

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

Number 64: Spring 2024

LNER, like Northern and TPE, is a state-owned train operating company.

It is part of our national rail system, a system that receives government support, funded by taxpayers. Everyone should be entitled and encouraged to use it, for business, leisure, the pleasure of travelling or to deal with an emergency. Rail must provide that service to as many people as possible – for the good of the environment if nothing else.

Now LNER has changed its tickets on London to/from Newcastle/Edinburgh journeys. Flexible cheap off-peak fares have been abolished, replaced by “70 min Flex”, available in limited quotas. If you can’t get an “advance” or “flex” ticket or need greater than that ± 70 minutes’ flexibility, it will cost £193.90 single. That’s the full-price “anytime” fare, largely used by people on expenses. The old off-peak single valid on any off-peak train was £87. How is this more flexible? Let it never come to our part of the world. Nina comments on page 6.

We cannot help wondering whether this is really the work of experienced railway managers. Is it rather some barmy idea dreamt up in the crazy world of the DfT?

Meanwhile in Scotland, off-peak Scotrail fares are now valid all day in a trial until the end of June. More enterprising? – JSW

Our LNER “Azuma” is, of course, at York – JSW

railfuture

Yorkshire branch

President:

Alan Whitehouse:

Vice-Presidents:

Mike Crowhurst,
Alan Williams

Rail developments in Yorkshire and the north

by Stephen Waring, editor

So TransPennine Express gave up on their push-pull (Class 68 + Mark 5A coaches) at the end of last year. Apart from being seen – or heard! – as something of a public nuisance when parked with engines running in places like Scarborough (Cleethorpes was also threatened at one point), crew training with them was the big issue, and it must be a big relief to get them out of the way. Where these modern trains – if you can call a diesel modern – will end up is still not clear as we write – possibly the Chiltern line out of London Marylebone.

As a result all TPE services across the north are now either Class 802 electro-diesel bimodes, or the somewhat ageing but perfectly serviceable Class 185 diesel multiple units. It really is as well TPE did not actually dispose of any of the DMUs, even if they do have a bit of an outer-suburban feel on, say, a Middlesbrough to Manchester trip, as well as a carbon footprint that should be on the way out. Outer-suburban or not 185s now dominate services to Scarborough, Teesside and Manchester Airport plus the south Pennine Cleethorpes-Sheffield-Liverpool route and Leeds-Huddersfield stoppers (of which more below).



“Old faithful” 185 waiting for the green at Leeds on Manchester Airport to Saltburn

The good news is more stock to be ordered for TPE, but for now – several years in fact – the 185s must carry on with the bimodes mainly on the Liverpool-Newcastle route. Less good is that to recover from the abysmal service performance of recent years TPE is running a reduced service in the current timetable. And the reductions are expected to last at least until December this year.

The present service reductions arguably feel most harsh on the Leeds-Huddersfield line. For much of the day it's just three trains an hour:

- Newcastle to Manchester Vic and Liverpool fast;
- Saltburn to Manchester Vic and Manchester Airport fast;
- Hull to Manchester Piccadilly, all stations Leeds-Huddersfield, then fast.

In addition there's the Manchester Piccadilly to Huddersfield stopper. This runs through to/from York via Wakefield and Castleford four times a day (with one extra to/from Wakefield only). This is the beginning of restoration of

the Huddersfield-Wakefield-Castleford former Northern hourly service. The plan as we understand it is to increase frequency Wakefield-Castleford-York to 6/day this summer and then to a full hourly service in December 2024. This (in my view) is long overdue. Let's hope it happens, providing a decent service for Wakefield to Manchester and York.

There are very few services linking intermediate stations Stalybridge-Huddersfield with Leeds – just peak hours. This is a long-standing issue for the Huddersfield line. Our friends campaigning for this stretch of route have put forward a strong argument for more frequent trains to serve Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite.

Scarborough is still mainly served by shuttles to and from York. These are mostly the old faithful 185s with the odd 802 thrown in. It looks like there are plans for a few extra services in the summer, at least at weekends. This is also relevant to Haxby station opening (below).

The signs are that TPE's new strategy is working: reliability and punctuality are improving. **The hope is that service levels will be restored to the pre-Dec'2023 level in December this year.**

There is a complication with the Leeds-Huddersfield service. This was expected to be transferred to from TPE to Northern this coming December. This has still not been confirmed and the latest we heard was that the change might not be going ahead. There was an interesting question about what type of trains would be used. Arguably the 185s with comfortable seats and doors part way along the carriage are ideal for this service. Indeed better than they are for services like Saltburn to Manchester Airport. What trains would Northern use – older sprinter types? We'll have to see.

And if the transfer does not go ahead, won't that leave TPE short of trains for the services it wants to restore or improve? It's hard not to worry.

The new trains can not arrive too soon. It would be nice to think they might be zero-carbon. No dirty diesel in other words. **But that, we suspect, would be just a dream.**

Meanwhile over in Bradford there's a lot of interest in what's going to be happening with mass-transit and the proposed new through station. West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) has given the go ahead to a consultation on first phases of the county's proposed mass transit system. The first two phases are Leeds to White Rose and Leeds to Bradford. The Bradford route could extend across the city and potentially link the heavy rail networks on either side. Nothing is revealed yet about detailed routes for the mass transit lines, but consultation is planned for later this spring→

or summer. The new station would be designed so that trains no longer have to reverse at the Interchange terminus, speeding up trains between Leeds and Bradford and onwards west. But this would need good links into the city. Or it should be nearer the centre; the suggested St James market site caused mixed feelings, significantly further out than Interchange though in a city quarter that Bradford wants to develop.

The attractions of removing the need for Calder Valley line trains to reverse are obvious. Significant cuts in journey time, with Leeds-Bradford down from 20 minutes to 12 minutes, and potentially even better for Calderdale destinations. **New, increased capacity would also be provided by** ending the lifelong necessity of trains changing direction (“Why are we going backwards, Mummy?”). **But good links into and across the city would be essential.**

The WYCA meeting also approved the final version of the county’s rail strategy (wyca-rail-strategy-final-version.pdf (westyorks-ca.gov.uk)), dated January 2024. We will include more detail on this in future editions of this newsletter. WYCA also agreed to move forward with bus franchising across the county. Link for the meeting is at [WYCA - Modern Gov.](#)

Still in Bradford you will have read that Northern is to have a new depot – sorry Traincare Centre, located just south of Shipley’s triangular station where routes from Leeds, Ilkley, Skipton and Bradford Forster Square join and cross. Price tag is reported as £100 million, on a site recently vacated by a scrap business, Crossley Evans.

Funding is associated with the TransPennine Route Upgrade because TRU work east of Leeds will disrupt access to Neville Hill depot. But the new Shipley depot will have a permanent role stabling and servicing Northern’s electric units. **Let’s hope that will be a growing fleet.**

Haxby progress. Network Rail has submitted a planning application for Haxby station to York City Council. It is hoped construction, costed at £24 million, could start in about a year’s time, with opening of the station in 2026. Funding is from the Department for Transport and York council; £3.5 million has already been spent by way of the Reopening Your Railway fund.

The old station, in the village centre, closed in 1930. The new site is just to the north of Haxby village, on Towthorpe Road leading to neighbouring Strensall.

Shared-use paths will connect the station to residential areas of Haxby for pedestrian and cyclist users. Image shows what the station could look like. Expectations include:

- fully accessible footbridge with lifts and steps;
- bike shelters;
- 154-space car park – including EV charging; taxi rank;
- and bus stop.

The picture looks north-east towards Malton, so the village is behind. Trains on the Scarborough-York route, basically hourly, will call. **We hope the new station will stimulate demand for more trains, going beyond York at least to Leeds – or maybe Sheffield.**



Haxby, as proposed.
Image by Network Rail,
with thanks.

Dore & Totley station expansion and track doubling is expected to be completed as we go to press, with opening of the new platform finished and in use by the time you read this – only 6 months late so not bad as these things go.

Part of the Hope Valley capacity scheme, approved in February 2018 by then transport secretary Chris Grayling, construction started in early 2022. Cost had risen to £145 million. More in our next issue

Making a difference – selling rail travel and a greener future to Gen Z. Did you know...?

- Going by train instead of car saves the same carbon (as CO₂) as boiling a kettle up to 455 times...
- Switching from car to train, you could save enough to power your phone for up to eight years...
- An average train journey causes nearly five times less CO₂ emissions than the equivalent by car...

– **facts highlighted in a new campaign** by Network Rail, partnered by the Rail Delivery Group and Campaign for Better Transport, to inspire more young people to travel by train. “A Greener Future” is aimed at Gen Z or the Zoomer generation – people born between 1997 and 2012. Headlined “Making a difference: one train journey at a time”, the campaign runs across social media, digital platforms and outdoor advertising over the next month. It’s about cutting CO₂ emissions, supporting the government target to achieve net zero by 2050. Electrification is mentioned, and wider environmental targets. Network Rail is one of the nation’s biggest landowners looking after rich lineside diversity.

We hear there are millions of young people who have never travelled on a train. **And we guess there are lots of older people who could benefit from the same modal shift, as could our fragile future!** – JSW

All opinions in this newsletter are those of the individual writer.

Read on for Nina’s column→

When will we get a bigger railway?

My column starts with a long quote from a recent editorial in *The Guardian* (online 27 Feb 2024 ¹):

“The cancellation of HS2 beyond Birmingham, and the related downgrading of Northern Powerhouse Rail, have made a mockery of the government’s supposed levelling up ambitions. ...

The common thread in this sorry sequence has been a refusal to invest sufficiently for the long term, and a blinkered determination to prioritise cost-cutting across the network. ...

According to forecasts from one specialist rail consultancy, the number of people travelling by train could double by 2050. This would be exactly the right direction of travel, helping the country make the necessary move to a greener transport network. Handled with imagination and flair – for example, in relation to ticketing – it could also deliver huge social benefits. But a misconceived austerity strategy is inflicting reputational damage as service standards drop, grievously undermining industry morale and risking a spiral of decline. ...

After a period in which industrial relations have reached rock bottom, the rail unions and train operators should be seen as partners in that wider vision. A new era of ambition and collaboration is required, after the scandalous dysfunction of recent years. The curtain must come down on a period in which passengers have been paying more for less, victims of an overbearing Treasury that has known the price of everything and the value of nothing.”

I could not have put it better myself!

Services not good enough, thanks to government

Doncaster to Lincoln by direct train takes about three quarters of an hour. Unfortunately, there are only five direct trains on Mondays to Saturdays and none on Sundays. Otherwise, passengers have to change at Retford, waiting there between 27 and 43 minutes, with a total journey time of between 1hr 18 minutes and 1hr 33 mins – not an attractive proposition. Researching this piece, I asked the Railfuture Lincolnshire branch chair if he knew when the franchise commitment of direct hourly EMR Lincoln-Doncaster service would start. He said it had been postponed due to Department for Transport squeezing of the budgets of train operating companies.

That sums up the short-sighted attitude towards our railway that is the current policy of the DfT and HM Treasury.

Either a lack of understanding, or a not-caring attitude seems to prevail. We need a better railway to increase mode shift to help achieve net zero, and because new and better train service have economic benefits. That could be making jobs accessible to a wider catchment area, reducing social isolation, or benefiting the leisure and tourist economies of the places served. In this case, Lincoln in particular would benefit from increased tourism. Lincoln is a wonderful, medieval cathedral city, with a castle, ancient streets, excellent shopping and a thriving university. Many passengers for an hourly direct Doncaster-Lincoln service would be changing off a train from Leeds or York, or more distant points such as Durham or Edinburgh.

Currently, to get from Leeds to Lincoln (72 miles by road) by train – without changing – typically means a 2hrs 15 mins journey on a roundabout and slow route via Barnsley and Sheffield. Travelling via LNER to Doncaster, then a →

¹ To read the whole leading article see: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/feb/27/the-guardian-view-on-rail-reform-think-growth-not-managed-decline?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

direct train to Lincoln would take about 1½ hours, assuming a 15 minute change at Doncaster. There must surely also -be a common sense case for some Lincoln-Doncaster services to be extended to York, capacity exists on the ECML. How brilliant for tourism that would be!

This is not the only case of an inadequate timetable on passenger routes. **Railfuture Yorkshire has been campaigning for years for an hourly Goole to Leeds service.** Currently this is a “parliamentary” service – one train a day timetable (2 trains westbound). West Yorkshire trains Leeds-Knottingley would extend hourly to Snaith, Rawcliffe and Goole in the East Riding via Hensall and Whitley Bridge in North Yorkshire – three different local authorities.

Northern’s current position is that campaigners should present to local and regional transport committees the case for funding from local government to deliver the additional services. **Really?** The line is part of the national rail network, and the service should be funded in the normal way from the DfT budget. Trouble is, DfT./Treasury are squeezing Northern’s budget, instead of increasing it, which is what they would be doing if they were serious about levelling-up.

Bigger railway needed!

A leading campaigner for an important reopening in the South East of England was quoted recently as saying in “The South East always loses out”².

That’s not what it seems like up here! The North has had much less railway investment than London and the South East for many years. Local and regional campaigners have for 20 years now been campaigning to reopen the railway between **Skipton and Colne**, a vital regeneration route, and yet despite support from at least one past transport secretary, there is still no indication of when this link will reopen. Similarly, when will trains run again from **Stocksbridge to Sheffield**, or **Beverley to York**? When will the **Criggleshole Curve** be reopened? When will the **Barrow Hill Line** see passenger trains again? When will **Askern** get a station, and **Pontefract** a direct rail connection with Doncaster, or a regular service to Sheffield and York?

If the next government is serious about both levelling up and climate change, it will fund these projects. Electric cars may be “the future”, but they will not solve wider connectivity issues or fully address congestion, urban environment and air quality issues.

Our railway is currently suffering from significant underfunding. People may say we can’t afford it as we need to spend the money we have on the NHS, local government services, education and defence. Yes, I agree, we do, but **a government that was willing could fund a better railway** by increasing fuel duty, increasing Vehicle Excise Duty,→



In the shadows on Leeds platform 17, Lincoln train blocked in by apparently broken-down stopper in front. So nobody goes anywhere for best part of an hour. Leeds needs more platforms. (JSW)

Anyone for Lincoln, Goole or Askern – or Sheffield to York?

Leeds has an hourly service through the week (best not talk about Sundays) to Lincoln. It runs via Barnsley and Sheffield which is good for those places and a useful joining up of services, suiting Northern as cost-conscious operator and hopefully more than the odd passenger. It takes the best part of 2½ hours to get to from Leeds to Lincoln. So how about a different more direct route, part of upgrades using existing routes through Castleford and Pontefract. Leeds could have trains to Lincoln via Pontefract, Askern – new station – and Doncaster. Leeds-Goole hourly, and Sheffield-Pontefract-York. The last would reduce the dependence of local travellers on long-distance cross-country trains; all are proposed in West Yorkshire Combined Authority’s rail strategy.

The trick will be delivering a programme to bring developments like this about. Developments that could give early benefits compared with “sexier” high speed (or not so high speed) projects that could be decades away if ever feasible. Would not an upgrade of the Calder Valley line yield earlier gains for more travellers than a fantasy (?) high speed route from Bradford to Manchester via Huddersfield?

Here’s a picture of Lincoln cathedral. Surely worth a **direct** train service from Leeds (and maybe even York!)? – JSW



By DrMoschi - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, (Wikipedia) <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4900154>

² London to Brighton via reopened Uckfield-Brighton route, plus restored links into Tunbridge Well (via a currently a preserved railway) and from Croydon to London Docklands. See <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1870100/brighton-main-line-two-train-journey-proposal-london>

taxing electric car mileage, taxing aviation fuel, and reducing the size of the new roads budget.

The will is missing.

Labour and the railways

The Labour party will most likely form the next government, either solo, or in some type of arrangement with the Liberal Democrats³. Labour's transport policy under Blair and Brown was disappointing, with very little electrification, steady state franchises, and little investment in new rolling stock. They have to do better this time. The Conservative and coalition governments in the pre-Brexit era did rather better, with a substantial modernisation of the train fleet. However, their record since then has been poor, if we exclude the necessary funding provided to keep the railways afloat during the Covid period. Unfortunately, the Treasury's attitude is determined to recoup some of that funding, seeing it as revenue expenditure rather than as what it was – investment necessary to keep a vital railway system for the post Covid era.

Labour must have a different mindset, and invest significantly in the railway. At present caution prevails, with little policy emerging other than nationalisation when contracts end, and putting the passenger first – without explaining how.

Shadow Minister Stephen Morgan gave a Bradshaw Lecture, but without going into any further detail. Railfuture at national level has engaged with him to spell out its view of the railway's needs

(<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1911-Rail-Action-Plan#threadId=455>).

Simplification or complication? We need off-peak “walk-up” fares!

One of the strengths of the railway in Britain is that it is a walk-up railway. Yes, you can buy a cheaper advance ticket if one is available and you are able to sacrifice flexibility, but often people do not know when they will be returning, especially if visiting older relatives or going sightseeing. Flexibility is important and it must be available at a reasonable price. An off-peak return, whether a day return or a monthly ticket, gives that.

So LNER's decision to scrap off peak flexible tickets in a pilot scheme is outrageous. The only genuinely flexible ticket they offer is the full price open single, far too expensive for most people to contemplate. They have replaced the off-peak ticket by giving passengers with a semi-flexible “70min Flex Single” the option of changing their return train for another within a 70 minute window⁴ provided there are spare seats on the train you need to transfer to. LNER calls this simplification. I call this a complication, as well as being part of a rip-off experiment, and **it must be scrapped.**

It can be speculated that LNER's reason for doing this is that by having fewer any operator tickets valid on their trains, they have to share the revenue from fewer tickets. One benefit of Labour's nationalisation plans is that this would no longer be an incentive for the train operator.

Connectivity

A top class railway system is focussed on connectivity. Connectivity is not just about connecting the stations on a one line, but integrating with other routes. The developing **East West Railway (EWR)** between Oxford and Cambridge is a much needed strategic railway route that should never have been axed. Other key places on the route are Aylesbury, Bicester, Milton Keynes and Bedford. If EWR's preferred route is accepted, it will cross the East Coast Main Line (ECML), at Tempsford, south of Huntingdon, where an interchange station is planned, but this does not appear to be an intercity station. It is vital that Tempsford is an intercity station **with an hourly service on trains from Leeds and Edinburgh**, so as to give good connectivity between centres in the East Midlands, Yorkshire, NE England, eastern Scotland, and destinations on EWR.

There also appears to be no physical connection between EWR and the ECML on current plans. This is clearly nonsensical, as such connections would open up a variety of new through service options, such as Lincoln to Oxford, Leeds to Bletchley (for Milton Keynes), Norwich to Bristol, and Hull to Cambridge. The specification of this route needs to be fit for purpose for the next 100 years, not pared down to a short-sighted HM Treasury budget. →

³ The Scottish Nationalists and Plaid Cymru might also come to mind! - JSW

⁴ We found the LNER website unclear as to whether the £10 fee to change your ticket applies within the +/- 70min window – JSW

New trains for the North

Both Northern and TransPennine Express are planning to buy new trains. That is excellent news.

What is critical is that the orders are for sufficient trains to be able to expand services, rather than merely replace older rolling stock. Representatives of Railfuture's Yorkshire, NE and Lincolnshire branches had a frank and useful meeting with key Northern personnel in January, and we stressed this, as well as stating that the new trains must be built to a high passenger specification. We stated that the new trains should have variations of internal specification depending on which types of services they are intended for, and we cited the need for a minimum of two toilets per train set, end gangways, seating appropriate to journey length, luggage, bike and buggy space, level boarding ramps, adequate space for wheelchair passengers, and three pin plug and phone sockets plus adequate wi-fi and other "mod cons".

TransPennine Express devoted a session at their recent stakeholder event to asking for views on their next train sets, and attendees put forward a wide range of suggestions.

Stakeholder events

Talking of which, Railfuture Yorkshire was pleased to be well represented at **recent stakeholder events hosted by Northern, TPE, and Hull Trains.** We were impressed that Chris Jackson, TPE's new managing director, is determined to put TPE's recent dark days behind them, and run the reliable, quality service that passengers pay for. Sadly, Northern's new MD, Tricia Williams was unable to be present following a fall and we send her our best wishes for a full recovery. Perhaps the most valuable part of Northern's event was the presentation and discussion with their new accessibility and integration manager Matt Wilson, who outlined Northern's range of initiatives in this sphere. If only there was more Access for All funding, and that it was spent more rapidly than it is. Work has only recently started at Todmorden, for example.⁵

Hull Trains (who run from London as far as Beverley) impressed with their ambitious yet realistic plans that have introduced more trains onto the core Hull route. As part of First Group they have released plans to apply to the Office of Road and Rail (ORR) to run a new service from Sheffield to London via Worksop. Open access operators like Hull Trains and Grand Central have a key role to play in opening up new direct journey opportunities, **and it is important that the next government encourages this.**

Rail reform bill and GBR

The government introduced the draft **Rail Reform Bill** into Parliament in February. This Bill is the first legislative step towards the creation of **Great British Railways**. If GBR, the guiding hand, can end the fragmentation of the railway that has been the main service downside of privatisation, then it will be a good thing. Labour is committed to railway reform so we hope they will support GBR as a genuine arms-length body, and end the micro-management by ministers and civil servants that has adversely tied the hands of the TOCs in recent years.

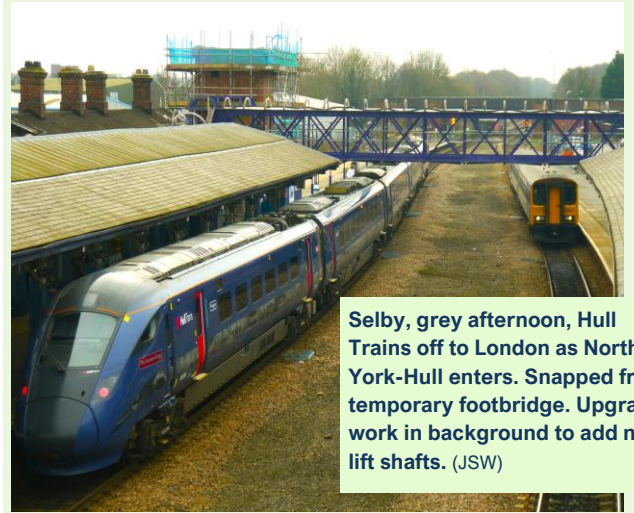
Branch meetings

Our last two Yorkshire branch meetings have both featured innovations, resulting from the results of the members' questionnaire in late 2022. In Halifax on 25th November, a joint meeting with NW Branch, most of the meeting in workshop style. Feedback from those present was positive – a format worth repeating from time to time in the future. The February 13th meeting was held on-line on a weekday evening. Railfuture board member and national communications lead Neil Middleton was the speaker for the first part of the two hour meeting. Attendances at both meetings were in line with the recent pattern. The November joint meeting suffered from a number of travel problems – rail disruption! – on the day. Twelve Yorkshire Branch members attended and thirteen sent apologies due to travel problems, so 25 had planned →

⁵ And seems to be progressing with painful slowness – Ed.

Good to see access work...

...on the go at Selby, Garforth, Todmorden and elsewhere...



Selby, grey afternoon, Hull Trains off to London as Northern York-Hull enters. Snapped from temporary footbridge. Upgrade work in background to add new lift shafts. (JSW)

to attend. Four NW members attended, as did Stephen Chaytow (MEMRAP) from the East Midlands and our speaker and workshop leader Prof Paul Salvesson. The Zoom Branch meeting attracted 35 people for Neil's presentation and discussion, of whom 23-27 were Yorkshire branch members; 22 people stayed for the business section of the agenda.

The May meeting will be the AGM – some details below – more to follow. **NS**

Branch diary: three events very soon – *be there!*

Thursday 4 April: North Yorks mayoral candidates hustings – webinar

Online: start 17.30 (finish 19.00) on rail issues in North Yorkshire and York. Zoom link will be sent out soon by Andrew Dyson. Affiliated groups may wish to forward the invite to their group members. The hustings will be chaired by Graham Collett, Vice Chair of Yorkshire Railfuture and start with short, limited statements from the mayoral candidates, followed by questions from members. The process for questions is being formulated currently and will be included with link sent to members.

Saturday 27 April Yorkshire Railfuture Annual General Meeting

Joseph Priestley, for whom our meeting room is named, is one of four statues in [City Square](#). Priestley was minister at the chapel but more famous as “discoverer” (moot point) of oxygen.



Starts 13.00 (1pm)
in Priestley Hall, Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel, City Sq, Leeds LS1 5EB.

5 minutes from Leeds station. From main ticket gates bear left and head past ticket office, down ramp/stairs past snack outlets in north concourse. Keep right and continue out into City Square. Outside bear right, look for five big legs and venue is behind them (sculpture by Kenneth Armitage). We are likely to use entrance at right hand end of building as last year. Ramp available. Doors open 12.45 for setting up. Meeting closes 16.00 (4pm) – all out by 16.15.

Calling notice to follow will include details of speaker, to be confirmed soon.



Tuesday 30 April Webinar with newly appointed Network Rail North and East route* director, Jason Hamilton

* Within Network Rail's Eastern Region, N&E route is area covered by Yorkshire, North Lincs and the North East, excluding the East Coast Main Line.

Online: start 10.30 (finish 12.00)

Our online speaker Jason began his railway career in major projects working on the Great Western and South East routes as part of the Crossrail programme before moving north closer to his roots and continuing in leadership roles involved with third party project delivery, complex railway upgrades, the intercity express programme and alliance leadership. His most recent role was as a member of the East Coast Route executive team, as Route Programme Director (Works Delivery) leading a multi-disciplinary maintenance, renewals and response principal contractor organisation across East Coast, East Midlands and North & East Routes and as deputy Route Director of the East Coast Mainline Route working closely with our customers and operational teams. Jason takes up his role as N&E route director at beginning of April.



Watch out for more events...

We hope to have more webinars later in spring and onward. As usual expect a branch meeting late summer or early autumn and another before Christmas, maybe joint with neighbouring branches, and one in South Yorkshire. **We need your ideas for speakers** – it doesn't have to be a rail or transport manager every time, though we are massively grateful when busy professionals are prepared to give up a Saturday afternoon for us.

... and meanwhile...

... we need your input to enrich this newsletter! It is not too early to start thinking about long pieces or snippets of news. Don't forget **community rail** action. **Copy deadline** is **31 May**. Earlier contributions are welcome so get writing! (The editor would like to finish before going on holiday on June 14; this issue is 10 days late so **apols for that!**) – JSW

Turn over for more!

Access for all

in Yorkshire and beyond

by **Graham Collett**, Yorkshire Railfuture vice-chair and accessibility champion

If you are disabled or need assistance what factors affect whether you can complete your journey satisfactorily?

- Can you enter or leave the **station** without help? The entrance may be via a bridge, a subway, on a slope...
- Are the platforms at each end of the journey accessible without steps?
- Are the platform heights the same as the trains? What is the stepping distance needed to board the train? Does the train have a level floor? Even if it does, getting up or down into the train may require crossing a gap between the platform and the train. The Stadler trains now used in East Anglia, Merseyrail, Newcastle Metro have a sliding step and provide (in my opinion) the best solution available at present.
- But platform heights can still be an issue. Merseyrail have done work on their stations to overcome this.

These are the sort of issues – plus accessible toilets, clearly signed walking routes, assistance points etc – that I look out for in any applications for station works which come to my notice. I consult with local disabled persons' organisations, the rail user group (where there is one) or contacts in the area. Recent examples have been an additional platform proposed at Bradford Forster Square and a new footbridge at Menston.

Northern's assessment of its 465 stations finds 32% fully step-free, 57% partially step-free (including stations which are accessible in one direction only) and 11% are totally inaccessible. Northern intends to improve by fitting tactile surfaces (on platforms and handrails), CCTV coverage, public address systems, customer information systems, smart beacons, and accessible toilet pods. The plan is to prioritise their 160 busiest stations for such improvements.

TransPennine Express manage just 19 stations of which 17 are now assessed as being step-free without assistance. The train company is carrying out minor works to improve accessibility, including adjustments to steps and ramps, tactile handrails, modified seating and wayfinding measures. The front entrance to Huddersfield station is a major priority. Future activity will focus on making the entire journey as seamless as possible for passengers with mobility impairment.

Good news is that 24 of the 25 stations on TRU – the **TransPennine Route Upgrade** – will be made fully accessible, with one station still to be accepted as needing work. But the project has a very long timescale – early 2030s at best.

Network Rail's "Access for All" (AfA) programme started in 2006. AfA is concerned with all impairments to mobility, including age, luggage, buggies & prams, and disabilities. Stations to be included for each 5-year control period (CP) are normally nominated one year before the start of that period. 56 stations in the North have been nominated for the CP7 AfA programme, starting this April, but it is not clear when the final list will be published. The CP6 programme is still in delivery, with 13 stations in the main programme and 8 stations in the "mid-tier" programme of smaller works. NR views "first and last mile" issues as a key area of improving rail accessibility – especially interchange with other modes of transport.

Accessibility is a key part of the **Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT)** agenda. The National Rail Accessibility Strategy (NRAS) provides "a robust, joined-up, system-wide approach to accessibility" during CP7. GBRTT are consulting on the NRAS, in partnership with Transport for All. A recent in-depth accessibility audit funded by DfT was undertaken by Atkins. It is hoped that it will be possible to determine the exact current state of accessibility from this audit – and who is responsible for each station at which there are accessibility issues.

I was pleased to find that the **TfN Rail North committee** has an Accessibility Task & Finish Group⁶ which has provided a lot of useful information for this article. I was also pleased to read that West Yorkshire Mayor Tracy Brabin is keen for this group to consider safety and perceptions of safety as well as accessibility, in order to reinforce a wider inclusivity agenda.



Level access by Stadler. Picture with thanks to Greater Anglia. More at link: [Greater Anglia's new trains recognised for accessibility innovation | Greater Anglia](#).

⁶ <https://democracy.transportfornorth.com/documents/s9157/Appendix%201%20Accessibility%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20-%20Initial%20Output.pdf>

Penistone line update by Andrew Oldfield and Stephen Waring

In March, Kirklees Council confirmed acceptance of funding to kick start the Penistone line upgrade. Huddersfield-based Kirklees, who led the bid also involving Barnsley, the combined authorities and Sheffield should this spring/summer see confirmation of programme, and agreement by government departments for transport (DfT) and for levelling up (DLUHC).

The £47.9 million provisionally granted in November was just about the maximum that could be awarded on the basis of bids from two MPs, Mark Eastwood (Dewsbury, covering the area around Denby Dale) and Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge). Total cost of the upgrade was estimated as more than £100 million. **Obviously, this implies a significant gap.** Further funding will, it seems, have to be found.

The Kirklees [report](#) describes the Penistone line as a “key strategic element of the transport infrastructure linking Huddersfield, Barnsley, Sheffield and the wider South Yorkshire area”, providing “a sustainable alternative to road travel” and a valuable community asset for “work, education, leisure and retail”.

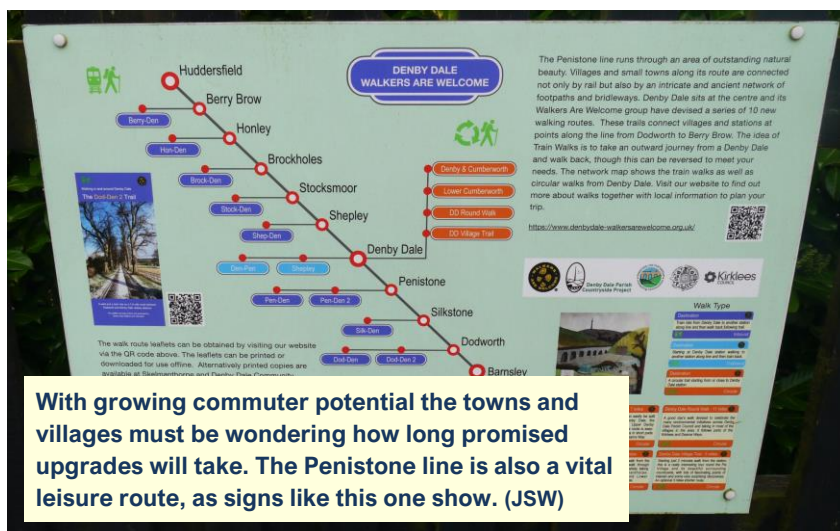
The report outlines a “shared vision” to include station enhancements, increasing service frequency through track doubling and linespeed improvements – which is where the £100M and funding gap come from. The levelling-up fund £47.9M is seen as a stepping stone to the wider aim of a half-hourly service in line with the West Yorkshire Rail Strategy.

There is also a comment that the levelling-up funding will “deliver significant improvement to service performance and reliability” through “additional passing places on the single track sections and linespeed improvements”. Station improvements will include mobility hubs for better inter-modal connectivity, and improved walking and cycling facilities. Full-fibre cabling along the route could benefit rail industry, passengers and local communities.

Future funding will be needed to provide the infrastructure for the half-hourly service – seen as essential by users and campaigners. Additional complementary funding could be sought for the fibre proposal (Network Rail) and mobility hubs (West Yorks CA).



Not quite Adlestrop (“No one left and no one came on the bare platform” – Edward Thomas) but Silkstone Common on a quiet morning. The train snakes its way from Sheffield to Huddersfield, next stop Penistone. Would that the rolling stock were more modern! (JSW)



With growing commuter potential the towns and villages must be wondering how long promised upgrades will take. The Penistone line is also a vital leisure route, as signs like this one show. (JSW)

Meanwhile, the TransPennine Route Upgrade should, as early as September 2025, deliver extension of Huddersfield platform 2 to 4-car capacity. That's the dedicated SW-facing bay that Penistone line trains use.

And there has been pressure – so far without tangible response from the railway – for small scale service improvements. An evening gap (20.35 to 22.35) needs filling. Then there's an early morning train from Sheffield to Barnsley that forms a local back to Sheffield. It seems less than outrageous to suggest additional resources to extend these workings to and from Huddersfield for an earlier Penistone line start. At present the first train arrives in Sheffield as late as 07.29 – too late for early commuters (yes, they still exist!) or early intercity connections.

These are small improvements that would give much better use of our famously state-supported railway.

Celebrating success on the Settle & Carlisle line

by **Edward Album, OBE**

In writing this I am not looking for personal emphasis! The work of saving the S & C Line was on behalf of – and as part of the overall operations – of the **Friends** of the Line. Later works were based on the acquisition, restoration and support of the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust. This covered Ribbleshead, Horton and Kirkby Stephen stations, and then, with the Friends, included the acquisition and restoration of Dent Station.

It is interesting that the ceremonial re-opening of the restored station at Kirkby Stephen was carried out by then Prince of Wales, who is now King Charles, and who arrived, of course, on the Royal Train.

I very much appreciate Nina's kind comments (left) as chair of Railfuture Yorkshire.

I have been involved with the Settle-Carlisle Line since 1984 and only retired for the Trust and the Friends of the Line recently. Initially, I was particularly active with the Friends in the campaign to save the line from closure and this was achieved after a long struggle. One of the inducements we put forward to the government of the day was that we would form a trust to raise money towards the cost of repairing Ribbleshead Viaduct and for restoration works on the historic structures. And so the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust was formed.

This [link \(www.settlecarlisletrust.org.uk\)](http://www.settlecarlisletrust.org.uk) takes you to the trust's website. The promise of a trust was a stated factor in the saving of the line. Then we acquired three stations and the stationmaster's house. Subsequently, all the properties, including recently Dent Station, have been restored and made available not only for rail passengers but also as holiday accommodation. This has proved very successful and provides funds for the upkeep of the station buildings.



Line for all seasons. Hopefully, clear skies in summer as well as here with wintry covering at Ribbleshead. Stations restored thanks to the Trust. Other weather conditions are available!
Image from S&C Trust with thanks.



By the walk to Whernside, Ribbleshead Viaduct. An early restoration project for the Trust, channelling £600000 from local authorities and others. Image from S&C Trust website with

Edward writes modestly of himself. The Settle & Carlisle Railway Trust website (to whom thanks for this biog.) notes that he set up the registered charity in 1990, on behalf of the Friends of the line and as proposed to ministers when closure was threatened. An original trustee, then chair of the Trust, 1999 to 2009, when the three trust stations were acquired, he chaired the property company set up to hold title to and manage the Trust stations. A Londoner, but brought up and schooled at an early age in Frizinghall; later City lawyer and legal advisor for the Friends and the Trust. Self-confessed railway enthusiast from age of eight! (JSW)

Message to Edward from Nina

“Many congratulations from Railfuture Yorkshire on your very well deserved award of an OBE in the New Year's Honours. It is really good that your vital contribution to the Settle and Carlisle route has been recognised at this high level. ***Very best wishes,*** Nina Smith, Chair, Railfuture Yorkshire branch.”

Later projects at Ribbleshead station included restoration by Network Rail of the northbound platform.

The station building (southbound side) had been restored 1999-2000, acquired by the Trust's subsidiary company, Settle & Carlisle Railway Properties Ltd, on a 125 year lease. Restoration need was urgent, to create an exhibition centre within the old entrance/ticket hall and construction of a caretakers' flat – now let for holiday accommodation. At **Horton-in-Ribblesdale**, after full restoration, two rooms became offices and a third a community room. Opening was November 2003. A project to create holiday accommodation as well as an improved community room has received planning permission and is proceeding. Then **Kirkby Stephen** entered the fold. The restored station had offices a two-bedroom caretaker's flat. It also had an exhibition and meeting room, known as the Midland Railway Room, with some interesting and historic pictures and memorabilia. Facilities for rail users have been substantially improved. **The Stationmaster's house, Ribbleshead** was acquired in 2006 from the Lytham St. Anne's Schools Foundation at a price of £150,000 funded equally by the Trust and Friends of the Line. Railway design and architecture, but with modern facilities, holiday lettings have continued successfully to date.

Top marks for rail to sail community initiative!

from news release by **Rod Tickner**



At the National Community Rail Awards event held at Swansea Arena on Monday 18th March, the Bentham Line (Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership) was the winner of the “Community Creative Projects and Station Arts” award. This was for our “Rail to Sail” project, which came to fruition in June 2023: it included a specially commissioned large artwork, located in the newly refurbished passenger lounge at the ferry terminal showing the new ferry Manxman which went into service in July 2023. With a train in the background the work symbolises how two different transport systems can interchange between one mode and another, easily and quickly.

Children from St Peter’s Church of England Primary School, Heysham, were involved in producing another piece of artwork at the buffer stops where the railway line ends also under the “Rail to Sail” banner together with other artwork on the station platform.

Celebrating the success Gerald Townson, chair of the CRP said “The Bentham Line was delighted to engage with so many local partners on this multi-aspect project which included first-class artwork for the station and port terminal together with panels recording the history of rail and sea journeys to the Isle of Man over the last 125 years.”

Brian Haworth, a CRP Officer for the Bentham Line said “It was pleasing to see our project “Rail to Sail” which was developed within the local community bringing together a multitude of diverse partners, achieve success in this year’s Community Rail Awards.. The involvement of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company brought together two



Artwork at Heysham port station. Local school pupils were supported by local artist Alistair Nicholson who has worked with the Bentham line CRP for a number of years. Reproduced with thanks.

different transport operators in a unique partnership.”

Alice Rice, Terminal Manager at Heysham Port, said “The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company are delighted to have been part of a joint initiative with partners from the local community to enhance a rail and sail facility at Heysham Port. Special thanks to the children from St Peter’s School and to the Bentham Line volunteers for all their hard work.”

Gerald Townson, chair of the partnership, gained second place in the photographic competition on the theme of “Capturing the essence of Community Rail” with an image titled “All Friends Together” depicting the Bentham Line’s “Grand Day Out” booklet and associated panels which are on various stations along the route.

The Friends of Bentham Station (FOBS) received their Certificate of Excellence at Gold level in the Community Rail Awards category “It’s Your Station” being one of only four recipients.

The route from Heysham, Morecambe, and Lancaster tracks the idyllic Lune and Wenning valleys with Ingleborough as a backdrop, and on to Skipton, the Aire valley and Leeds.

CRP website: thebenthamline.co.uk; see also communityraillancashire.co.uk/lines/bentham-line.

The Bentham Line is ‘working to become dementia friendly’, by

- supporting the journeys of those living with dementia, their carers and supporters,
- raising awareness of dementia with staff, volunteers and passengers
- creating dementia-friendly station environments, services and activities.

Rod Tickner is vice chair, press officer of Leeds-Morecambe CRP, an Alzheimer’s Society Ambassador for Dementia Friends and one of the founding members of Dementia Friendly Keighley.

Bradford reflections – a personal view by Clive Barton

Many thanks for your article in YRC 63 (Winter 2023-4). What indeed is to be done about Bradford and the Calder Valley line? BRUG, the Bradford Rail Users Group, discussed the St James site for a new station. We decided it was a non-starter because it is too far out of the city centre. The GNR closed their station at Adolphus Street, which was closer to the city centre in 1867. Do we learn from history? Passengers found it easier to walk from exchange to Forster Square than to Adolphus street.

Long before the first Broadway shopping centre was demolished the recent replacement, BRUG member Peter Allan was lobbying the developer to come up with a scheme with city hall approval for a combined railway station and shopping centre. Without success.

At city hall, over the years BRUG lobbied most political groups. Some declined to meet us. Some were pro-rail and realised how the poor rail facilities were holding the city centre back. Individuals had individual interests for example improving the London King's Cross service at Shipley rather than the idea of getting by rail to Shiley to Halifax in 20 minutes. Others were simply not interested.

We heard one opinion that the Shipley-Bradford railway should be closed and cut-off, with the line Laisterdyke to Bowling junction reopened with a station on Wakefield Road. Wakefield Road would have a higher frequency bus service. Problem solved. Very bold.

Another was of the opinion that railways had had their day. Beeching did not go far enough; everyone wanted cars and road building. Los Angeles had dropped that thinking during the 1980s. City Hall was responsible for moving Forster Square station out of the city centre station, and Exchange to Interchange.

What potential investors in Bradford think when they arrive by rail I dare not imagine.

Years ago we heard an officer say they felt the present rail set-up was all right. It kept freight out of the city – helped the truckers?! – and passengers were not looking at the city from a railway carriage whilst travelling to the Calder Valley or Leeds. Maybe there is a different view now. ***We also met two officers from the department of regeneration and housing who were very pro-rail, who did not need convincing of the benefits of railways to the development and prosperity to cities.***

Reopenings – and mass transit!

Forster Square and Interchange are a mess for railway users. Many years ago with Transport 2000 we met Metro officers to discuss local rail. Afterwards I was taken to a quiet corner and learnt that one of the West Yorkshire district authorities did not like Metro contributing to transport development in their area. The "Was this Bradford?" question received no comment.

BRUG often discussed the journey between Bradford and Sheffield via Barnsley, beating gridlocked roads. I have heard little discussion among politicians of Spen Valley line reopening. The Midland Hotel exit from Forster Square station deters potential passengers. Rough sleepers occupy vacant arches. I have heard of Burley-in-Wharfedale people driving to Bradford avoiding penalty fares when they cannot obtain a promise to pay ticket from the machine.

Station and line reopenings would reduce demands for road construction and car-parking. Reopenings offer many possibilities on the Airedale, Wharfedale and Calder Valley lines. (We already have Low Moor, Apperley Bridge, Frizinghall, Saltaire, Crossflats, and Steeton & Silsden, of course – Ed.) Routes around Otley could offer alternatives for Bradford-Harrogate and Leeds-Ilkley journeys, an alternative to road gridlock. Skipton to Forster Square trains could be extended via a cross-city link to Sheffield, via a direct route through the Spen Valley and Barnsley. With its population Spen Valley should create far more passengers than the Ilkley line. Cleckheaton and Heckmondwike would gain a service. That gets a mention in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's rail strategy as does Otley South. Bradford suffers bad roads gridlocked through a heavily populated deprived area.

BRUG also discussed light rail in Bradford and decided St Luke Hospital and Bradford Royal Infirmary should be in the first phase. The next phase should follow Harrogate Road to Greengate, Apperley Bridge, Rawdon and Yeadon. The combined authority seems to have different ideas!

BRUG folds, but could phoenix rise from ashes?

The Bradford group of rail campaigners decided to fold up at their first post-pandemic AGM last October. Officers decided not to seek re-election and no new nominees came forward. After discussion the decision was taken to wind up the group. Anyone interested should get in touch. Contact Clive Barton via the editor of this newsletter.

User groups affiliated to Railfuture within Yorkshire area

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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It's not too early to think about what you want to say!
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