). A key factor will be route capacity, particularly the reinstatement of the passing loop at Wadsley Bridge. Presently daily freight workings have ceased. Talk of halting the scheme at Deepcar is dangerous and could wreck everything because the bid was specific to Stocksbridge (which is on a branch off the Deepcar-Penistone line). The reopening should be extended on to Penistone to develop the network,



Wadsley Bridge Station (Creative Commons [cc-by-sa/2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) - © [Martin Addison - geograph.org.uk/p/3819472](https://www.martinaddison-geograph.org.uk/p/3819472)) Regular passenger trains ceased in 1959 but Sheffield–Huddersfield passenger trains continued to run through the station until 1983. Football specials used the station until 1994, for Sheffield Wednesday games at Hillsborough. Here's railtour in about 1987.

and also serve Sheffield Midland where capacity improvements are due. This should be an early task for Doncaster-based GBR, the first of many required in South Yorkshire and the rest of the region.

The Barrow Hill line project Sheffield-Chesterfield could be developed into a circular operation: northbound via Beighton and returning south through Dronfield and *vice versa*. This would dovetail with reopening Sheaf Valley stations (Heeley, Millhouses and Beauchief). [The Sheaf Valley RYR bid was initially unsuccessful but let's never say never.]

The new station at Waverley will be served by both Barrow Hill and Worksop trains.

Finally our good railway friend Pete Myers is due to retire from Northern in December. December timetable changes are the norm, but this feels like one change too many! Pete boasts a wealth of priceless experience and dedication that will be hard to replace.

A summer of heat and drought clearly showed climate change to be on track. Sadly, the same cannot be said in respect of the change in culture and mentality which is absolutely vital to the future of rail in the UK, and a future of temperate, civilised life.

Finished with this newsletter? Please pass it on to a friend or colleague who might be interested in campaigning for better transport or even joining Railfuture. Or you could leave with other second-hand books and magazines where these are placed e.g. in station waiting rooms; please ask for permission if appropriate.

User groups affiliated to Railfuture within the Yorkshire branch

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group	www.avrug.org.uk
Askern Station, Friends of	Contact Graham Moss on graz.moss@sky.com or 07510 555722
Bradford Rail Users' Group	www.bradfordrail.com
Esk Valley Railway	http://www.eskvalleyrailway.co.uk/evrdc.html
Halifax and District Rail Action Group and Electric Railway Charter	www.hadrag.com and www.electriccharter.wordpress.com email js.waring@hotmail.co.uk
Harrogate Line Rail Users' Group	Care of billymms@btinternet.com
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	davidpennierail21@gmail.com
Hunmanby Railway Station, Friends of	https://e-voice.org.uk/friendsofhunmanbyrailwaystation/
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	
Minsters Rail Campaign (Beverley-York)	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: markashmore@yahoo.com
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: Nina.Smith@railfuture.org.uk
Upper Wensleydale Railway	https://upperwensleydalerrailway.org.uk/
Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership (Yorkshire Coast Wolds Coast Line)	www.yccrp.co.uk

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Editorial address/Published by JS Waring, 20 Manor Drive, HALIFAX HX3 0DU; js.waring@hotmail.co.uk With thanks to Lucy Waring for copy-typing.

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