

# Yorkshire Rail Campaigner

No 23 January 2014

**railfuture** *Yorkshire*

President: Gerald Egan Vice-President: Alan Whitehouse

## Yorkshire Branch Leads on Railfuture's "Rail North" Response

by Nina Smith



Photo by Paul Colbeck – Will Rail North bring change at Castleford?

Railfuture Yorkshire branch led on the submission of Railfuture's response to the consultation draft of the Rail North Long Term Rail Strategy.

Rail North is the coalition of 33 local authorities and integrated transport authorities in the north of England who sought to have the responsibility for specifying, awarding and managing the next rail franchise(s) for the north devolved to them.

Since the closure of the consultation period, the government has announced a partnership with Rail North, but has stopped short of full devolution: (see inset below).

### Rail North – Department for Transport (DfT) Partnership

This is the text of a statement jointly issued by the DfT and the Rail North partners on 22 November 2013:

*The Secretary of State for Transport met a Rail North delegation on Thursday 21 November to take forward their proposals to devolve decision-making on rail services across the North of England.*

*The Secretary of State confirmed his support for the principle of devolution with DfT taking a role within an initial partnership structure to help manage the risks associated with a project of this scale. The approach will be based on the proposals that have been developed by Rail North over the past year and which include a long term rail strategy for the North of England, a wide ranging business case, and a structure for decision-making in the North.*

*A shared set of principles has been agreed to underpin this Partnership. These acknowledge the importance of growing the railway to maximise the benefits of infrastructure investment and linking this to railway efficiencies and having a platform for determining investment priorities within the Partnership. The Secretary of State has welcomed the principle of risk and reward sharing between members of the Partnership. Further work will be needed in this complex area but it is agreed that the Partnership should be structured to allow the balance of risk to change over time.*

*The DfT-Rail North Partnership will cover the re-franchised Northern and TransPennine services. The parties intend to agree detailed arrangements to ensure that the franchises will be jointly designed and managed by the Partnership, with DfT running the procurement processes to a common timetable. The competition is due to begin next year with new franchisees being in place by February 2016.*

*A Joint Rail North/DfT Officials Group will develop the detail of the Partnership proposals for presentation to the Secretary of State and the Rail North local authorities early in the new year.*

The dominant objective driving Rail North's vision is supporting a growing and more productive economy. Rail North wants to see rail's market share double by 2033, "extending its reach and relevance across the north". The central proposition is to create a European-style connected network, with "a focus on broadening the appeal of rail to address a wider set of markets".

In achieving its vision, Rail North states that sustainable economic growth will be supported by improving connectivity:

- Between the cities of the north.
- By expanding commuter networks
- Connecting areas of economic disadvantage with areas of economic opportunity
- Providing capacity to accommodate the expected growth in freight by rail
- Addressing the differing needs of the North's evolving and rebalanced economy; and
- Providing direct and efficient links to London, the other major terminals of Great Britain and international airports, and to ports and freight terminals.

Rail North states that this will be achieved through "a focus on an easy-to-use network, integrated across the modes, with a connecting timetable of local and express city to city services and a transformed fares system". It seeks a "consistently good standard of train quality" and "adequate provision of capacity across the North". Electrification is sought on a number of key routes.

## RAILFUTURE'S RESPONSE

Railfuture's response can be seen as being broadly its own strategy for the north of England, although the response has omitted some important aspirations, especially in the Cheshire area, owing to a lack of input from the North West region. Railfuture praises Rail North for producing the first public sector document that is really ambitious about the future of the North's rail system, but feels that the proposals do not go far enough. In particular, we feel that the draft strategy lacks any strong commitment to re-opening railway lines that should never have been closed, and lacks aspirations to open brand new routes where local demand or connectivity requires it. We also stress the need for full timetables to be introduced on those routes whose current services range from poor to skeletal, and for new passenger services to be introduced over existing passenger and freight lines to directly connect places that currently require long-winded journeys with one or more connections. Furthermore, we identify places on existing passenger routes where there is a strong need for a station.

In terms of route reopening, we propose Skipton-Colne; Burscough Chord (to enable Preston-Southport); Harrogate-Ripon-Thirsk; Beverley-York; the Woodhead Line; the Spenn Valley route; the Crigglestone Chord; and the Keswick and Fleetwood branches. With hindsight, we should also have included the Widnes chord and the service developments that this can unlock. Freight-only lines that should have passenger services include Knottingley-Doncaster; and Ashington-Blyth-Newcastle. Brand new routes we advocate are Bradford Crossrail, Leeds-Wetherby and Ormskirk-Skelmersdale. Services such as Spenn Valley and Wetherby may best be tram-train routes.

Skeletal services that need improving include York-Pontefract-Sheffield; Leeds-Knottingley- Goole-Hull; Middlesbrough-Whitby; and Stockport-Stalybridge.

New routes we recommend over existing lines are East Lancashire-Huddersfield via the Calder Valley; and East Lancashire-Brighouse-Barnsley-Sheffield.

New stations suggested include Elland, Haxby, Hipperholme/Lightcliffe, Milnsbridge, Dore (main line), Heeley, Millhouses, Armley Moor, Methley, Garstang, and Baguley.

The five priorities in the draft strategy are: better connectivity, better customer experience, efficiency, being locally responsive and deriving full value from planned investments. Asked whether these are the correct priorities, Railfuture agreed, but said that there should be three more:

- increasing rail usage by modal shift from private cars and road freight
- close integration (timetables, fares/ticketing. provision of information) with other public transport, especially trams
- transport (capital) spending to be concentrated on public transport, rather than roads.

The consultation asked whether there were any strategic gaps missing. Railfuture's response highlights the need to bring Sunday services broadly in line with the rest of the week, with the exception of some early morning commuter trains. Early services on Sundays, later services on all days, and actual services on Sundays where these currently don't exist are required. We consider that all stations on Commuter routes should have a minimum of two trains per hour in peak periods.

Rail North's strategy suggests that some stations are so poorly used that they could be closed. Our response stated that reasons for poor usage should be examined. In some cases, these are clearly due to an inadequate service, whilst on some rural lines, it is because they are request stops serving isolated communities; in other cases, it may be because the station is poorly situated for its target population and should be re-sited. We consider stations should only be closed if they no longer serve their area, due to redevelopment; otherwise, measures should be taken to increase usage.

The consultation asked whether the right set of outputs has been identified to deliver strategic objectives. We responded that they should be added to, citing the need to improve journey times between "second tier cities" such as Bradford, Hull and Huddersfield both with each other and with other large towns/cities such as Chester, Stockport and Nottingham. In respect of connectivity to key centres, we highlight the need for either a direct rail service or a seamless connection to Leeds/Bradford Airport, and for a dedicated railway managed transfer coach service from Hull and Newcastle stations to their passenger ports. We cite other necessary priorities as being commuting, including from small towns and large villages; and connectivity between sub-regional towns e.g. Halifax to Skipton and Burnley to Sheffield.

Asked how important electrification is, we replied that it is very important, and added that other structural improvements are also very important, including selective doubling and quadrupling, raising track speeds, reducing the length of signal blocks, and inserting passing loops. The draft strategy contains a map (fig 7.1) of envisaged future electrification, including the Harrogate Line and Sheffield to South Kirby Junction (both of which we recommend be brought forward to Control Period 5), Manchester-Sheffield, Selby-Hull, York-Scarborough, Doncaster-Cleethorpes, Northallerton-Middlesbrough-Sunderland-Newcastle, the Calder Valley Lines (Leeds-Halifax-Manchester/Preston), and Leeds-Sheffield via Barnsley. We point out key gaps in their map, including Halifax/Sowerby Bridge to Huddersfield/Mirfield/Wakefield Kirkgate, Skipton to Gannow Junction via a reopened Skipton-Colne line, Thorne Junction-Goole-Gilberdyke, a reopened Keswick branch and a reopened Leeming Line, together with a number of short, connecting lines.

Other Railfuture recommendations include:

- Transferring significant volumes of parcels and mail onto rail, including reopening the Doncaster and Low Fell Railnet depots, and opening new ones at Leeds and Carlisle. There need to be more rail connected logistics centres, and a range of smaller container terminals, all designed to achieve a significant modal shift to rail.
- Increasing usage of the Settle and Carlisle Line, with direct services to Manchester Airport and a direct Nottingham-Glasgow service. Line speeds should be raised to 80mph, and rolling stock should be on inter-city quality, either cascaded Meridians after Midland Mainline electrification, or shortened, cascaded HSTs.
- Bringing the Manchester-Chester-North Wales semi-fast service into the north of England franchise
- Replacing the class 142 and 144 pacers before 2019; substantially increasing the amount of rolling stock available; and enhancing train comfort, with better seating and sufficient tables and toilets.
- Smart ticketing, with safeguards
- Reducing fare levels, and giving full consideration to a zonal scheme.
- Developing stations as integrated transport hubs
- Adequate free car parking at stations
- Stations above a certain footfall (250,000 passengers a year is suggested), and also more remote stations, should be fully accessible to mobility impaired people.

**Nina Smith is Vice Chair of the Yorkshire Branch of Railfuture, and the lead author of Railfuture's response to the Rail North draft strategy.**

**Hannah Mitchell Foundation**

**by Mark Parry**

The Hannah Mitchell Foundation – the North's campaign for regional devolution – has called for a major enhancement of the North's rail network, in their October press release, with rail services managed by a directly-elected Northern Assembly and run on a not for dividend basis.

In its response to the Rail North consultation on its 'Long Term Rail Strategy' the Foundation has called for "a compelling vision which puts a publicly-owned railway at the heart of a new North". It argues for a programme of electrification and line re-openings which would provide the capacity and jobs the North urgently needs and could be delivered more quickly than HS2 – and bring greater benefits.

Professor Paul Salveson is the General Secretary of the Foundation. He pointed out that the Foundation would like to see many improvements including re-opening Skipton-Colne, completing Bradford Cross-Rail and re-opening the Woodhead Route.

His views are echoed by foundation chair Barry Winter who said that rail in the North should be democratically accountable. He said they thought that Rail North should answer to a directly-elected Northern Assembly which would have a transport committee of elected members who would work closely with an experienced executive team. He pointed out that the different agendas of the 33 member authorities in Rail North, demonstrate the need for a single pan-Northern elected body.

The Foundation argues that a new approach to rail in the North should put people before profit. They want a Northern Railways owned by the people of the North of England, both passengers and employees, and not by private shareholders whose prime concern is short-term profit. They hope this could be achieved relatively quickly, when the current franchise ends in 2016 – and invite interested organisations and individuals to work with them to achieve it.

The Hannah Mitchell Foundation is a broadly-based campaign for Northern devolution, supported by many Northern MPs and peers. Hannah Mitchell (1871-1946) was a radical activist who was imprisoned during the agitation for women's votes.

## **Rail North? Combined Authority? Leeds City Region? Getting Confused?**

**by William Kirby**

*Editor: At a Joint Passenger Consultative Committee seminar at Metro's Wellington House on 18 September, William Kirby was busy taking notes:-*

The title of the seminar was "Governance Changes and Forward Plans". It was led by John Henkel and Giles Nightingale. John described the strategy while Giles described how it would be implemented (where possible).

The topics included the Leeds City Region deal, the Combined Authority and the Bus Quality Contracts scheme (*which has been omitted here Editor*).

### Leeds City Region Deal

John reported that the idea of a £1bn transport fund had been endorsed and the Government had granted £183m devolved funding to kick-start it. However, with the impending abolition of the Integrated Transport Authority and the Passenger Transport Executive in favour of a Combined Authority, the money was being routed through the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership and the Combined Authority would have to bid for it. Businesses can also apply via the Local Enterprise Partnership for funds from the Regional Growth Fund.

Each Local Enterprise Partnership has to submit a Strategic Economic Plan to central government by April 2014 in order to 'win back' our transport share and more. I'm not sure how this works.

### Combined Authority

Points to note are:

- 1) the Combined Authority only covers West Yorkshire, not the whole Leeds City Region, which extends into North and South Yorkshire. At present the City of York, which would like to join the Combined Authority, but cannot do so as it doesn't border on West Yorkshire; however, the Combined Authority Board will include the leader of York City Council as an 'associate' member.
- 2) The Combined Authority will only be responsible for transport and economic development; it is not a recreation of the West Yorkshire County Council.
- 3) It will have a Transport Committee, although the details still have to be worked out. The METRO brand is expected to be retained for marketing purposes, and some means of public scrutiny equivalent to the Passenger Consultative Committee's will be established.

### The West Yorkshire Plus Transport Fund

A core package of 32 schemes costing £183m has been endorsed, although the Combined Authority's transport

committee will have to apply to the Local Enterprise Partnership for the funding. However, the future financing of the fund is still being developed; the plan is to levy a supplement on local council taxes, but the Department for Communities and Local Government (i.e. Eric Pickles) is dead against the idea.

### Rail devolution

The Northern Rail and Transpennine Express franchises will end in 2016. The current plan is that a new authority with the working title of 'Rail North' will be established; this will be the franchisor for the new franchise(s). No decision has been taken yet (*Editor: at the time of writing*) on whether to merge the two franchises.

This will entail a huge responsibility and financial risk. The consultation period for the draft strategy ended on October 21; the responses, including the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority's response, will be published (presumably on the Rail North website -[www.railstrategynorth.com](http://www.railstrategynorth.com)) and the final version will be approved next year. Rail North envisages having wide powers, including the power to decide the fares structure and the fares themselves (personally, I don't think it will be allowed to do this). If you haven't looked at the draft Strategy or the summary document, it's worth doing so.

## **Wharfedale Rail Users' Group Disbands**

**by Mark Parry**

The Wharfedale Rail User Group disbanded on 31 October 2013 but released the following before they closed.

The Group was established in 1985, at a time when a severe reduction in Wharfedale train services, particularly those to Bradford, was threatened. It was the direct successor to the Ilkley Railway Supporters Association, formed to fight the original Beeching closure proposals. Since then, it successfully campaigned for the improvement of Wharfedale Line rail services and facilities. It was a respected body, formerly with representation from each of the local communities from Ilkley to Baildon, and has contributed much to the establishment of today's improved timetable.

Following the line's electrification and improvements to service, passenger numbers have greatly increased. The train service has become a fully-specified part of the Northern Rail Franchise, with support from West Yorkshire Metro. There is now no threat of significant service reduction or closure of the line; indeed firm plans for longer Wharfedale Line peak hour trains to Leeds are part of the agreed Route Utilisation Strategy lodged with the Office of Rail Regulation.

Over the same period, refurbished ticket offices have been opened at Ilkley, Menston and Guiseley stations: all stations are now equipped with automatic ticket machines, passenger information screens and a long-line public address system.

Thus, many of the Group's original objectives have been achieved. Though their local contacts with Northern Rail and Metro remained good, they felt it could not go on as it was, because the structure of the privatised railway means that most decisions about the levels of service provision involve consultation with other bodies such as Network Rail and the Department for Transport. In consequence, campaigning can be more effective through national groups, such as Railfuture or the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT), who have the ear of the rail industry and government.

In Wharfedale, where there is a need to better integrate rail services with local bus networks, the Group considered that the West Yorkshire Branch of CBT offers the greater benefit, because it promotes all forms of public transport and is already active in the provision of public transport in the Yorkshire Dales.

As the intended retirement of three of the long-standing members would leave the Group without operational leadership, the Group agreed to disband formally and invited campaigners to become members of the West Yorkshire Branch of CBT.

Alternatively, those with a particular interest in rail services would be welcome to join the Aire Valley Rail User Group. Provision of facilities at individual stations would be best pursued by local station groups and/or Parish Councils; the successful Burley Gardens project will be continuing as an independently funded project.

The Wharfedale Group thanked all those who have given it support over the past years.

Given the current threats to the funding of local buses in North Yorkshire, particularly the service 74 between Ilkley and Grassington, there is a need for a vigorous public campaign to protect this part of the public transport network in Wharfedale, and the Group wished CBT well in its campaigning.

The Selby Group has been informed by Hull Trains that it should be able to make a detailed progress report on its possible electrification of the lines between Selby and Hull and Templehirst Junction, and the procurement of electric stock. A meeting is being arranged with the Managing Director and a Director of the Company.

- 1) Work necessary to repair the footbridge at Selby Station is now in a programme and should start soon, and preliminary work is on-going in the road subway prior to the Swing Bridge major refurbishment commencing in July next year. Discussions are on-going with Transpennine Express, Network Rail and Selby District Council regarding the Section 106 monies for Station improvements.
- 2) Northern Rail have now agreed to the request that Sherburn-in-Emet should have a Sunday service to add to the two York to Sheffield services. The additional trains will be included in the May 2014 timetable and for the first time give a Sunday service on the York to Hull link. The trains will be timed to make it possible for the fast growing community to spend time on Sundays in York.
- 3) On the Selby to Leeds line three road crossings have been transferred to automatic laser controlled operation. These are at Sandhill Lane near Selby, Thorpe Gates and Thorpe Hall. Two Gate Boxes have been demolished. At the time of this report difficulties for road users are being experienced and the Group is in continuous dialogue with Network Rail. The project to do the same on the Selby to Templehirst line has been put back until these problems have been resolved.
- 4) A number of issues are affecting South Milford Station. The footpath crossing between Platforms 1 and 2 has been closed following 2 fatalities and a number of serious incidents. This has meant a long difficult detour for some passengers in accessing platform 2. Some weeks ago Selby District Council as a cost saving measure, removed CCTV cameras protecting the station and passengers on Platform 1 involved in emergencies or seeking information have no help phone. Network Rail have been persuaded to improve the 2 access routes, to install lighting and provide disabled car parking nearer to Platform 2. The Selby Group is pressing Northern and Network Rail to urgently address these matters.

**Elland****by Mark Parry**

HADRAG, the Halifax and District Rail Action Group is determined to keep Elland rail station on the agenda of rail businesses, transport agencies and the local authority.

HADRAG's Annual General Meeting in May attracted many people and hosted a useful discussion, helping to regenerate the campaign for a station at Elland.

On 5th August Calderdale Council's cabinet meeting agreed £50,000 funding for a "GRIP 3" study to get the railway's planning process a stage further on. The GRIP (Governance of Railway Investment Projects) study is part of an 8 stage process to get the station built.

An Elland to Leeds journey of around 25 minutes is envisaged along with an Elland to Manchester journey in around 50 minutes. The possibility of the Grand Central inter-city Bradford-London trains serving Elland has also been raised.

It has been suggested the new station should be considered as a park & ride railhead. Elland's success would be founded not just on the number of houses within walking distance but also its ability to serve a wider hinterland through park and ride and new, high quality local transport links.

There is some debate on the best location for the station. Lowfields seems to be the favourite and this was the site proposed when the Brighouse line re-opened. A circular bus route could link this to key places around Elland. Alternatives such as Greetland and the original Elland station site at Exley Lane would require footbridges to be built and are next to fewer houses if any close by. It would also be difficult to find space for a car park now at Exley Lane.

As the Calder Valley line's timetable will be reviewed in future years it is hoped there will be more flexibility to include timings for a stop at Elland.



Christian Wolmar presents Brian Dunsby the awards – photo by Graham Collett

Brian Dunsby is pleased to report that the Harrogate Line Supporters Group won two national Rail User Group Awards in recognition of their contribution to rail campaigning at the Rail Future Conference in Oxford on Saturday 2nd November 2013. They were COMMENDED for the Best Campaign and were the WINNER of the Best New Group. Certificates for each award were presented to Brian Dunsby by the President of Rail Future, Christian Wolmar. The Group was nominated for these Awards by the Yorkshire Branch of Rail Future after providing supporting evidence of their campaigns to achieve more direct trains between London and Harrogate and the recent bid for electrification of the whole of the Harrogate Line between Leeds, Harrogate, Knaresborough and York.

### HARROGATE LINE RAISED IN THE COMMONS - Twice in two weeks!

Brian has also reported that Andrew Jones, the MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, has successfully raised the question of the electrification of the Harrogate Line in the House of Commons twice in the past two weeks.

**30 October - Andrew Jones MP asked the Prime Minister:** *“A few days ago, I launched the business case for the electrification of the Harrogate and Knaresborough rail line, which will mean more trains, faster services and better rolling stock. As the previous Government electrified just 9 miles in 13 years, will my right hon. Friend continue to prioritise rail electrification?”* The Prime Minister responded highlighting £1 billion of spending on rail in the north.

**7 November - Andrew Jones MP asked the Secretary of State for Transport:** *A couple of weeks ago I launched the Business Case for the electrification of the Harrogate & Knaresborough Line; a case which would bring more frequent services, quicker services for passengers and a great return for taxpayers public money. Will my Honourable Friend meet with me to discuss this opportunity?*

**Secretary of State, Patrick McLoughlin MP:** *I have to say that I would be delighted to meet with my Honourable Friend, but he does not waste any opportunity of actually raising this particular case for electrification with me at every available opportunity and he has been a doughty campaigner for it. We have received a copy of the Business Case for the electrification of the Leeds, Harrogate and York Line and indeed the Business Case looks promising and I am more than happy to discuss it further with my Honourable Friend.*

This important question and answer session was briefly mentioned on BBC Look North on 6th November and it was well reported in the Yorkshire Post on 7th November.

Brian says: I have congratulated Andrew on being recognised as a "doughty campaigner for our line" - and for managing to ask two questions on our line in two weeks, which certainly raises its profile in Westminster. The response from Patrick McLoughlin was I believe quite a strong commitment from the Government, when compared with his answers to similar questions for other local lines across the UK, which were rather evasive. I must take this opportunity of expressing my personal thanks to our Rail Adviser Mark Leving for all his voluntary support and guidance for our Group. Also thanks to our many supporters for their contributions in terms of comments, suggestions and research which helped to underpin the campaign.

A press launch took place at Harrogate Station on 11 October. The case for this project has been presented to the Government by Andrew Jones. The cost is estimated at £93 million and the benefit cost ratio is high at 3.61.

## Branch Key Contacts

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Branch Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/RailfutureYorkshire](http://www.facebook.com/RailfutureYorkshire)

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### Welcome to new members

**Paul Colbeck – Membership Secretary**

Mr Simon Wood of Shipley, Mr R D Haigh of Huddersfield, Mr Ken Speake of Brighouse & Mr A P Lewis of Leeds

### Hello from your editor – Mark Parry

Thanks to all those of you who sent in articles and apologies if I was unable to include your contribution, but again space has been tight. I wish everyone well for 2014 as we look forward hopefully to rail improvements.

### Press Date for March 2014 issue

Please email (preferred) or post material, news and feedback to: Mark Parry (YRC 24),  
[Mark.Parry61@Virginmedia.com](mailto:Mark.Parry61@Virginmedia.com) to arrive by Saturday 1 February 2014.

## **Railfuture Yorkshire Our Next Branch Meeting Doncaster Priory Place Methodist Church Saturday 18 January 2014**

This meeting will start at 14:00 hours and everyone is welcome.

On leaving the station bear right and cross the car park between the yellow posts using the zebra crossing. Cross the dual carriageway using the pedestrian crossing lights. Walk to the end of the short street ahead of you passing the tattooist (right) and the "Tut and Shrive" pub (left). Cross the road ahead of you into the street opposite with the stone benches between Herbert Brown's jewellers and T.J. Hughes (former) store. Priory Place Methodist Church is a short distance along on the right hand side

### Railfuture Branch and National Events Diary

- Saturday 18 January 2014: **Branch Meeting** – Doncaster Priory Place Methodist Church, Printing Office Street.
- Date and venue to be confirmed – March 2014: **Yorkshire Branch Annual General Meeting**.
- Monday 21 April 2014: **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of saving the Settle to Carlisle Line.
- Saturday 10 May 2014: **National Annual General Meeting** – being hosted by our branch in Sheffield.
- Sunday 18 May 2014: **National Rail Timetable Changes**.
- Saturday 21 June 2014: **Railfuture** summer conference in Cambridge.