

Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

Number 65: Summer 2024



TransPennine pulls in to Brighouse, first Sunday in June. With work going on upgrading the Huddersfield line, this also happens sometimes through the week. Brighouse station has four entrances and it's not always clear which way people have to go for replacement buses. Good to see some staff, on the normally unstaffed halt, which happened to have fastest growing passenger numbers on the line, percentage-wise, before Covid. Some weeks Brighouse-Leeds passengers have found Northern direct weekday trains to Leeds replaced by buses (taking over an hour) whilst TPE run trains via Normanton. Is this fair, asks the local rail users group?

Further along the line we've a report from Selby, a bit of history from Dore, and an update on the Penistone line – wondering what £48M is going to buy. Bikes and trams are on the agenda. And an inspiring example from community rail.

Branch chair Nina's report contemplates the election. Let's not hold our breath for instant reopenings or even upgrades from any new government. Who would argue the NHS should not come first? – JSW, 12 June 2024

As always, views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individuals, not of Railfuture or its Yorkshire branch.

railfuture

Yorkshire branch

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Time, money... still waiting for effect

The Hope Valley capacity scheme, 1990s to 2024

by Chris Morgan



Crowd on new platform at Dore & Totley. Footbridge has lifts and stairs. Typical rail-myopia that the platform is not quite wide enough to serve a fast line track beyond the fence? We await news of service enhancements now that double track through the station is back in place plus freight loop up the valley. Pictures supplied by Chris Morgan.

We can't blame Beeching for everything. The railways across the South Pennines were primarily built to move coal from east to west, over Woodhead from South Yorkshire and the Hope Valley from Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire. Passengers were a secondary business. By the 1960s the coal trade was in decline, quicker than most realised. Passenger traffic was heading the same way, down, down, down.

We've been over the Woodhead closure many times, electrification completed 1955, closed to passenger services in 1970 and freight in 1981.

The Hope Valley route was saved by Derbyshire limestone and cement.

By 1983 the whole railway looked to be in decline. British Railways were incentivised to reduce and simplify track mileage everywhere. Closing branch lines was the most public part but it was arguably more damaging in other places. In the 1960s and '70s the four tracks between Sheffield and Dore had been reduced to two as stopping services on the main line were withdrawn and stations closed¹.

That wasn't enough. About that time it was decided to simplify Dore Station Junction and remove

three platforms at Dore & Totley reducing the kilometre to Dore West Junction to single track. Single track, note, through the station! Job done 1985.

So of two 1960s double-track routes Sheffield-Manchester there now remained only one, dependent upon a single track bottleneck. It wasn't such a daft decision if you consider that in 1983 passenger numbers were still in free fall. There was an hourly fast service between the two cities with a stopper to New Mills at best 2-hourly so rarely more than 4 trains an hour through Dore. We now know that passenger numbers stopped going down in 1985 and by 1990 were on a clearly rising trend. Oh dear!

By 1995 singling was accepted to have been a mistake. Somewhere there may be a record showing when the first redoubling plans were being drawn up. It was before 2000. Railtrack had it in their plans to complete in CP5 2003/4. Sheffield City Council were talking to them at that time and were making plans to build a new car park at Dore in anticipation. The car-park opened in 2013.

Cost?

So, how much does a project cost? Money was being spent on planning 25 years ago. The first public consultations in November 2013 revealed that the scheme had grown to include new loops at Chinley, Grindleford and Dore to permit four fast paths an hour. By that time services had increased to 2 fast an hour and a stopper from Manchester through to Sheffield. This was to be part of the Manchester Hub (or Northern Hub) work, including platforms 15 and 16 at Piccadilly and the Ordsall Chord.

Ah-hah, that wouldn't work, time for a rethink, there wasn't enough capacity in Manchester or Sheffield for 4 fast services an hour. So a second public consultation in early 2015 dropped the Chinley loop leaving only one extra path an hour. National Trust played their inalienable land card, Network Rail backed off and returned with a third consultation moving the Grindleford loop to Bamford. This was all costing more and more money as the project went to a 3 week public inquiry in May 2016.

Discovery of the (once secret) national strategic oil pipeline very close to the Bamford site almost scuppered the whole scheme. But it was all agreed in November 2016. How much longer? The DfT issued their Transport and Works Act Order in February 2018. At the 2013 consultation the scheme was to be delivered in 2018, but still not there. Invitations to tender were issued in October 2019 and Volker/Story were awarded the contract in 2021 and first spades

¹ Heeley, Millhouses and Ecclesall, and Beauchief as shown in well-known "Pre-grouping Atlas" – JSW

in the ground auspiciously on 1st April 2022. Finishing touches are still being made in June 2024.

Meanwhile all projections for passenger growth were being exceeded – until March 2020 when Covid hit. The Ordsall chord has proved a very mixed blessing. Piccadilly P15&16 aren't happening yet if ever. Passenger numbers are now recovering after Covid, but for leisure not commuting. It's a different market needing more capacity but it doesn't have to be fast.

After 25 years there are no extra trains between Sheffield and Manchester, fast or slow. Other new services introduced in the meantime are blocking paths into and in both cities. The scheme is claimed to have cost £150 million. For the contract as tendered perhaps, but over those 25 years it's cost a great deal more.

All that time, effort and money with – so far – little effect. ***What a way to run a railway!***



Standing on the new platform at Dore and Topley, our Chris Morgan makes his point with rail minister Huw Merriman (left) and Neil Holm, TRU managing director.

Campaigners boast impressive list of services on half-a-dozen routes!

by Roger French, membership secretary, Selby users group



Work nearing completion at Selby – signs say summer this year. Footbridge with lifts will be good for disabled people – and folks like me with bad knees! – JSW.

Selby and District Rail Users Group (SADRUG) was established by passengers and local authorities in the former Selby District Council area. The initial objective was to protect services when the East Coast main line was diverted away from Selby due to the Selby Coalfield opening.

The group's success is measured by service improvements/ Selby now has direct services to London by Hull Trains – 94 services per week – and in addition a daily London North Eastern Railway (LNER) service each way.

Flagship of regional services at Selby station is the hourly Transpennine Express (TPE) service from Hull to Leeds and Manchester, with additional services at peak times. From the December 2024 this is due to extend to Liverpool Lime Street. Northern trains operate an hourly service (not Sundays) from Hull to Leeds and Halifax, also serving South Milford station which is in our group's area. Northern also operates hourly Bridlington-Hull-York trains, with additional services at peak times. Many of these services, though not all, also stop at Sherburn-in Elmet, Church Fenton and Ulleskelf stations all in our area.

Another three trains daily services York-Pontefract-Sheffield, Monday to Saturday, call at Sherburn-in Elmet, Church Fenton and Ulleskelf. Finally, Northern's Leeds to



Good town to visit. You may find the early gothic Selby Abbey occupied by happy couple and team! - JSW

York services run via Church Fenton local Leeds stopping services as well as the York-Blackpool North semi-fasts. (A few trains call at Ulleskelf.) Not a bad list!

Our priorities

Priorities for SADRUG are:

- Step free access – including refurbished footbridge with lifts – scheme at Selby due originally to be completed last year, then April 2024 the latest date given is June 2024. We will believe it when we see it completed!
- Long promised Selby station upgrade with new access from the south side of the station, new retail outlet and revised parking arrangements commence.
 - Scheme was designed by Selby District Council. Funding approval with West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and full business case approved by North Yorkshire Council. Some reductions in the scheme arise from cost escalation, after being in the planning process for 4 years.
 - The scheme commencement date is said to be the winter of 2024. Very vague! Again we will believe it when we see the work start.

We also want to see:

- Double tracking and electrifying tracks east of Leeds to Hull and York to increase capacity.
- A new calling point for the Castleford-York trains at Sherburn-in Elmet to serve the ever expanding business park at Sherburn. This is the new Manchester-York service introduced by TPE, with some success, we gather.
- Continuing improvement to the number of services calling at Ulleskelf. A priority is to secure late night Leeds-York stops at Ulleskelf as well as Church Fenton

- After TransPennine Route upgrade an additional semi fast Hull to Leeds service is planned. We advocate this should stop at South Milford to serve the expanding local area.
- Improving the facilities for disabled and elderly passengers at the rural stations.

For the medium-longer term SADRUG calls for increasing the frequency of services on the Goole to Leeds line from the current minimal service to provide at least a 2-hourly weekday service. This would require limited investment and is practical given the current line track facilities as proved by the chair of SADRUG an experienced former railway route planner.



With temporary footbridge at far end of station, Bridlington-York train pulls up by almost finished lift at Selby – JSW.

Still interesting times!

General election: The long awaited General Election, announced unexpectedly on May 22nd, will be dominating the news until July 4th and beyond. It seems almost certain that Labour will be the largest party, although less certain the party will win an overall majority in the Commons. Without such a majority any party would have to govern with the support of one or more smaller parties.

The fourteen years of Conservative Party government have been mixed for the railways. There have been a number of plusses. The railways were supported during Covid, although it would have been disastrous to our country's future had they not been. Now, however, the Treasury seems determined to squeeze government spending on the railways to claw back some of that necessary expenditure. The Treasury questionably saw Covid support as revenue spend rather than investment in the future. Let us hope that the new government accepts that our railways are a vital public service that are essential not just for the economy and social mobility, but also have a vital role to play in reaching Net Zero by 2050.

We also had a very good transport secretary in **Patrick McLoughlin** in the mid-2010s (2012 to 2016). During that period, we had electrification of much of the busiest parts of the Great Western main line, and electrification from Manchester towards Preston². Subsequently, the Midland Main Line electrification slowly continues northwards.



Pacer trains at Exeter, back in the day. How we miss them! Patrick McLoughlin deserves our thanks for their demise. Lord McLoughlin is now Chair of [Transport for the North](#). When appointed, he said: "I believe firmly in the potential of the North of England and know from my personal experience and professional career just how vital reliable, cost-effective and sustainable transport is to people and business" Photo (Wikipedia) by Geof Sheppard - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23264559>

And MacLaughlin ensured the replacement of the pacer trains.

Then we had the disaster of Brexit and government turmoil. **Chris Grayling** set up the Williams Review which led to the recommendation to set up Great British Railways, which is enshrined in the Railway Reform Bill. The bill was lost with the dissolution of Parliament, although as Labour broadly supported it, we can hope it will be resurrected in the next parliament. **Grant Shapps**, the supreme PR man, introduced the *Re-opening Our Railways fund*, which has resulted in the welcome reopening of the Okehampton line to regular passenger trains, to be followed next year by the Northumberland line – the latter in no small part due to the assiduous campaigning of Railfuture North East's Dennis Fancett.

A poor return for 14 years of government, with many missed opportunities, which include:

- NPR Leeds-Manchester abandoned, leaving major capacity problems and slow journey times;
- The Skipton-Colne reopening still in the balance, and hopefully in the not too distant future;
- No new electrification in Yorkshire, though Leeds-Bradford Interchange is promised and Hull hinted at;
- Still only one train a day Leeds-Goole (but two Goole-Leeds);
- No Northern service between Pontefract and Doncaster;
- Elland station still not started;
- No regular fast direct service between Doncaster and Lincoln;
- Thirsk still having no direct service to Darlington, Durham and Newcastle.

I could go on! There is much for the next government to do, in Yorkshire alone! Will they?

² Schemes originally planned by the previous government. The GW scheme was subsequently cut back: Bristol and Oxford remain diesel. – JSW

Assuming the next government is a Labour Government, what can we expect? Historically, since 1964, Labour Governments have a very poor record on railways. Harold Wilson, Tom Fraser and Barbara Castle implemented the Tory Marples/Beeching Report with gusto, believing that the motor car was the future in the “white heat of the technological revolution”. Several important routes were closed that would be of such great benefit now, including the Great Central Route to Nottingham; the Midland line across the Peak District; Beverley to York, Skipton to Otley; Harrogate to Ripon and the ECML; the Spenn Valley Line; the cross Pennine Stainmore route from Darlington to the West Coast Main Line; Penrith to Keswick and Workington. The list goes on!

Tony Blair showed little interest in public transport, and replaced his transport secretary annually. One, the late Alistair Darling, refused funding for Leeds Supertram, leaving Leeds the largest city in Europe without a tram system. Only Lord Adonis in 2009-10 is remembered. The Airedale and Wharfedale lines were, I think, the only lines in the period to be electrified, and most franchises were steady state; it was only the entrepreneurial flair of Northern boss Heidi Mottram that started to tackle the inadequate level of service that the Northern franchise provided.

Looking ahead, Labour has published its rail plan *Getting Britain Moving*, which is a broad outline of policy. The document stresses the need to get the basics right, which I hope will mean **reliability, affordability, regularity, comfort and resilience**. Labour will return franchises to state control as they expire; this will only be beneficial if it is used as a springboard to grow our railways, to make services more comfortable and reliable, and to achieve a very significant mode shift to rail. The plan also supports the establishment of Great British Railways. Shadow transport secretary Louise Haigh has kept her head down when it comes to detail, which is unsurprising as the shadow chancellor has made it clear that there will be no unfunded spending promises. Fair enough, but it is really disappointing to hear her rule out any income tax rises when it is clear that those on six and, especially, seven figure incomes can afford to pay more to pay their fair share. Public transport is essential, but is inevitably low in the pecking order below the need to solve the waiting list and recruitment crises in the **NHS**, the **sewage** crisis, the **social care** crisis, the **housing** crisis, **education**, and probably the need to increase **defence** spending in an increasingly volatile world.

But our job as public transport campaigners is to continually press the next government about why the railways are so important, and to present them with examples of sorely needed investment. Nearly every re-opening has far exceeded expectations, and electrification is a winner on grounds of carbon reduction, better accelerating and quieter trains, lower maintenance costs and longer life expectancy.

I outlined potential **quick wins** in the April issue of Railwatch, and Railfuture Yorkshire branch are currently putting together our investment priorities for the next ten years. We are also developing a list of timetable improvements to present to Northern and TPE, but most of these are dependent on both operators getting much needed additional and replacement rolling stock.

A new Labour government must be really serious about the quality of life, about reducing congestion and air pollution from our roads, about achieving Net Zero by, and preferably before, 2050, as well as opening up opportunities for green travel, be that for commuting for work or education, for business travel, or for leisure. **A Labour government must fully recognise that the railways are a vital public service that are essential in any social democratic society, and it must develop plans to improve existing services, develop new services and routes, integrate public and active transport modes, and develop the infrastructure necessary to achieve major modal shift of freight and passengers from road and air.** A Labour government under Starmer must do much better than previous such administrations. Labour may have pledged not to increase income tax, but let's hope it looks at such as wealth and mansion taxes, raising the duty on alcohol, tobacco and gambling, restoring fuel duty to 2012 levels in real terms, encouraging workplace parking levies in city centres, and bringing electric vehicles in to the vehicle excise duty (car tax) regime. And it must spend on a range of public transport investment as well as, yes, ensuring our roads are safer by a major high quality resurfacing programme – potholes are unacceptable³!

Mayoral authorities

There is a small section in Labour's *Getting Britain Moving* on enhanced powers for mayors, but this seems mainly to be about the integration of different modes – very necessary and welcome – but avoids specifically encouraging mayors to enhance their rail networks. Land value capture of unused railway owned land is, however, mentioned as a source of mayoral revenue, but I'm unclear if this is to generate finance to improve the railway system, or whether the money can be used for housing development (much needed of course). **What we need in our mayoral areas is additional funding to develop the rail system and train services that the region needs. West Yorkshire has published an excellent rail plan,**⁴ and it really is vital that funding is available for it to be speedily implemented.

³ Not least for road users on two wheels.

⁴ At present the metro mayors have little or no funding that can be devoted to rail enhancements.

The combined authority of **York and North Yorkshire** now has a mayor, and we congratulate **David Skaith** on his appointment. Railfuture will seek early engagement with him, and as it is vital in his four year term to tackle some long neglected needs in his area, not least an hourly service from Thirsk to principal towns northwards, a half hourly service on the Scarborough line complete with a new station at Haxby and a second platform at Malton, and an enhanced (ideally hourly) service on the Sheffield-Sherburn-York direct line (which runs through Pontefract in West Yorkshire).

Climate chaos, climate resilience, and their cost

The climate emergency is with us now. The planet is beginning to experience temperatures near 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, sometimes higher. Chaos causing and tragedy causing events are happening with increasing frequency.

Resilience is vital, with recorded landslips on Britain's railways having increased from 475 to 848 in the five years either side of 2019, with 35 in the North of England in the past year. Currently, the Shipley to Ilkley route has been closed for some three months after part of a hillside at Baildon collapsed, whilst the line between Pontefract and Knottingley has only just reopened after several weeks of landslide-caused closure. **Railway closures cost millions directly and indirectly.** Network Rail has dedicated £2.8bn in Control Period 7 for resilience work, to deliver a more sustainable and reliable railway that is resilient to the challenges posed by climate change. But given the importance of the railway in a climate-chaotic world, is enough being spent on resilience? In my view, no! What plans are being made for line diversions if and when these are necessary? And are any plans being made for alternative routes so that major areas are not dependent on only one route in? Plymouth and Cornwall were cut off for weeks when the Dawlish trackbed was washed away. Despite repairs, it is still vulnerable, yet the alternative route to Plymouth via Okehampton still shows no signs of being built. In Yorkshire, the main line to Hull must be at risk from Humber flooding if sea levels continue to rise, and yet there is little progress towards reopening the Beverley to York route, badly needed to ease road congestion as well as climate resilience.

In an article in the Guardian, transport correspondent Gwyn Topham⁵ suggests obliquely that the £2.8bn might otherwise have been spent on electrification projects. If he is correct, it demonstrates how inadequate the CP7 settlement is for the railway's needs.

An electrified railway is a vital component in the fight to contain global heating, and funding for a large scale rolling programme must be a priority for the next government. It must properly fund both resilience and electrification.

Open access developments

Open Access operators are a force for good, as long as they offer journeys ignored by the franchised operators and DOHL (DfT Operator of Last Resort Holdings Ltd). So it is good news that the Labour Party has recognised the benefits of open access. The Grand Central West Riding service has been of great benefit to people using the seven West Yorkshire stations that it serves. Living in Hebden Bridge, I use GC from Halifax as it is more convenient than going into Leeds for LNER and is generally cheaper. Its first class carriage offers excellent value for money to those of us who have reached an age when crowded standard carriages are a turn-off on long journeys. So I am pleased that GC has applied to ORR to run an extra two return journeys daily, thus increasing capacity and, presumably, shortening the current lengthy gaps in the timetable.

For those of us in the Calder Valley, it is also good news that First has applied to run a Lumo service from Rochdale to London, which gives us another alternative. Whilst I shall continue to favour GC over Lumo, as the latter does not have a First Class carriage, it is good to know that an option is available. First Hull Trains is also planning a Sheffield-London KX service via Worksop, which is excellent news for those on the route it plans to use.

Covid, me and the AGM

I am grateful to Yorkshire branch for re-electing me as chair for my eleventh year! I was really sorry to miss our branch meeting and AGM (27 April) at short notice. Unfortunately, having evaded Covid for four years, I tested positive on the morning of the meeting. I thought I had a fairly mild cold, but as I was due to go for my booster jab, I decided to test myself. I remained positive without feeling very ill for another ten days. I was lucky in that my Covid infection was mild, probably partially due to having had five jabs over the years. But it just goes to show how easy it is to be mixing with people unaware that you have Covid.

Best wishes to all - **Nina** 28 May'24

DIARY on back page. For more to make you think! Turn over →

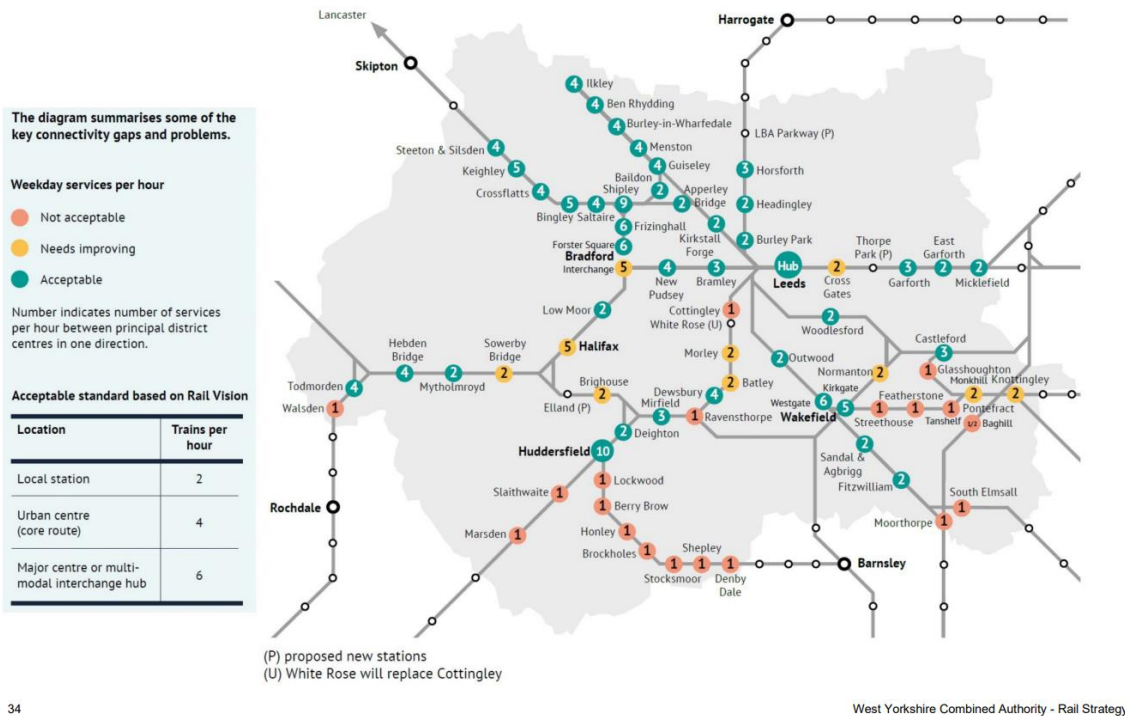
⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/may/19/uk-rail-faces-fight-to-stay-on-track-as-climate-crisis-erodes-routes>

WY rail strategy sets out ambition.

by Stephen Waring

After two consultations, West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA)'s rail strategy was approved in the Spring. Not too different from the draft, which we submitted our response on last summer. One or two things have been slipped in including mention of the government's Network North idea. Some of us think a better idea than a new line Bradford-Huddersfield using a long-disused line through Bailiff Bridge, would be to upgrade the Calder Valley route, with electrification of course.

Figure 8: West Yorkshire train frequency constraints (pre-Covid service level)



Electrification is indeed a key feature of the strategy. Three routes comprise WY's aspirational phase 1: Harrogate, Calder Valley and the Moorthorpe route to Sheffield. Other routes would follow, the aim being full wiring across the whole county in due course.

The strategy is illustrated with various diagrammatic maps including the one Pink clipped out here (with thanks to WYCA).

Pink spots mean stations where service frequencies are not acceptable. There is a

cluster of these between Castleford, Wakefield and Pontefract, then there's the Penistone line and the Colne Valley. **Yellow**-spots need more trains, such as Sowerby Bridge and Brighouse in Calderdale. (Brighouse's 2/hour is really only 1/hr as the station is served by two different routes.)

So there are proposals for frequency increases, not least on the Pontefract lines where doubling of frequency is suggested on both routes from Leeds, plus hourly trains to Goole, through Askern to Doncaster (South Yorkshire are developing this as a Restoring Your Railway scheme) and on the Sheffield-York line through Baghill. Less fully developed are Brighouse line improvements – more frequent and faster services on the direct line to Leeds. The TP route upgrade may be significant here.

A sifting exercise has identified six routes subject to development funding, that could involve new or upgraded track. We should emphasise that these are, if you like, "possible possibilities":

- Otley-Menston and on to Leeds and Bradford;
- The Crigglestone chord at Horbury to provide a Bradford-Calderdale-Barnsley-Sheffield service;
- Spen Valley reopening to provide a short cut from Bradford for previous;
- Penistone-Deepear for increased and faster Huddersfield-Sheffield services;
- Keighley-Oxenhope, the Worth Valley, for a regular passenger shuttle, connecting with existing services at Keighley.

Dare we entertain such dreams? **And in a country where the next government is going to have to work hard to find the money to repair essential services how long shall we have to wait for any of this?** This short piece just picked out a few strategic proposals.

Read the whole document here: [wyca-rail-strategy-final-version.pdf](https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/wyca-rail-strategy-final-version.pdf) (westyorks-ca.gov.uk). Tell us what you think.

More "tram plan" details in offing

At the same meeting, WYCA agreed to go ahead with the first stages of detailed consultation on its proposed mass transit system. This will Leeds lines – St James's Hospital to White Rose – but also into and across Bradford. We'd guess – hope, even – that the Leeds-Bradford route could serve central Pudsey maybe using part of the course of the old Pudsey loop. It is certainly expected to go through Bradford city centre. So the plan could be trams from Leeds linking Bradford's two heavy rail stations. More details after election, we guess.

Trams, trains and bikes in Sheffield

by **Simon Geller**

Those of us who are “in the know” realise that bikes and trains are a marriage made in heaven, but whose relationship since that happy wedding day has had its ups and downs.

To take a personal example, if I want to catch a bus to my local station I need to allow an hour for the journey. I can drive there in about 15 minutes, but a day’s parking costs a ruinous £23 (probably more than the cost of my rail ticket.) If I leap on my bike, however, it takes less than 15 minutes to get there, and if I don’t need my bike at the other end, I can put it in the station hub.

If I do need to take my bike with me, it gets a bit more complicated. I might need a reservation and I might have to rely on the goodwill of the train staff and the other passengers if the train is crowded. Most of the time, however, it works pretty well, and you can feel good about having completed your journey in as low-carbon a means as possible.

But what about the tram? This issue has come to the fore again with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) taking Supertram under their control.

In most cases, you might ask, why would you need to take a bike on the tram anyway? Most tram systems don’t go so far that you can’t cycle it. That might be true in many cities but here in Sheffield we have a slight problem: the hills. Supertram glides effortlessly over Sheffield hills while many people would struggle to follow suit on a bike. If we really want people to leave their cars at home and try other modes of transport, we have to make it as easy as we can for them. Electric bikes can make those journeys without too much effort though, and with the current concerns about the safety of some e-bike batteries it seems likely that e-bikes would not be allowed on the tram, at least until the issue of battery fires can be sorted out.

There are of course some concerns about what allowing cycles on trams would entail. Where will the bikes be stored? Will they inconvenience other users, especially disabled people? What will happen if the tram performs an emergency stop? These are all issues to be worked through - tram systems in other parts of the world have managed to overcome them - so I believe that a carefully planned and managed trial of bikes on Sheffield Supertram would resolve these issues and open a range of new travel opportunities that have previously been unavailable to people because they live just a bit too far from the tramway.

We conducted some trials in the early days of the tram system which passed without incident, but Stagecoach management remained resolute that they were not going to open the system up to cycles.

Also there is a concern that if “heavy rail” lines are converted to tram or tram-train the facility to carry bikes will be lost. This happened on Manchester’s Metrolink when it took over the heavy rail lines to Bury and Altrincham. New or re-opened lines must take bikes. Around Sheffield I am thinking in particular of the proposals for the Upper Don (Stocksbridge) and Barrow Hill – which could be tram or heavy rail. ***This route offers fantastic opportunities to get onto the National Cycle Network and it would be a shame if cyclists are forced to use their cars to access the Trans Pennine Trail while the tram glides by with room on board.***



Pictures: Jonathan Alexander demonstrates with a cardboard replica that a bike will fit into the recess on the tram. And trial of bikes on the Sheffield trams.

(Photos supplied by Simon Ashton.)

We are ambitious, yes!

by members of the two branch committees

Here, edited for size not content, is a joint branch response to Railfuture at national board level following a request for our views on future development of the network, to help in formulating policy at a national level. Focussed on the trans-Pennine corridors we take a broad view.

We are working on more detailed lists but for now these below are schemes that we see as urgent. Infrastructure is broadly defined. High speed rail plans for the North seem to be decades away. **We need progress now for present day and would-be passengers.** Our railway needs massive government support. So let's justify that support by making the railway serve more and more of the people.

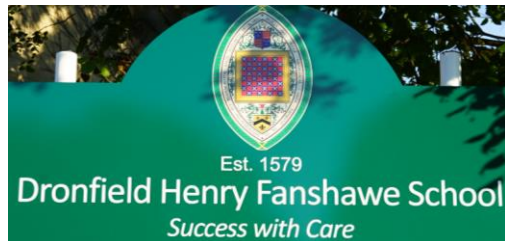
The **TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU)** and a **rolling programme of electrification** top our list. (Later items are not in priority order.) The list is not comprehensive. And **members views are invited.**

Key objectives	Reasons and justifications
<p>Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU, see thetrupgrade.co.uk) to be completed in full, with no further delay</p>	<p>TRU is needed to both increase capacity across the Pennines and to provide a reliable and robust timetable that will benefit the whole of the north of England.</p> <p>When TRU was first planned it was accepted that the Standedge route would be filled to capacity by the time of its completion around 2023 (! – Ed.)</p>
<p>Continuous programme of electrification across the north based on “Northern Sparks”[*] and other reports.</p> <p>Nationally, this should be a rolling programme, to gain the economies of keeping teams and expertise intact.</p> <p>(* Northern Sparks was an all-party report published March 2015; other reports from rail industry bodies have followed advocating rail electrification. Other reports have followed from Network Rail, the Rail Industry Association and elsewhere.)</p>	<p>It is very inefficient to stop and start electrification projects and to disband and reform teams. An affordable rolling programme would save a lot of money in the medium term as well as significantly contributing to the net-zero CO2 target. Long-term, pay-back on capital cost would be achieved through lower operating costs.</p> <p>Electric trains have high efficiency and reliability. Bi/tri-modes are heavier, more complex and so have slower acceleration, costlier maintenance, and greater track wear. The better acceleration of electric trains on busy cross-Pennine busy routes would enable increased capacity.</p> <p>Examples of priority electrification schemes include the following where capacity and line speed enhancements must go hand-in-hand with wiring encouraging passenger and freight expansion, green growth and job opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheffield to Leeds routes extension of complete Midland Main Line electrification which still has to be formally approved; • Full Calder Valley route West Yorkshire to both Manchester & Preston as given top ranking in Northern Sparks, and building on recently government-proposed Leeds-Bradford scheme. Some additional infrastructure needed for speed and capacity for both express and stopping services. Should follow immediately on completion of TRU as cross-Pennine capacity will be full shortly after completion of TRU. • Hope Valley (Sheffield-Manchester) • Hull lines. • Leeds-Harrogate-York is another of West Yorkshire Combined Authority’s top three priorities.
<p>Castlefield corridor and wider capacity improvements</p>	<p>There are already plans to reduce the number of through platforms at Manchester Oxford Road to enable longer trains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two additional platforms are needed at Manchester Piccadilly to address gross overcrowding on platforms 13 & 14. More than 50% of passengers at Piccadilly use these platforms, nearly 12 million per year. This causes regular delays and restricts the actual capacity to 15 trains/hr (max with, no delays). (4 minutes headway is needed at Piccadilly p13&14: 2 mins to empty/load a train, 2 mins for train to depart, and next train come in. Passengers from previous train must clear the platform and those for the next must move forward.)

	<p>Wider capacity enhancement Manchester-Stockport area to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • triangular junction at Adswold (near Cheadle Hulme) as proposed by Railfuture (see below), to give, for example, freight traffic from Peak District quarries and Hope Valley line direct access to the south, avoiding the present circuitous and conflicted route, and removing passenger-freight conflicts in South East Manchester. • Track layout improvements for capacity Man-Stockport area that could include grade separation at Slade Lane Junction.
<p>Build new south Manchester Trafford Park freight line to remove freight trains from the Castlefield corridor, as per national Railfuture’s plan. https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1855-Relieving-Castlefield</p>	<p>Removing the freight trains from the Castlefield Corridor would release four paths per hour (two in each direction – each single freight train effectively occupies two passenger paths between Oxford Road and Piccadilly) so enabling more cross Manchester services and enabling more use of the Ordsall Chord. It would also contribute significantly to a more robust timetable for services to Yorkshire and the North-East from Liverpool and Manchester International Airport.</p>
<p>Reopen Skipton to Colne line for passenger and freight use.</p>	<p>Reopening this 12-mile line would not only provide extra and much needed cross-Pennine capacity for freight and passengers but would also revitalise the Colne, Burnley and Blackburn areas of East Lancashire. It would also significantly increase job and education opportunities for East Lancashire residents. We are aware that this would need consequent infrastructure improvements elsewhere to make the best use of this additional capacity (e.g. freight bypassing Leeds).</p>
<p>A significant increase in the amount of passenger rolling stock available to Northern, TPE and Cross Country</p>	<p>TPE will need to replace its class 185 trains, which currently form a major part of their fleet. Northern has some of the oldest trains running on the network and needs to replace these as soon as possible. Both companies are entering the process of sourcing new trains. Cross Country has long been in the habit of running short trains on long distance services. Current problems are aggravated by reductions in rolling stock. Longer trains are needed to restore former service levels with capacity for future growth. As it is they are looking to relieve overcrowding by damaging reductions in service to Wakefield, Chesterfield and comparable towns more remote from the Yorkshire region. This must not be considered acceptable. Similar problems are seen in TPE and elsewhere.</p> <p>New trains must deliver;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition to zero-carbon operation using battery (and maybe green hydrogen) traction as we move towards traction that is fully (pure) electric; • adequate capacity and comfort quality, sufficient to attract new users in an expanding future for rail.
<p>Mass-transit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Yorks must start on time (2028). • Other schemes include extending Manchester Metrolink from East Didsbury to Stockport and Hazel Grove. 	<p>A West Yorkshire system connecting areas without heavy rail and also feeding into town and city centres as well as into the heavy rail system is much needed. Further work is needed on the choice of routes. Leeds and Bradford particularly need such a system.</p> <p>In Greater Manchester we welcome progress towards extension of the Metrolink tram system into and across Stockport.</p>
<p>Integrated public transport ticketing across Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire, a contactless tap in/tap out multi-modal system with much improved interchanges.</p>	<p>The individual metropolitan counties are developing their own integrated transport ticketing, but these also need to be integrated into a single comprehensive multi-modal system which includes main line rail services. This will encourage use of the rail, tram and bus networks. <i>We look for a pan-Northern Oyster-style card.</i></p> <p>The London and the South-East has a Network Railcard. Nothing like that exists in the North. The north of England suffers from a lack of economic integration. An important factor are the high cross-border fares that reduce job opportunities for both employees and employers, contributing to the reduced economic productivity of the north of England.</p>

Community rail nurtures young writers

by Michael Penney, press officer, Friends of Dronfield station



The Friends of Dronfield Station have now sponsored seven annual essay competitions at Dronfield Henry Fanshawe School. On Monday 10th June winners were announced in assembly by headteacher Martyn Cooper.

Contestants were encouraged to use their imagination. Only stipulation was that they had to make some mention of stations or trains in their

work. The first prize of £125 and a certificate was awarded to 15 year old Lucas Stonehouse who wrote a compelling story about a young boy who, feeling depressed about his life, was taken on a journey by a mysterious passenger who demonstrated that some of the things in life he yearned for such as a rich family or getting in with a popular group at school were in reality not as attractive as he had imagined. Second prize (£85) went to Katie Watson with the third runner up Jamie New (£50).

Teacher Ruth Houldsworth explained that there were over 250 entries to the competition and because of the high quality of the students' work the two judges from Friends of Dronfield Station, Jan Alexander and Philip Brightmore, agreed that the stories submitted by two other contestants Lucy Rundell and Evie Billam came very close to winning prizes.

Before announcing the names of the winners Mr Cooper said ***"It is great to see our students engaged in a cooperative exercise with an important community group such as the Friends of Dronfield Station which continues to maintain a great relationship with Henry Fanshawe and all the other schools in the Dronfield area. The essay competition provides them with an unusual and challenging way of following the curriculum and continues to produce high quality results every year. Congratulations to our students and to the staff in the English Department."***

Essay judge Philip Brightmore said "Every year I have the pleasure of judging the essay competition and it never disappoints. It is fascinating to see how the students manage to include some reference to trains and stations in their stories in very imaginative and creative ways. This year the quality of the entrants was as high as ever and it proved to be a difficult job to separate the three prize winners from the other entrants. ***Well done everybody!***"

Taking the lead

Really great to see community rail involving young people and encouraging interest in rail. Friends groups like the one in Dronfield have long done this as this piece shows. It's a way of taking the lead.

Elsewhere we remember Brighouse station's 10th (?) birthday celebrated with cards produced by local school children.

More recently we see posters by Calderdale College students brightening up our stations. It can only help make train travel more relevant to future generations.

What can we learn as Railfuture activists? – JSW



"Don-Eden express" calls Settle and all stations to Carlisle – SG

More stops for "Don-Eden express"

as railway says yes to Simon Geller

The Sundays-only 10.19 is the only scheduled direct train all week from Sheffield to Carlisle running over the Settle and Carlisle line. It's a great opportunity for a day out in the Dales but up to now it had run fast from Settle, calling only at Kirkby Lonsdale and Appleby. From 2nd June, however, following my request, it calls at all stations.

Every one of the stations offers great opportunities for walking, hill-climbing or cycling. Dent, Ribbleshead or Garsdale are highlights. The train normally runs as 4 carriages so there's quite a lot of room on board.

The return journey at 15.19 from Carlisle also serves all stops to Settle so you can whoosh back to South Yorkshire without having to change at Leeds, and the train continues to Nottingham. But if you wanted to stay later in the Dales the last connection from Settle back to Sheffield is 20.51. – SG

Penistone line latest

Hot topic at AGM, writes **Andrew Oldfield**, secretary, HPSRUA

Too often you generate more questions than you get answers! The recent annual general meeting of Huddersfield-Penistone-Sheffield Rail Users Association was very much an illustration of the point. Long-awaited firm details of the levelling up award did not materialise.

Guest speaker Richard Isaac, community manager at Northern gave a good wide-ranging presentation covering gradual changes across the network, but none on the Penistone line in the June timetable, which does, however, feature short train formations. These cause student travel issues at Honley, needing staff deployment. 40 year old class 150 trains will remain for now, to be replaced by Class 195s – but not until 2029.

Mark Eastwood (recently MP for Dewsbury including Denby Dale until general election called) revealed a rapid chain of events driven by the HS2 decision and Network North announcement. Eastwood is backed by Miriam Cates (Penistone & Stocksbridge) and Jason McCartney (Colne Valley). (Two of the three are standing for re-election in broadly similar areas; Eastwood is standing in the remapped constituency of Ossett and Denby Dale.⁶) The Penistone Line levelling up bid was revisited leading to it being raised at Prime Minister's Questions in October. Then came a meeting with rail minister Hugh Merriman. Eastwood was summoned to a weekend meeting at Chequers with the Rishi Sunak. Next up was Michael Gove leading to the 20th November announcement of the £48 million Penistone Line award.

As always, the devil is in the detail. Contact with Kirklees council ensued. HPSRUA members expressed concerns regarding the fringe elements of the bid. Fringe elements maybe, **quick wins**, but not signalling and line enhancements that everyone had hoped for. No sources were named to bridge the funding gap, with a top sum of £100M mentioned. So, as mentioned in the previous issue of this newsletter, there is gap to fill. **A transformational core rail offer is vital for this long-neglected corridor, which means a half-hourly timetable. Nothing less will do.** At best the fringe elements – still not completely clear – would surely yield only modest gains. Members identified the scheme deadline as a concern too. Eastwood confirmed the date of April 2026.

What we are going to get is still not completely clear. There was no detail in the published version of the ministerial letter (Nov 20th). The three MPs – who had sponsored original bid alongside Kirklees Council – were honest but vague in a statement the same day. There was mention of improvements at stations from Honley to Denby Dale, and the fact that this was just the first phase was dropped into the statement. We think the upgrades will mean better access for disabled people and cyclists, at stations such as Denby Dale, Shepley and other stations on the line. There is also the broadband cabling. But no track and signalling upgrades yet.

After campaigning nearly 20 years for a half-hourly timetable we desperately want the £48M deal to succeed in order to secure maximum passenger benefits. Could some of the fringe elements be paused? Track reinstatement and increased line speeds are the vital components to delivery of enhanced rote capacity would finally allow the Penistone line to realise its potential. Could these be brought forward? Is this a controversial idea? One fear is that the general election could derail it all. Post-July 4th, we hope not. **Fingers crossed.**



Signs of change at Huddersfield. Note temporary roof structure. Penistone line bay platform 2 with its-3-car Northern trains will be lengthened towards station building. Two new platforms will be built off to left. Saltburn TPE train is arriving.

About the line: The Penistone line links Huddersfield with Barnsley 21 miles away and Sheffield another 16 miles. The all-stations journey is hourly, takes a good 75 minutes, and has to fit between other trains over the 16 miles Barnsley-Sheffield. North of Barnsley the constraint is track capacity over a basically single-track route from Summer Lane, just outside Barnsley. Passing loops are located at Penistone (short one); and through Shepley and Stocksmoor – long one. All other stations are single-track, and trains usually terminate in Huddersfield's short bay platform 2 – just about long enough for a 3-car class 150. Longer trains will have to wait for this platform to be lengthened – hopefully soon as part of the TransPennine route upgrade.

The hope is that existing double-track sections could be extended within the suggested £100M package. We'd guess that could be Summer Lane to the single-track bridge over the M1, around Penistone, a lengthened loop through Stocksmoor, and maybe a short one near Lockwood approaching Huddersfield. Options more than enough to allow trains every half hour.

Double tracks through stations would need station platforms to be rebuilt – a step too far?

⁶ For other candidates see for example Wikipedia [2024 United Kingdom general election in Yorkshire and the Humber - Wikipedia](#)

DIARY Saturdays coming up! (If you have a suitable event you'd like us to advertise please let us know.)

6 July Halifax & District Rail Action Group AGM, speaker Colin Elliff, high-speed rail advocate on a proposed tunnelled route under the Pennines, at Foundry St Centre, Sowerby Bg HX6 3AS, starting at 12.45. 5 min walk from SOW station. Finish by 15.30.

Railfuture branch meetings: 12 October, SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION, Sheffield, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire & East Midlands joint meeting; speaker from Cross Country invited; details to follow.

30 November, NW and Yorkshire, Friends Meeting House, Mount St (behind central library) Manchester M2 5NS, starting at 13.00 (doors open slightly earlier). Speaker provisionally from Transport Focus to be confirmed before next issue of this newsletter. May have streaming facilities so members can join in remotely. Finish 16.00.

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Please send us your contributions for autumn issue: by 31 August 2024, or earlier if possible. Digital submissions preferred: any paper articles should be not much more than one side of A4. Not too early to get started

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 billymms@btinternet.com
Harrogate Line Supporters' Group	www.harrogateline.org
Hope Valley Rail Users' Group	www.hopevalleyrailway.org.uk
Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association	Email: hpsrua@btinternet.com
Hull and East Riding Rail Users' Association	davidpennierail21@gmail.com
Hunmanby Railway Station, Friends of	https://e-voice.org.uk/friendsofhunmanbyrailwaystation/
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	
Minsters Rail Campaign (Beverley-York)	http://www.minstersrail.com/
Pontefract Civic Society Rail Group	https://en-gb.facebook.com/PontefractRail/
Selby and District Rail Users' Group	http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk/useful-links/selby-district-rail-users-group/
Settle-Carlisle Line, Friends of the	www.foscl.org.uk
Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership	www.selrap.org.uk
Stalybridge to Huddersfield	Email: markashmore@yahoo.com
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: Nina.Smith@railfuture.org.uk
Upper Wensleydale Railway	https://upperwensleydalerrailway.org.uk/
Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership (Yorkshire Coast Wolds Coast Line)	www.yccrp.co.uk

Yorkshire branch (RfY) committee and the small print

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