

Lakes Line Bulletin

Autumn 2016



News from the Line AGM notice
User Group news Fares and tickets
ACoRP Awards

Issue No 124



News from Oxenholme Station and the Oxenholme to
Windermere Branch

£1 where sold

**The Lakes Line Rail User Group is the User Group for
Oxenholme Station and the Oxenholme - Windermere Line**

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Cover photographs

The front cover photos show, paradoxically, old (above) and new (below). Or is it the other way round? In the new franchise our daytime trains are older, up to 27 years, than the 'old' trains, which are around 10 years old. How did we get here?

- When TransPennine Express (TPE) took on the Manchester – Scotland routes, it needed more trains. It signed a lease for 9 class 170 trains; the lease ran to the end of the TPE franchise in 2012.
- For various reasons, including the log-jam of franchises to be let, the TPE franchise was extended to March 2015 and eventually 31st March 2016.
- In February 2014 Porterbrook Leasing Company, the owners of the class 170 trains, found they could secure a longer term lease from Chiltern Railways, and announced the trains would move from TPE. This move had the approval of the Department for Transport.
- Following an outcry in Parliament, Stephen Hammond MP announced in March 2014 that the trains would remain with TPE until May 2015, when five would go south, leaving four with TPE till July 2016.
- Even the partial reprieve left a problem for railways in the North. Northern was already squeezing more out of its, already old, trains than most observers thought possible, and there was precious little slack in the system.
- To complicate matters, Northern's most common diesel units, classes 150, 153 and 156, have a maximum speed of 75 mph. Thus these trains get in the way of real express trains which can travel at 100 mph or more on the main lines, for example between Preston and Carlisle. One effect of this was a further reduction in direct Windermere – Manchester Airport services, as all available, fast, class 185 trains are needed for TPE services on its cross Pennine routes.
- The end result is that former TPE routes to Blackpool, Barrow and Windermere have lost most of their class 185 trains. Their replacements are the class 15x units, some of which are available as the DfT pays for the expensive, and not very reliable, loco hauled trains on the Cumbrian coast line.
- Because of the lack of trains, we would have had the class 15x trains on the Lakes Line now anyway, even if we had stayed within the TPE franchise.
- As the older trains are refurbished, the standard of the interior will improve, and then within four years Northern's brand new trains should be working the Lakes Line.

To return to the front cover pictures: David Dockray's photo (above) shows a rare appearance of a class 185 unit in the new TransPennine EXPRESS livery, with Kendal Castle in the background, while below is a 3-car, (156 + 153) train operated by the new Northern.

News from the Line

We have three car trains during the day again. Northern has arranged for a class 153 single coach unit to be attached to the 156 units, making three coaches again the norm during the day. In fact these 3-car trains have 60 more seats than the class 185 they replace. However, they don't have as much luggage space, and also the doors are narrow, and at the end of each coach. This means it takes longer for passengers to disembark and board, especially when there's lots of luggage about. In railway language the time it takes for passengers to alight and board before the train can continue is called 'dwell time'.

The sheer weight of numbers of passengers squeezing off and on our trains has increased dwell times at busy periods so much that sometimes connections at Oxenholme are missed.

At Windermere the narrow platform is a problem, as waiting passengers struggle to keep themselves and their luggage out of the way of passengers getting off the train. As the picture shows (white arrow), train crew have to struggle against the tide to change ends quickly, ready to set off back to Oxenholme.

An LLRUG member has suggested there could be a second platform at Windermere, on the Booths car park side, for passengers to disembark and so relieve the congestion on the station.

At Oxenholme Virgin Trains' platform staff use their hand held microphone to help out the Northern train crew by reminding waiting passengers to stand clear as the train arrives from Windermere, and give alighting passengers space to get off and move away from the train. Even so, the Group has had reports of passengers finding it touch-and-go to reach platform 1 for a connecting train before the doors close.

Arriva Rail North has continued to sort out its organisation as it affects the Lakes Line. Sharon Keith has now been in post as Regional Director for the North West for



a couple of months, and one change she has made is to decide all Lakes Line stations should have the same manager. Jane Murray, who was already responsible for Windermere, has been given the job, and also takes over all the stations on the Furness line. At the September committee meeting Jane was accompanied by Chris Cutts, who was in charge of the unstaffed stations, and has now taken on stations in another area.

Before he changed areas Chris had already set about getting traditional timetable boards up at Burneside and Staveley stations. This should mean there's a readable timetable even when the sun is shining on the electronic display, and stop the frustration of the timetable scrolling out of sight just as you've found the column you want to read. Jane hopes the notice board team will be able to get these timetables up soon, perhaps at the time they get the extra information boards she has ordered for Windermere up.

Northern (ARN) has a different policy about Station Adoption from TransPennine Express (TPE). TPE was interested mainly in someone local to check up on the stations, ARN is more interested in local residents enhancing stations by keeping them looking neat. Funds for projects, such as planting flowers, may be available. The Group has been registered as the Station Adoption Group for the Lakes Line, but



Yes, we've done it before. Two former chairmen and the current one at work on Kendal station in British Rail days.

we would like to emphasise that we want to involve people who are not at present active within the Group, perhaps not Group members at present. If the thought of helping out at one of the stations on the Line, or if you know anyone else who would, please get in touch. We hope to have more details by the time of the AGM on 2nd November. ARN is currently recruiting a member of staff who will look after the Station Adoption scheme in the North West.

One other change brought in by the new Northern has been very unwelcome. Under the old franchise school pupils over 16 who travelled by train to schools in Kendal could buy a scholar's ticket at the same discounted rate as those under 16. This has now been withdrawn, meaning the older schoolchildren are faced with a huge increase. TPE had a similar scheme on the Furness line, which has also been scrapped. The Group and the Community Rail Partnership have protested strongly

about this, but the view from Northern's management is that the old arrangement was discriminatory, and so the same terms had to be available to others, not just in Cumbria. It presumably depends on the interpretation of paragraph 3.5 in the Schedule 5.2 of the Franchise Agreement, 'Franchisee's Obligation to Create Fares'*:

3.5 Any requirement under this Schedule 5 to set a Child Price in respect of a Fare shall be satisfied by the Franchisee Creating either:

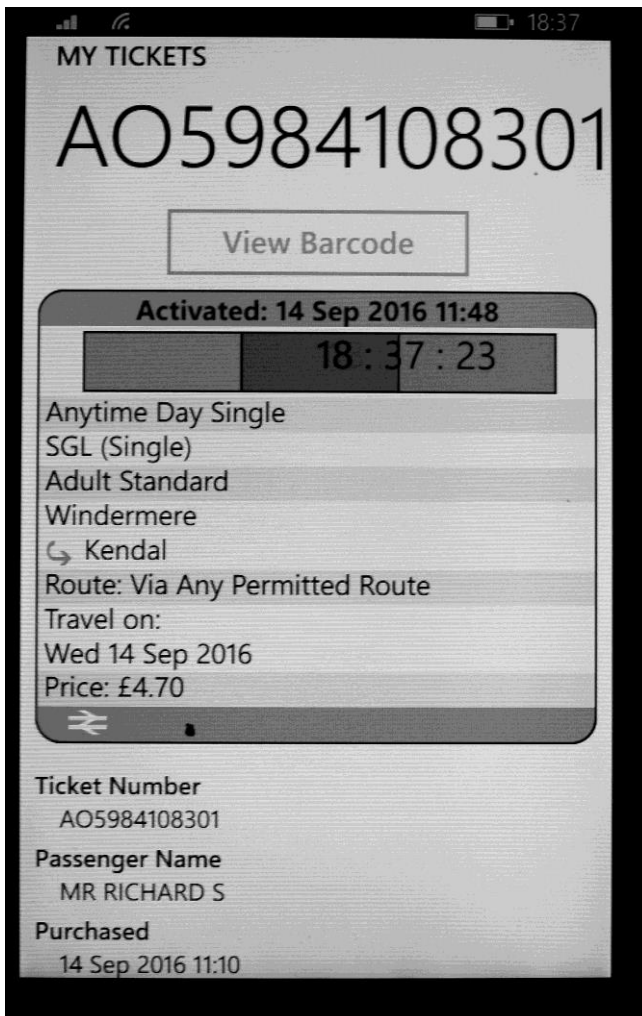
- (a) a Fare which is only valid for use by persons under the age of 16; or
- (b) a Fare which is valid for use:
 - (i) by any person at a price; and
 - (ii) by persons under the age of 16 at a discounted price relative to the price set pursuant to paragraph 3.5(b)(i).

If Northern offered these terms everywhere, it would lose income, which it cannot afford. Arriva Rail North was awarded the Northern franchise on the basis of its ambitious plans, which include significant investment of £500 million in new and refurbished trains, and upgrades at stations. If it reduces its income, it risks missing its financial targets. We continue to press for some sort of local solution. Carrying children to and from school is an important part of the Line's role in the community. The scholars' tickets give individuals the freedom to take part in after school activities without having to pay extra to go home at a different time from normal. In the low season, the schoolchildren form an important proportion of the Line's users. The Group accepts that there is a problem with getting them all to pay a fare. It was because we encouraged TPE to come up with innovative ways of getting more fares from the schoolchildren that they began to work with Queen Katherine School to find a solution – the discounted scholars' tickets. We understand that when ARN's Revenue Protection team did a swoop on the school trains soon after the start of term, they spent a long time selling tickets to pupils without one. The Group does not condone people of any age travelling without a ticket, but realises that if the only way of buying a ticket is to get one on the train, it is impossible for the conductor guard to sell more than a handful between duties opening and closing doors. Suggestions we have made for making it easier to buy a ticket – and so punish those who don't want to pay – include:

- ticket vending machines at the unstaffed stations
- staffing Kendal station at peak times
- setting up sales outlets in local shops
- selling carnets of tickets, perhaps 10-for-9, to encourage buying in advance.

Some of these ideas are already on Northern's list of improvements for our stations.

One way you can buy a ticket, anywhere and at any time (provided you have a smartphone or tablet, and internet access) is through an app. Both Northern and TPE have an app which will sell you an mticket, once you have registered a payment card. The ticket appears on your screen, and you need to activate it before you get on the train. Once activated, the time scrolls from right to left along the three colour band above the ticket type name. In the case of the ticket shown here it was never checked. As it's valid only for one day, by breakfast time on 15th September the colour had changed to a dull monochrome and instead of the scrolling time it had the message 'expired ticket', so it could not be used.



The Northern app is available for Apple and Android systems. The website claims 'Our mobile app helps you to travel in the North of England and even elsewhere in Great Britain if you want. You can:

- Plan and buy tickets for any train journey
- View information for any train service
- Let us know about any faults on a Northern station or service'

The Bulletin would welcome feedback from users.

Left and right hands

On 9th December 2015 one branch of government awarded the new Northern Franchise to Arriva Rail North. On 29th January 2016 another branch of government, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), opened an enquiry into

the possible 'Substantial lessening of Competition' (SLC) on routes where Arriva is both the rail and bus operator. The CMA feared this local monopoly could lead to a rise in fares. Its first report was published on 9th September, and found SLCs were possible on four routes, though none in our area. 'Targeted local remedies' could include caps on bus and/or rail fares on these routes.

While it's good to see someone keeps an eye on possible monopolies which would put fares up, could the cost of the enquiry be saved by writing something about it in to the franchise agreement, possible even the Invitation to Tender? With so many rail operators also bus operators, it's a situation which could arise with any franchise.

User Group News

The Group regrets to announce the death on September 10th of Colin Westworth. Colin originally got involved with the Group as a rep from Burneside Parish Council, but he joined as an individual member when he left the PC. Thanks to his ability to start a conversation with almost anybody he was a great help on the Sales Stand and during interview surveys.

We extend our sympathy to Diane and the rest of Colin's family.

AGM

The Group's 2016 AGM will be held on Wednesday 2nd November, in the South Lakes Foyer, Kendal, starting at 7.15 pm. As usual there will be a public meeting as part of the evening, and our principal guest speaker this year is Sharon Keith, the Regional Director for the North West for Northern.

The South Lakes Foyer is part of the former YWCA building (now Impact Housing) in Yard 95 off Stricklandgate; the entrance is at the end of the yard, and there is also access from Blackhall Road. The postcode is LA9 4RA. It is very close to the bus station, and about 5 minutes' walk from the railway station. There are car parks nearby off Library Road or Blackhall Road. The multi-storey Shopping Centre Park is not open in the evenings.

Sales Stand

The stand has been out twice recently, the first at Carnforth Railway Exhibition in mid-August. The weather was a bit wet which reduced the numbers of customers but we still took over £55-00 on the weekend, handed out a few membership forms and sold some stock we have had a while. The Orient Express passed through on the Saturday which helped to swell the numbers a bit.

The stall was out again on the first weekend of September in Blackburn; although not in our area we try to promote us outside the area so more people might come to the area by train instead of cars. We had a busy weekend and took over £210-00. We may have taken a bit more but Malcolm Conway and Phil Bell, who went on the Sunday, were held up for over 1 hour after a wagon tipped over on the motorway so they did not get there till about 10-30. Again we sold some slow selling lines and handed out membership forms. We hope to be at the Ambleside lights Switch-on on the 19th November but hope to see some of you at the AGM on the 2nd November in Kendal at the South Lakes Foyer. Ian Conway

New seats

Malcolm Conway went to 'new seats roadshow' at Liverpool to try out and comment on three sample seats for the new trains being ordered by Arriva for their Northern franchise. He pointed out that in one design a bracket under the seat would make it useless for luggage. A good move to ask potential passengers before the trains are

built! In August Malcolm attended a session about the new InterCity West Coast franchise, and was disappointed to find the presenters knew little about the issues.

Community Rail Partnership news

At the CRP AGM on 19th September the current elected officers, Chairman Tim Owen, Vice Chairman Ian Wilkinson and Secretary Dick Smith, were re-elected. Our Partnership Officer, Jim Trotman, is now working part time, and Community Rail Cumbria, the umbrella organisation for the county, is looking to the succession to ensure continuity when Jim eventually retires.



The RUG as a whole and our Chairman, and Partnership Officer as individuals were short listed in the annual Community Rail Awards. The ceremony took place in Southport on 29th September, but sadly none of them received an award.

New Ministerial team

Following the Brexit vote and change of Prime Minister there has been considerable change at the Department for Transport. After four years in post – an unusually long period of stability at the DfT – Patrick McLoughlin has moved to become Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. His successor as Secretary of State is Chris Grayling, Conservative MP for Epsom and Ewell. As usual there are deputies, with John Hayes the senior one, Minister of State, whose main responsibilities concern highways and maritime matters, though the area ‘freight and logistics’ will doubtless include some rail matters. The new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State is Paul Maynard, MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (right). He will cover rail (intriguingly, including housing development), rail security and light rail. As Andrew Jones, MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, remains at the DfT, with responsibility for HS2, the Northern Powerhouse and smart ticketing, among other areas, we have two Northern MPs in the Department, which we hope will mean the problems of rail in the North are taken very seriously. The final post in the DfT is held by Lord Ahmad, who will be mainly looking after aviation matters.



Fares again!

News in mid-August that July's RPI figure showed a 1.9% rise over 2015 means regulated rail fares will rise by 1.96% in January 2017. Predictably it set off a flurry of comment defending and attacking the rise. Why do rail fares rise year on year?

There's one answer politicians will not give: the electorate votes for it. For several Parliaments now the government has had a policy of making the passenger pay a greater share of the cost of the railway, and changing this has not featured in election campaigns.

Of course, it's not as simple as that. Those for re-nationalisation point out the franchise companies pay their shareholders dividends, and could be said to use taxpayers' money for this. Privatisation enthusiasts counter with the large sums franchisees invest in the railway, and say passengers should pay for the improved travelling experience. Northern's plan for around £1 billion spend on new trains and other improvements by 2020 is a current example. In the case of the Lakes Line of today, it's difficult to persuade passengers they should pay more for improvements when the standard has demonstrably gone down.

Another common cry is that Britain has the highest rail fares in Europe. Yes, though not always. This summer I travelled on Netherlands Railways (NS); one journey, Utrecht to den Haag, 39 miles, cost approx. £9.25 single, for a turn-up-and-go ticket. Kendal to Preston, also 39 miles, costs £17.90. A clear win for the Dutch? Yes, but I paid 85p extra for using a card other than the NS 'chipkaart', and £5.25 for my bike, which would have been free in Britain. This is a flat rate charge per day, no matter what the distance. And for a return journey? Kendal – Preston would be as little as £18, but the NS fare is double the single, at £18.50. A score draw perhaps?

There's certainly room for our system to be tidied up. Why should, for example, Oxenholme – Canterbury (bought a few days before travel) cost *less* than Oxenholme – Euston, using the same trains on the same days, and so a lot less than 'split tickets', Oxenholme – Euston + St Pancras - Canterbury? Travellers are often advised to try a split ticket to save money, but neither staff at ticket offices nor internet sites will sell you these unless you ask directly. If you want to add 'Plusbus', a bargain way of getting bus travel at your destination, you also must ask when you make the booking. The rail companies are keen to point out how we can save money by buying in advance, using a rail card where possible, and travelling outside the peak. This is small comfort to anyone who has little choice about when to travel or book. Also, despite all the claims made a few years ago that fares were being simplified, there are still lots of variations. As fares go up, the passengers need to feel they are getting value for money.

Dick Smith

Northern Contact Directory

We are compiling the new Northern Contact Directory, but as we have noted in the article ‘News from the Line’, changes are still happening. In the meantime, if you want to make contact with a member of the team in the first instance please contact them via one of the methods listed below:

- through forms on their website:
<https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/corporate/contact-directory>
- by emailing enquiries@northernrailway.co.uk
- by phoning the Customer Experience Centre on 0800 200 6060
- on Twitter or Facebook: @northernassist
- through any member of staff at stations or on the train
- by writing to Freepost NORTHERN RAILWAY.

Other operators:

TPE Customer Relations Customer Relations, First TransPennine EXPRESS
Admail 3878 FREEPOST
Manchester M1 9YB
0345 600 1671 (06:00 TO 23:00)
email: tpecustomer.relations@firstgroup.com

Virgin Trains Customer Relations

(Editors’ note: The current VT timetables suggest writing a letter or emailing to contact Customer Relations. The phone number given here is listed under ‘lost property’ but appears to relate to Customer Relations)

PO Box 713, BIRMINGHAM, B5 4HH
03331 031 031
e-mail: customer.relations@virgintrains.co.uk

All three train operators are in the ‘Delay Repay’ scheme for compensating passengers for late trains. There are leaflets at staffed stations, and information on their websites.

They also have Facebook and Twitter accounts which can be useful if you need up to date information. The best way of finding out what each offers is to go through a smartphone app or internet site.

British Transport Police 0800 40 50 40, or first_contact@btp.pnn.police.uk
Twitter: @BTPLancs
Report crimes or incidents discretely by text on
61016

In an emergency telephone 999.



The public level crossings at Burneside will probably both be changed when the Lakes Line is eventually electrified. The photos show TPE trains approaching them in autumnal weather.

