

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

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Spring 2023



Let's get on with it!

This is Barnsley Interchange, looking north. Note bus station – not too much of a walk over footbridge. Note also platforms currently long enough for 5 car trains (far side a bit longer) but with space to extend. What if this station were served by intercity trains from London St Pancras to Wakefield, Castleford and York? And East Midlands to Calder Valley & Bradford? (Other termini are possible!) Present Sheffield-Barnsley-Leeds trains can at best be called semi-fast. Cross Country run one fast train an hour via Wakefield Westgate. What happened to plans for a Northern fast service via the quicker route? And do we have to wait a lifetime for high speed rail that will only directly benefit the big cities? Professional research group Greengauge 21 says we need to develop new services this decade over existing routes around the Leeds-Sheffield corridor. That way present-day passengers realistically have something to look forward to; more will be attracted. **And the economy of the corridor will grow sustainably.** More inside (p7-9).

Enjoy this issue of YRC! Please send us your ideas, words (about 500 fill a page) and pictures for the next one by end of May – JSW

All opinions in this magazine are views of the writer not necessarily of Railfuture or its Yorkshire branch. Photos by editor unless otherwise attributed.

railfuture

Yorkshire branch

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Chair's column
by **Nina Smith**, Chair
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Good railway, bad railway



Liverpool-Newcastle TPE at York.
March afternoon, and on time!

The last three months have been both good and bad for the railway. Good in that passenger numbers have continued to rise and according to the Rail Industry Association (RIA), were 90% to 98% of pre-Covid levels on every single day in the second half of January. And good in that the Secretary of State's Bradshaw lecture was generally well received, not least for its recognition that rail freight must grow. **But also bad** – again for two reasons:

- **Strikes** have continued to cause massive inconvenience to rail users.
- And, not least for travellers in Yorkshire and across the north, because the **chaotic state of TransPennine Express (TPE)** has delivered scores of daily cancellations (sometimes masked as late changes to the timetable), an issue that has now been raised in parliament and attracted significant media coverage.

On the TPE chaos, the Department for Transport (DfT) is developing a recovery plan. Rail minister Hugh Merriman MP told the Northern Transport Summit in February the plan should be published in “the next few weeks”. Many of us feel that this must include transferring the franchise to the “operator of last resort”, DfT OLR Holdings Limited (DOHL). The plan could even be out by the time you read this.

On the industrial front, three main unions have been involved with strikes. One, the **TSSA**, has now settled with the employers, accepting a deal which most benefits the lower paid (as advocated in my column of our issue 59) and which includes changes to outdated working practices. The other two, **RMT** and **ASLEF**, have shown limited signs of settling with the train operators. The Government has not allowed the train operating companies to settle outside defined parameters. However action planned by the RMT members at Network Rail was called off pending results of a ballot on an improved pay offer of between 14.4% (for lower paid workers) and 9.2%. The ballot result of Network Rail workers, as this piece took its final form, was heavily in favour of accepting the offer. Now RMT strikes in the train operating companies at the turn of March and April have been called off with talks taking place.

In my view, the cases for industrial action made by RMT and ASLEF are substantially different. **ASLEF** represents drivers, a well-paid group, whose pay since privatisation has risen very substantially and whose qualified members earn around twice the national average salary, and significantly more than almost all their European counterparts. In my view, their pay demands are unjustified and, given their pay level, it is time for ASLEF to prepare to accept (as its Northern members in Yorkshire have) that the modern seven day world requires each working day to have the same value, with contracts and rotas that reflect that. **Relying on overtime and rest day working is no way to run a railway.**

The **RMT** have a stronger case, as many of their members earn around the national average wage or less, and their concerns are also about proposed “restructuring” within the rail industry. Most Railfuture – and, I am sure, most older passengers and those with physical, sensory, hidden or learning disabilities – support RMT's demand for **the retention of ticket offices**. Yes, there may be some that are little used, and can be replaced by roving staff, and it is reasonable to expect ticket office staff to help disabled passengers boarding trains and alighting. Many such staff already do this.

But there are many passengers who, for a number of reasons, find ticket vending machines (TVMs) difficult, impossible or simply inconvenient to use. There are others who either do not have computers or smartphones, or who do not wish their ticket to be on a phone that may lose charge or be lost or stolen.

On board trains, it is essential that there is a second member of staff, for safety, revenue protection and information – for example about delays.

Why shouldn't drivers operate the doors, assuming the right technology is in place for this to be done without loss of safety?

But a **customer-facing on-board conductor or guard is essential**. They must be accessible to passengers – demonstrating the short-sightedness in specification of Northern's CAF trains without end-corridor connections. (See pictures, left.)

Stress-free train journeys

If people enjoy a train journey, they are more like to make more of them. So trains need, as far as possible, to provide a comfortable and stress-free journey. Obviously, **the basics are that trains turn up (TPE please note) and are on-time, but beyond that the passenger ambience needs to be welcoming.**

We are fortunate in Yorkshire. Most of our trains are of a higher standard than those found in some other regions - for example, the DfT-specified Thameslink and GWR Azuma train sets are heavily criticised for uncomfortable seating.

But the behaviour of passengers is important too. People tell us of journeys marred by anti-social behaviour, often related to alcohol. You feel like asking, why are people allowed to drink alcohol on trains, or to board them when drunk and disorderly? Noisy and out-of-control children can make journeys unpleasant for other passengers. Parents do not always like being asked to exercise control.

People with mobility problems all too frequently have problems with boarding and alighting trains. Wheelchair spaces are sometimes occupied by luggage – why are all medium and long distance trains not provided with adequate luggage space?

Among those who particularly suffer from noise on trains are some autistic people, including some who are below clinical level. One contact's journey was made a misery recently by noise escaping from a fellow passenger's headphones. Making matters worse, the conductor declined to ask the headphone user to turn down the volume. Needless to say, my contact travels on trains on sufferance rather than with pleasure. This cannot be right. Research is needed on the experience of people on the autistic spectrum when travelling on public transport, and on what should be done to improve their experience.

More carriages are needed

As stated above, Northern has insufficient carriages for demand, and this will only get worse if, as we all expect, the current post-Covid resurgence in train travel continues. Of course, the company (formerly a franchise owned by Arriva) now is nationalised as Northern Trains Ltd within DOHL¹, and subject to micro-management by civil servants working under HM Treasury diktats.

But if we are to see an end to overcrowding on popular leisure routes, especially in the summer months, it is essential that Northern has more stock. Cascades of class 170 units are the most obvious if any become available from other Train Operating Companies (TOCs), but more is needed.



Three CAF trains (above)

Top: West Midlands "196", at Worcester. End-of-unit gangway connection means guard can get through and help all passengers. Even if the front looks like a lunar landing module! (RailphotographyUK CC BY-SA 4.0)

Bottom: Northern 195, Leeds. Driver has more panoramic view out of front window but if two units are coupled the guard is stuck in back part of train. (JSW)

Middle shot: What do we think of the WM interior? (Myaj47 CC BY-SA4.0)

¹ DfT OLR Holdings Ltd, where the internal acronym = "operator of last resort". You couldn't make it up – JSW

A number of **Voyager** units will become surplus from Avanti (West Coast) later this year, followed by some **Meridians** from East Midlands Railway. DfT should authorise sufficient of these to be transferred to Northern to enable longer trains on the Hope Valley, Wolds Coast and Settle and Carlisle (S&C) lines, to name the most obvious². These trains will need interior refurbishment. Improvements must include sufficient toilets, luggage space, and legroom. Comfortable seats must be rearranged to line up with the windows so people can see out – especially on important scenic routes such as the S&C.

These services can then be marketed to attract people out of their cars.

Climate crisis

No apologies for banging this drum again! The climate emergency is such that our way of life, perhaps life itself, is severely threatened. It is the most important and pressing issue facing the planet, but governments are not doing enough to avert potential catastrophe. **The UK has the Climate Change Act with the 2050 Net Zero target, and rail must play a big part in this.**

Derby wins!

The government has announced its decision on Great British Railways HQ. Many Yorkshire Railfuture members were gunning for Doncaster, to give a boost to the South Yorkshire town. Some of us backed more central Derby, shortlisted on levelling up, connectivity, opportunities for GBR, value for money, and heritage criteria. Derby came top of six in the public vote, and was duly selected. – JSW

Currently, rail carries 10% of all transport journeys, but accounts for less than 0.5% of CO2 emissions (*source: Rail Business Daily 24.2.23*). **But rail needs to do even better, and that means three things:**

- decarbonisation of the railway through a massive programme of electrification – tried and tested technology, backed up by battery and hydrogen technology for less well used routes.
- expansion of the railway network, starting with infills and proceeding with major new routes. This must include Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and line reopenings.
- and taxation and spending policies that encourage major modal shift from road vehicles and short-haul aircraft to the railway.

And all that requires major changes from Government – **the railway must receive greater funding from the Treasury in the interests of the planet.**

Members' consultation

The results of the consultation we carried out with members early this year showed most members to be satisfied with how the branch is run, but we learned where we could change things.

It was clear the majority of members want one or two branch meetings a year to be online, although naturally a minority without computer access wish to retain four in-person meetings annually. A likely compromise will be three in-person meetings plus one on-line. Members want in-person meetings to be in reasonably central locations. So we are unlikely to hold branch meetings again in Hull, Settle or Todmorden. Members generally liked the idea of holding a meeting in a location where there had been important recent rail improvements. Our branch webinars have proven popular, and many members made suggestions for speakers for future Zooms.

Finally - I am having radiotherapy for four weeks from March 23rd. *All being well, I hope to be out and about not too long after that.* – NS

Branch diary: Come to our 2022 AGM – 20th May

Railfuture Yorkshire branch
Annual General Meeting
Saturday 20 May in
Leeds, Mill Hill Chapel just off
City Square (east side across
from station). Starts **13.00 (1pm)**.

- Speakers invited – maybe with a community or ticketing focus.
- Nominations for officers and committee are welcome. All existing members are understood to be happy to be renominated.
- We would also like a minute's secretary (or suggestions as to how minute taking might be shared out – JSW).
- Full agenda etc to follow. Please accept this as advance notice.

² Can I put in a bid for York-Blackpool?! – JSW

Gaining momentum!

Yorkshire “restoring your railway” updates

by **Andrew Dyson** (additional points by **Stephen Waring**)

Askern service could go to Lincoln

Askern is on the line between Knottingley and Doncaster – a potential new link between West and South Yorkshire. SY metro mayor Oliver Coppard, and local MP Ed Miliband (Doncaster North), showed support for the proposed station reopening on a visit to the site.

The plan would reinstate direct services Leeds-Pontefract-Doncaster, via a Askern. The project is regarded as a front runner in the government’s Restoring Your Railways initiative. All the necessary track is already in situ and the service might not require any new paths into Leeds station. At present, the line through Askern is used only by Grand Central’s King’s Cross–Bradford services, and freight.

An hourly passenger service could be provided by extending one of the half-hourly Leeds–Knottingley services to and from Doncaster. The idea aligns comfortably with parallel hopes that the other twice hourly Leeds–Knottingley service could be extended to Goole. This would provide a substantial uplift in services to the south east of Leeds and Wakefield through Castleford and Featherstone to Pontefract and Knottingley for minimal relative investment.

A complication is the track layout at Knottingley. The junction for the Doncaster line is just on the wrong side of the station so for the service to continue serving Knottingley – present terminus of almost all trains from Leeds – Doncaster trains would require construction of at least one new platform on the Doncaster line at Knottingley. We are not clear whether two platforms would be needed; the line has some degree of reversible signalling. An alternative would be to increase service frequency Leeds-Pontefract with the additional trains – at least initially – running non-stop Pontefract to Askern.

Frequency increase could be enabled by the second platform at Castleford, nearing completion as we write this, increasing capacity where Leeds-Pontefract trains have to reverse. More trains would serve Glasshoughton with its Xscape leisure facilities, ski slope, shopping, eating and drinking places at “Junction 32”. More than hourly trains are needed.

There would also of course be the capital cost of the station at Askern. Housing growth in Askern has been substantial; further developments are ongoing. A rail connection would alleviate severe congestion that blights the main A19 road into Doncaster. The through route would create new journey opportunities to Leeds and elsewhere in West Yorkshire as well as Doncaster, South Yorkshire and beyond.

There are suggestions that any Leeds–Doncaster via Askern service could be extended to serve Lincoln, potentially replacing the limited (5 trains/day) Lincoln-Doncaster East Midlands Railway (EMR)



By Askern’s crossing gates, South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard (left) with lead campaigner Graham Moss and Ed Miliband MP. Courtesy SYMCA.



Reprising our YRC58 shot, Grand Central train by-passes Knottingley (platforms on right). To serve this station Askern trains would need at least one new platform. Note tracks in foreground accessing traction depot would require adjustment.

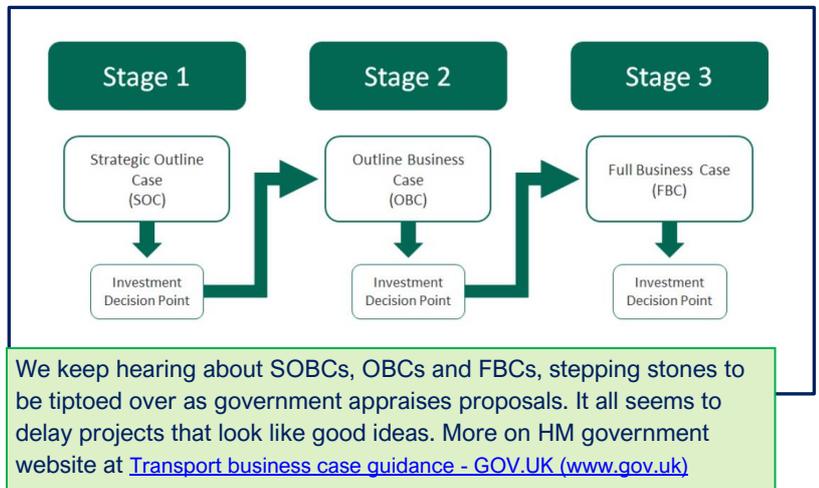
service. Direct Leeds–Lincoln trains would be a lot faster than the present through service via Barnsley and Sheffield. On winning the franchise, EMR had pledged to introduce an hourly service between Lincoln and Doncaster but seems to have stepped back from this commitment.

Any new service to or via Doncaster would have to overcome pathing issues through an already congested layout. Alternative routes between Askern and Doncaster avoiding the East Coast Main Line (ECML) have been considered, but would increase costs. **But extending the trains to Lincoln** would avoid problems of prolonged platform occupancy at Doncaster, and resolve conflict south of the station. Northbound trains would cross the congested ECML by means of the flyover between Decoy and Bessacarr Junctions where the Lincoln line diverges.

Around Sheffield...

At the end of September, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) submitted a strategic outline (business) case (SOC) to the government for reintroduction of passenger services on the **Don Valley line** between Sheffield Victoria and Stocksbridge. A decision on whether this scheme can progress to outline business case (OBC) stage is expected in 2023.

The **Barrow Hill Line** scheme is now progressing to OBC, having been approved by Government to go forward in June 2022. This work is looking at what is needed to deliver a phase one scheme by 2025, which could include up to three new stations on the line and one train per hour between Chesterfield and Sheffield (Midland or maybe less convenient Victoria). Phase two could then enhance the passenger offer, either by rail or tram. A decision is still awaited from Government on the SOBC for a new station at Waverley on the border of Sheffield and Rotherham, submitted at the end of November 2021. Integration of Barrow Hill and Stocksbridge proposals is an obvious development, maybe via Sheffield Victoria. A station at Nunnery Square could link with trams into the city.



...and elsewhere, a government decision is also due this year on an SOC for **Beverley-York**, effectively a completely new line, with decisions need about precise routing.

Nearby **Haxby** has £4 million committed from York council, another £12M needed, hopefully from government. 83% of 1200 respondents in a local survey said they would use the station. Location has become a little controversial, just outside the village – maybe good for parking maybe but not for active travellers. The hope is work could begin in a year or so with station opening shortly after. We assume the station would be served by existing TransPennine Express service as proposed introduction of York-Scarborough locals by Northern seems to have fallen by the wayside.

Back in West Yorkshire,

construction of **White Rose** is under way. White Rose will serve a major shopping centre and is expected to replace Cottingley. **Thorpe Park** in East Leeds should not be too far behind.

Good news in Calderdale is planning approval for **Elland** which should have opened in 2000, along with neighbouring Brighouse. Elland station had at least as good passenger numbers predicted as Brighouse but was more complicated to build on an embankment site and so was shelved. Latest designs show three routes to each platform –



Elland station design (image from Calderdale council website)

steps, lifts and ramps. A separate access package will link up with local walking and cycling routes along the valley. The station should open in 2025 – a quarter of a century late!

All of these schemes need to get finalised and go ahead without further delay!

Let's campaign on this:

We can't wait for high speed rail.

Let's campaign to get the most out of the lines we have!

Stephen Waring welcomes Greengauge 21 Sheffield-Leeds corridor report

WE NEED to demand progress on improving and expanding services on our existing routes across Yorkshire. Jim Steer, director of Greengauge 21 joined Railfuture Yorkshire branch members and friend at a recent webinar to talk about the group's report **Sheffield-Leeds: What Next**. The report also featured in *Railwatch* 175 (Apr'23) (www.railwatch.org.uk).

A quick start is proposed on ready-to-roll schemes – and near-ready ones – so that South, West and North Yorkshire are not left behind. What can be done within existing capacity? The report is about improving our present rail links over the next ten years, whilst waiting what seems a lifetime for the promise of high-speed rail.

Recently announced rephasing of aspects of HS2 adds two years to delivery. The London Euston terminus and sections north of Birmingham are both subject to delay. Nor is there clarity on what the solution will be for the eastern arm to (or maybe just towards) Leeds.

This gives urgency to the question how we can improve services over existing routes whilst waiting for long-term mega-projects. In its Leeds-Sheffield corridor paper Greengauge 21 discusses high speed proposals favouring an alignment via Nottingham and Newark, bypassing Doncaster and approaching Leeds from the east. But the point of the report is that such projects are decades away. **Today's travellers need better services today** – or at least within a sensible time horizon such as ten years.

We are indeed desperate for better services that can get us between cities such as Sheffield, Wakefield, Leeds, Bradford and York quickly and efficiently. For now York-Sheffield means via Leeds or Doncaster – except for the limited service via the slow Pontefract Baghill line. Calderdale and Bradford to Sheffield means a tour, and a change of train, via Leeds. How much better would be a direct route via Barnsley? A better deal is needed for major communities like Halifax, Huddersfield, towns along the lower Calder Valley, not to mention Wakefield and the “five towns”³ to the east. And of course there is also the Penistone line which links Huddersfield and Barnsley – towns linked by higher education – but is an indirect route to Sheffield.

Leeds-Sheffield has just one fast service an hour via Wakefield Westgate, operated by Cross Country and



Sheffield Midland station – look, bridge at north end crosses four tracks. But catch a train going north and you'll see where Victorian(?) engineers left the job unfinished. The stretch of tunnel and cuttings under complicated roads just has room for two tracks up to the junction at Nunnery Main Line.

More trains through here could be demanded by Barrow Hill line reopening and extra trains northward to West and North Yorkshire. For the long term, Greengauge proposes a “holistic examination” of capacity solutions north of Sheffield Midland.

Could digital signalling could be part of the answer?

³ Castleford, Pontefract, Knottingley, Featherstone, and Normanton

taking a little over 40 minutes. Half-hourly Northern semi-fasts run via Wakefield Kirkgate and Barnsley but take a full hour. The distance is slightly more than 40 miles. Work it out.

So Greengauge message is that **we must start implementing improvements on existing lines now.**

The report covers the two routes Leeds-Sheffield via Barnsley and Moorthorpe with potential links to York via Castleford, and to Bradford via Horbury the Calder Valley.

Railfuture Yorkshire's branch committee has agreed to campaign – not just for the Gg21 proposals but for wider developments across our county. Gg21 proposes early action to implement and build on existing proposals for the central corridor. If you have read your Railwatch 175, the main Gg21 proposals will be familiar (but see panel, left).

Greengauge 21 priorities – much of this could be achieved this decade!

Immediate action:

- Second hourly fast Leeds-Sheffield via Wakefield Westgate dovetailing with Cross Country. This is thought to be an existing ambition of Northern. "Fast" means little more than 40min.
- New Rotherham main line station for interchange with trams and buses.
- East Midlands services extended via Barnsley to Wakefield Kirkgate and York via Castleford.

Initiate planning for new services:

- Sheffield to Manchester Airport (avoiding Piccadilly). This could initially be via a new station at Baguley linking with Metrolink trams to the Airport. A further development could use a proposed western link into the airport.
- **Bradford-Sheffield via Halifax and Barnsley.** The Crigglestone curve, closed more 30 years ago but still structurally intact would need to be reopened. This would allow trains serving Low Moor, Halifax, Elland, Brighouse and Mirfield to access the line to Barnsley, Meadowhall and Sheffield. A new station could be opened at Horbury, serving Ossett. Our estimate is journey time would be 75 minutes Bradford-Sheffield. This beats existing times via Leeds (with a change) and avoids the pathing issues of potential Bradford-Sheffield trains that would have to reverse in Leeds. Journey time improvement for other stations would be even greater. Brighouse-Sheffield would be less than an hour – a better link to South Yorkshire than the west end of West Yorkshire has ever enjoyed in the past.
- Examine possibility of **second hourly** Sheffield fast being extended to Birmingham.

Renew investigations for

- Infill electrification north of Sheffield to Doncaster and the Doncaster-Leeds line at South Kirkby junction. Capacity upgrades including new loops are also mentioned.
- Sheffield Midland capacity solutions including possible digital signalling.

Note top of "immediate" list is the much-needed second "fast" each hour Leeds-Sheffield. This could later be extended southwards towards Birmingham (or elsewhere). Also "immediate" is extension of East Midlands services to Wakefield and York (or could be Leeds?) via Barnsley. Barnsley has clear potential, but it makes sense for trains to continue north rather than terminate. The proposed main line station for Rotherham is seen as in interchange with the Parkgate tram-trains. But the main line is on the opposite side of the Parkgate shopping centre, so we take it a new station site is envisaged.

Bradford-Sheffield – another RYR scheme?

The Bradford-Sheffield service is under "initiate planning". The suggestion is that reopening of the Crigglestone curve linking the Calder Valley from the west at Horbury with the Barnsley line, and also the proposed station at Horbury for Ossett could be funded as a Restoring Your Railway scheme. Crigglestone was one of the "five curves" closed in the late 1980s when two summer Saturday trains were withdrawn. Ossett is reputed to be the largest town in Yorkshire without a train station! We feel bound to add that developing this route for Bradford-Sheffield trains was advocated by Halifax & District Rail Action group about 20 years ago!

This service could also be extended south, the suggestion being Leicester.

Sheffield capacity. And other important routes: "Why aren't we mentioned?"

The Penistone Line Huddersfield-Barnsley-Sheffield is touched upon with a proposal for 2 trains/hr at least Huddersfield to Barnsley, where capacity issues start to hit. Thoughts of trains terminating at Barnsley sound an alarm, but it seems likely at least one Penistone line would continue to run through to Sheffield. At present the Huddersfield trains run all-stations south of Barnsley, adding up to a journey Huddersfield-Sheffield of getting on for an hour and a half.

Capacity over the 2-track section north of Sheffield station is critical, as it is for the *Reopening Your Railway* Chesterfield-Sheffield Barrow Hill line scheme – assuming that goes into Midland station. A possible service Chesterfield to Huddersfield via Victoria and Penistone has been mooted. Greengauge admits this is welcome, but points out that capital costs would be great. Reopening of the 5 mile section from Deepcar to Penistone⁴ would be one thing. Having two

⁴ Currently part of the Trans Pennine Trail for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Some doubtless use it for commuting!

separate Sheffield city stations is described as “less than ideal”. Capital costs would be great. We’d say some high quality connection – tram? – to Midland would be essential.

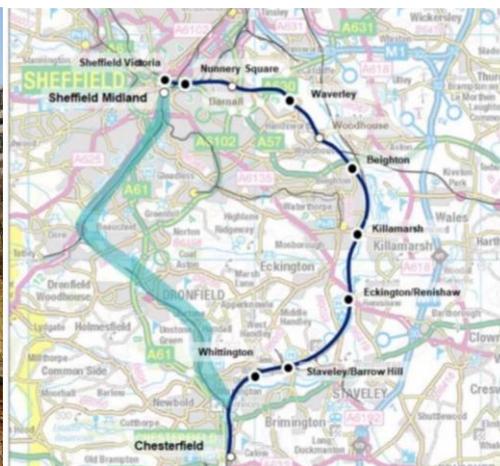
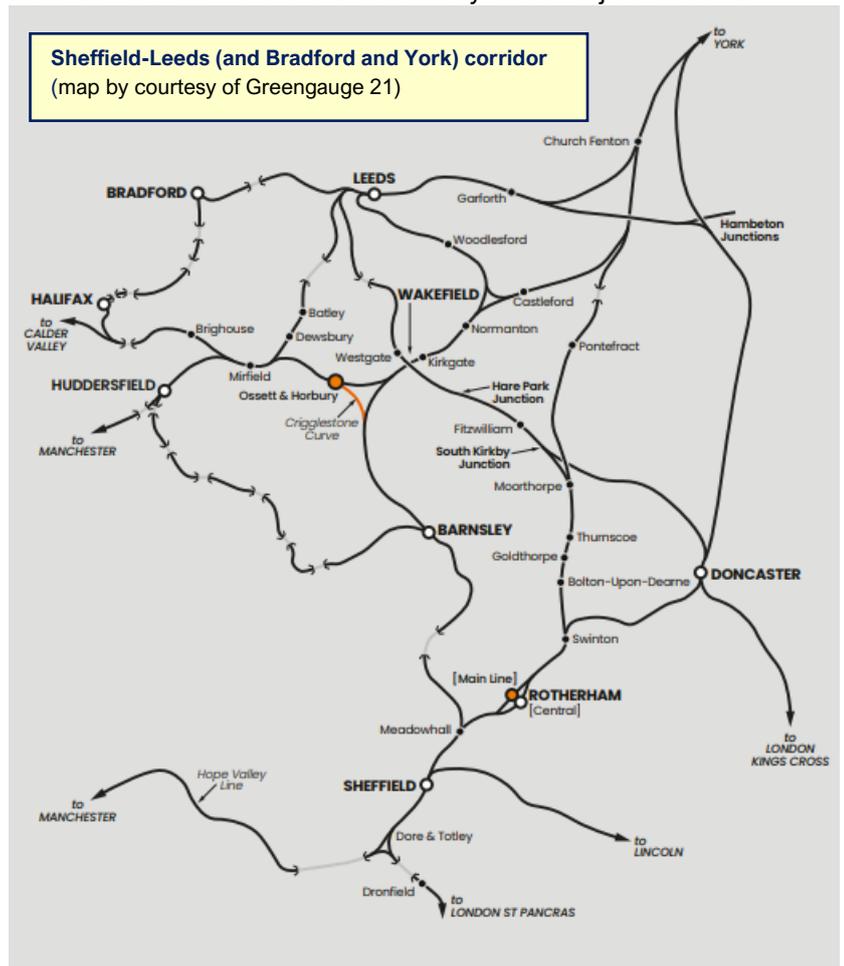
The writer of this piece (not Greengauge!) is tempted to suggest some form of tram-train operation with Chesterfield to Penistone (maybe Huddersfield) services running through the city centre serving commercial areas and the two universities. The old Huddersfield-Sheffield direct service reversed at Nunnery and took just under an hour to Midland. 50 minutes Huddersfield to Victoria seems reasonable. Or a little more than that to the centre using the tram tracks. The tramway would rule out diesel operation – absolutely right if the aim is zero-carbon transport – so alternatives could include battery operation with recharging in the city centre and at termini. Other complications with trams or tram trains include platform heights. Crazy? But we have been ambitious all our lives, why stop now?

Greengauge’s map (left) shows the Sheffield-York route via Pontefract Baghill but not the lines from Wakefield and Castleford to Pontefract, Knottingley and beyond. All of these lines are outside the defined “corridor”. We cover progress on Askern reopening elsewhere in this magazine. The limited services on the Goole and Baghill lines badly need improving – firstly increasing in frequency. There is massive potential to develop train services that criss-cross Castleford, Pontefract and the other three of the “five towns”.

Let’s get writing!

Railfuture Yorkshire Branch’s campaign on this will support the principle, not necessarily every detail of Greengauge’s ideas. The proposals for Bradford, Calderdale, Wakefield and York are close to our hearts. And of course we want expansion of the network across Yorkshire. Let’s focus on the benefits for the places where we live.

So look out for press coverage. **You can help** by contacting your MP and your councillors and combined authority representatives. Keep your arguments simple and concise. If you write more than two pages cut it down! Greengauge 21 is a respected transport research group and they deserve to be heard. It’s all about getting some benefits that will not cost the Earth – literally or metaphorically – but will benefit us as travellers and explorers, workers and leisure seekers in our lifetimes. Good transport improves life quality. **It’s achievable.**



RIGHT: Could tram-trains like this one but maybe with batteries be part of the solution for proposed routes to places like Stocksbridge and beyond? (JSW)

LEFT: The Greengauge 21 report shows this map from the SOBC for Barrow Hill line reopening. Note the line could go into Sheffield Victoria or Midland. And it could link up with the line to Stocksbridge or even Penistone. It’s all about capacity. [Source: Appendix 2 Barrow Hill Line Restoring Your Railway Strategic Outline Business Case.pdf \(derbyshire.gov.uk\)](#)

It's all go!

This is issue 60 of YRC. Minor milestone! And we have had an active start to the year with webinars featuring:

- Northern's Tony Baxter (regional director) with recently appointed stakeholder manager Darren Allsopp;
- TransPennine Route Upgrade – presentation by Neil Holme TRU managing director at Network Rail;
- Greengauge 21 Leeds-Sheffield corridor proposals with Jim Steer. We intend to campaign on this, and hope members will help!

All our webinars have been informative, discussion-stimulating, and well attended by Railfuture members and friends in this branch and across the North. More are planned over the next few months. Watch out for details.

First branch meeting of the year centred on an excellent talk by Pete Myers. We must thank Pete not only for his years of service with Northern but for actively taking up new roles in Railfuture both in our branch and nationally. Pete represented two user groups at Northern's May timetable discussion in Leeds.

It is impossible to attempt here to cover everything that gets discussed either in committee meetings (often now held online) or in regular email conversations. **A big theme has been TransPennine Express**, its daily tally of performance issues and the question of when real, permanent improvement will be visible. Transferring the company to the Operator of Last Resort seems attractive. It may be a start but does not guarantee improvement. TPE hit the headlines as criticism of "P-coding" (removing trains from the timetable the day before instead of declaring them cancelled on the day) surfaced. Other train companies have also used this practice to a lesser extent – including Northern and Grand Central. The Regulator has now clamped down: [Regulator tells rail industry to ensure cancellation statistics match the passenger experience | Office of Rail and Road \(orr.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-tells-rail-industry-to-ensure-cancellation-statistics-match-the-passenger-experience).

We maintain good relations with the train companies and with Network Rail. We have met with Railfuture East Midlands committee members to share thoughts on working with regional transport bodies such as our combined authorities in West and South Yorkshire. New combined authorities are due in the East Midlands and in North Yorkshire. Our experience is that when we talk to combined authorities we are "singing from the same hymn sheet", even though our ambitions may be greater in volume. Campaigning is our role.

That is also true of our relationship with Northern. We are critical friends. Several of our committee and other members were at Northern's recent session on the May timetable. Everyone there agreed that it was too late to consult on the imminent new timetable; we needed to have proper in-advance sessions in the future. Arising from this the branch has submitted a menu of ideas to Northern. **Short term** – ideally by Dec'2020 – we want to see:

- restoration of currently **suspended or reduced services** such as Huddersfield-Castleford – pending extension to York; gaps on the Pontefract and Scunthorpe-Doncaster lines; Gainsborough Central (very limited service in summer timetable); Sheffield-Doncaster stoppers and Bradford-Ilkley;
- restoration of **missing station calls** such as Calder Valley late night at Mytholmroyd and Sowerby (eastbound). More trains at Sowerby Bridge. More trains at Ulleskelf.
- **timetable tweaks** on Harrogate, York-Leeds and Skipton lines, and Sheffield-Hull on Sundays.

Medium term we have sent an initial list of aspirations. We hope these could start in the next couple of years:

- Pontefract lines – second train every hour via Castleford and Glasshoughton (for Xscape and shopping) extended to Askern, Doncaster and Lincoln; hourly service all week Sheffield-Pontefract-York (all stations);
- York-Scarborough half-hourly; Sheffield-Gainsborough hourly (was a franchise promise), and Saturday trains via Brigg to Cleethorpes restored; hourly service Leeds-Knottingley-Goole;
- Extend Bentham Line trains to Heysham for IoM ferry connection (currently "change at Lancaster"); strengthen service for opening of Eden Project Morecambe – to be major attraction promoting green values.
- Calder Valley, starting with Sunday Leeds-Brighouse-Manchester service; later doubling of frequency on Brighouse lines half-hourly both N-S and E-W, Elland station, possible new destinations; Bradford & Calderdale to south Manchester for employment, education, leisure and (even!) the airport. Better connections via Brighouse, upper Calderdale-Huddersfield and Stalybridge line stations to Bradford.
- Additional semi(?)-fast service (à la Greengauge 21) Leeds-Sheffield via Wakefield Westgate.
- Earlier start to service on Sundays – similar timetable to weekdays.
- Bradford City of Culture 2025. Start Bradford-Sheffield service via Brighouse, Wakefield Kirkgate & Barnsley.
- Generally improve timetables. Lengthen trains. Improve infrastructure: in Manchester for Bradford to Airport trains, and Craggstone curve for direct Bradford-Sheffield service are just examples.

All of the above is work in progress for Railfuture Yorkshire. Big thanks to Nina for collating. More on this in future editions. **Please send us your ideas. And your articles for our next issue – short and concise is best!**

Finally good news of stay of execution for the 840 York-Whitby bus. **This service is a vital lower carbon alternative to car travel in a world we have to make green again.** See you at our AGM on 20 May! – JSW

National Lottery?

by Andrew Oldfield

The Huddersfield-Penistone-Sheffield Rail Users Association had been going for 42 years. We hoped for the best from the Penistone Line levelling-up bid. The original bid submission failed. MPs Mark Eastwood (Dewsbury) and Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge) deserve praise as co-sponsors. Both were limited to a ceiling of £25M. In 2021 Eastwood was optimistic about a revised application succeeding. Only £1.7bn of the £4.8bn national funding pot had been allocated and Huddersfield-centred Kirklees had



Penistone line trains have their own platform at Huddersfield, a short bay so trains can only be 3 coaches. It's single track from here with just two loops before Barnsley.

received positive feedback from levelling-up officials. A broader bid was assembled to increase chances of success. Projects in Batley and Huddersfield were added. But it only, in the end, saw the former awarded £12M. The greater combined Kirklees bid of £70M was basically three schemes packaged together. Maybe with hindsight we might ask, how often does asking for more result in triumph? Was not levelling-up always going to be a matter of rationing, despite the warm words of Boris Johnson? Then, of course, there is also the impact of inflation meaning less can be delivered.

Could this be a rare case of unity with HM Treasury, DfT, and levelling up chiefs viewing the Kirklees bid in a wider context? **Was the conclusion that the TransPennine Route Upgrade was already making Huddersfield a major beneficiary of rail investment and on that basis the Penistone line levelling-up was rejected?**

It seems consultants were employed to explore other avenues to gain a half-hourly service. But what other options, what other funding sources were there? **Over a decade ago the Penistone Line Enhancement Strategy proposed extra track at Summer Lane (Barnsley) and Lockwood close to Huddersfield.** Most of the investment was to cover signalling. Present line is single track the whole way from Platform 2 at Huddersfield to just outside Barnsley with loops only Shepley to Stocksmoor and at Penistone.

Funding a range of schemes around the country promotes the idea that government is tackling levelling-up. Metro mayors have expressed concern. In the West Midlands Andy Street – Conservative – has stated his dislike for the bidding process. When bidding is unsuccessful it represents wasted expenditure on constructing the bids by local authorities who are desperately short of funds after 13 years of austerity.

Is this not another version of the National Lottery?



Huddersfield-Barnsley-Sheffield train enters Penistone loop. The line has a strong community focus as display (left) in waiting shelter, Huddersfield platform 2, shows.

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 Yorkshire area

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 billtymms@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

Yorkshire branch (RfY) committee and the small print

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