

Lakes Line Bulletin

Spring 2016



Issue 122

£1

**The Franchise Change
Low Season Survey
Engineering Work—again!
Rail in the North:
Who's who?**

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Editorial

April 1st 2016 marks a whole new era for the railway between Oxenholme and Windermere. For most of the time since privatisation in the 1990's the services have been provided by First Group, as First North Western and then First TransPennine Express. This continuity has enabled the Rail User Group to build up good links with the operator, and work together to improve the service for travellers. From April 1st our services will be provided by Arriva Rail North, a new company. Arriva has bold plans for developments during its tenure, plans which helped make it the winning bidder. The Rail User Group welcomes the new operator and looks forward to working with Arriva Rail North to maintain the best possible service between Oxenholme and Windermere.

The New World at Oxenholme and Windermere

The names of the operators may not be changing much, TransPennine will still be running the Manchester—Scotland services, stopping at Oxenholme. So what can we expect?

The new TransPennine company is owned entirely by First Group. There is a new Managing Director, Leo Goodwin, but other directors will continue in post from the old to the new company. As TransPennine (TP) loses its services on the Lakes and Furness Lines, its staff there will transfer to the new operator, which also means local knowledge transfers too, an important point. Initially, TP will continue to run the same trains as now, the class 350 electrics, though there will be a new livery. The Department for Transport (DfT) is keen for each franchise to have a basic livery and branding which will continue even when there is a change of franchisee, so that passengers build up an affinity for their local service. If you go to Scotland you will see this idea in practice. The basic saltire-on-blue livery has continued even though the franchise transferred last year from First Group to Abellio. Recently First Group made a radical change to the livery of its Great Western franchise, turning out trains in a smart dark green livery without a hint of the pink stripes that used to be apparently compulsory on First Group vehicles, so we could see something radically different here.

Initially the trains between Oxenholme and Windermere will be the ones we see now, but with the branding changed from First to Arriva. However, in the timetable for May 15th onward many Lakes Line trains have an extra minute or two added to their schedule. We assume this is because some of our trains will be run with older units, which are also slower. Regular readers will remember the crisis caused when five



TransPennine Express (TPE) trains were claimed by Chiltern Railways; the other four of the class are to follow them south at some time before December 2016, so TP may need to claim some of the class 185's back for their services. The older class 156 trains which have been pressed into use on some TPE Blackpool services have a maximum speed of 75 mph, so cause a hold up if they have to travel far on the West Coast Main Line, with its 100

to 125 mph limit. Arriva has already ordered a fleet of impressive new trains, some electric, some diesel, but they are not available off the peg. Britain's railways have less clearance between and beside the tracks than continental ones, so a proven design for, say, Germany, must be scaled down for British use. Also some British standards are more onerous than other European ones, so again re-design is needed.



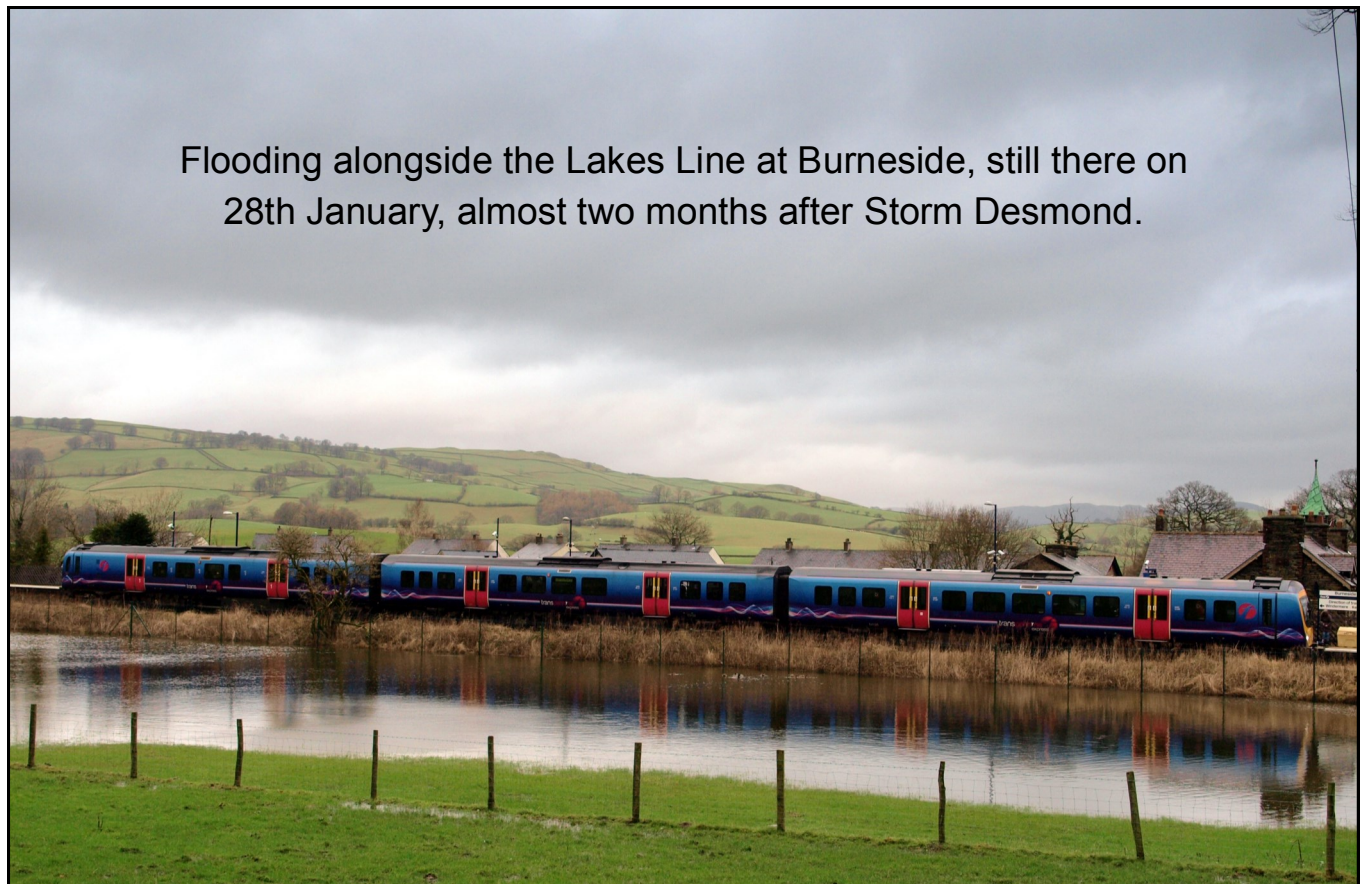
The way things were and could be again—but with a different livery. A class 156 Sprinter edges over Burneside Lower crossing in late British Rail days.

An area where a new operator can make an early difference is at stations. Arriva plans refurbishment at 355 'locations', and new facilities at 243 stations, and to have staff at 45 of what are now unstaffed stations. We don't think that any of the three unstaffed Lakes Line stations are in this group. However, they plan to have ticket machines at all their unstaffed stations, something LLRUG has asked for for some time.

Arriva Rail North's managing director is Alex Hynes, who is currently MD of Northern, ensuring there will be continuity there. Alex has made a good impression since his appointment in August 2013, so that is a positive sign. Some of the drivers and conductors on Lakes Line trains will be people we already see, especially any based at Barrow or Blackpool, but as Arriva and TransPennine separate out their fleets and depot staff, this may change. It's possible that, initially at least, some of the staff who transfer to Arriva Rail North will sometimes crew the Manchester—Scotland services, or some who stay with TransPennine will be operating Northern services. Rail safety rules mean that staff have to have a certain level of knowledge of a route and a train type before they can work on it, and it will take a little time before each company can get its new staff trained up. TPE is losing services at the start of the new franchise, while Northern is not being given extra staff or trains immediately, so it makes sense for the two companies to work together to keep the trains running. These are called 'traded services' in the industry, and are not new.

Fares will not change until the next revision in January 2017. However, different operators can interpret the concept of 'peak hours' in their own way, so fares can apparently go up. A couple of years ago the current Northern franchise decided some afternoon times were peak hours, which meant a price rise for anyone who previously used an off-peak ticket at those times. Equally, each train operating company can decide on special offers for use on only its own trains, and these may change.

We know that teams in both new franchise companies have been working hard on what the industry calls ‘mobilisation’ for April 1st. Frustratingly the Group has not been able to have much contact with these teams, as the franchise process does not allow the new team to talk detail until it is in post as franchisee. The Group has, however, drawn up a list of points to be addressed by the new operator, and we have been reassured by TPE that they are passing on their knowledge of operating the Lakes Line to the Arriva team.



Didn't it rain?

It wasn't just Storm Desmond, but also Storm Frank which severely affected northern England and southern Scotland this winter. The Lakes Line itself was hardly affected, though several new lakes appeared alongside it. The biggest effect on our services came from delays to connections on the main line, in particular the damage to Lamington viaduct on the upper Clyde on 31st December. Network Rail pulled out all the stops here and had the viaduct made safe and back in action on 22nd February, a week ahead of the expected date. While the West Coast Main Line (WCML) was blocked, Virgin Trains (VT) put on an hourly shuttle between Carlisle and Glasgow using some of their diesel Voyager trains. 'At long last', thought many rail observers, as some years ago we were told the Voyagers would be used this way if the electrified main line was blocked, in order to avoid passengers being de-canted into substitute buses. The Voyagers have only rarely been used in the this way when the northern part of the WCML has been closed. Both VT and TPE offered buses direct to Glasgow, using the motorway, while TPE kept their Edinburgh trains running as far as Lockerbie, where buses took over. Was this a first for the Borders town, featuring as termi-

nus of a train service from England? VT's passengers for Edinburgh were offered bus travel from Carlisle.

While Lamington made the national headlines, there were numerous other problems across the North, and the Settle and Carlisle line is likely to remain blocked by the landslip at Eden Brows, near Armathwaite, for some time. Services between Skipton and Appleby are operating, and Northern has issued a special timetable.



Valedictory Thanks

A message from our Chairman.

The Lakes Line Rail User Group just wants to say a sincere 'thank you' to First Group for looking after us and everything it has done for our passengers since rail privatisation.

We have experienced two new sets of rolling stock (with a third on the West Coast Main Line) and apparently more to come. We have seen significant improvements at stations including: information screens on platforms (cis); cctv; a public address system; help points; enhanced facilities at Windermere; a daily station cleaning regime; travelling cleaners; additional staff at holiday periods.



There have been a number of very special occasions including: our assistant secretary joining council representatives and media folk for TPE's senior management visit to Germany to view the class 185s on its test track; as guests on the first electric train from Preston to Manchester; Baroness Kramer at Windermere confirming electrification of the Branch; and who will ever forget that evening in Belfast where we were flown over, wine and dined to attend the European International Station of the Year Awards ceremony, at which Windermere Station came first in one of the categories. Recently there's been the TPE Choir, in which, as well as singing at a number of railway environments, we performed at Old Trafford cricket ground, the Bridgewater Hall, Ripon Cathedral, and the Northern Powerhouse Conference Dinner.

So it is with a heavy heart as we say thank you and au revoir, but not quite, as FTPE will continue to dip its toes into the Lake District water hourly at Oxenholme and (although a bit off our patch) Penrith. We will miss the special relationship of being partners with FTPE on our line. May we wish FTPE 'all the best' with the new franchise, and we look forward to continuing supporting it.

Who's who and what's what in Railway Management.

Members of the committee have been information gathering about the future new order of the railway in the North, and it has to be said that some of it isn't much clearer than mud at present. A concern is: where do the passengers and passenger representation groups stand in the complex management system of Britain's railways? There are so many tiers. We have:

Department for Transport (DfT) Based in London. This department has separate parts for the different types of transport. The Rail Executive deals with our sector. It says of itself: "Rail Executive is a single, integrated body established by the Department for Transport to take Britain's railway into the future, and to put passengers at the heart of the journey. With some £16bn in government funding behind them and strong leadership in place, they have an unprecedented opportunity to drive things forward."



Office of Rail and Road (ORR) Also London based. Was the Office of the Rail Regulator. Does it still regulate? If so, how much? It says of itself: "We are the economic regulator for railway infrastructure (Network Rail and HS1); the health and safety regulator for the rail industry as a whole; and the industry's consumer and competition authority."

Rail Delivery Group (RDG) Formed as a result of the McNulty Report, to bring together those who should be delivering the cost savings McNulty foresaw. It includes the train operators, who are full members, and associate members, many of them in the rail industry supply chain, such as Carrillion, Railway Vehicle Engineering Ltd and Siemens. British Transport Police is there too, as is thetrainline.com and Young Railway Professionals. RDG also includes ATOC, the Association of Train Operating Companies. It says of itself: "The Rail Delivery Group was set up in 2011. It brings together Network Rail and the passenger and freight train operating companies to lead and enable improvements in the railway which are ultimately for the benefit of passengers and freight users as well as the taxpayer and the wider economy."

Network Rail (NR) The engineering side. NR looks after the track, signalling, and sorts out the timetable from the competing requests from operators. Now likely to be at least part re-privatised. It says of itself: "We run, maintain and develop Britain's rail tracks, signalling, bridges, tunnels, level crossings and many key stations."

Transport for the North (TfN) A relatively recent body, set up as part of the Northern powerhouse campaign. "Our shared aim is for economic growth in the North to be at least as high as the rest of the country, to complement and act as a balance to the economic weight of London." Based in Manchester.

Rail North (RN) “Rail North Limited brings together Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) across the North of England into one cohesive and proactive body, which represents the regional and local economic, transport and strategic objectives for the rail industry.” Following an agreement of February 2015, RN will work with the DfT to manage the new Northern and Transpennine franchises from April 1st this year. Based in Leeds.

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has considerable influence over heavy rail services in its area, as well as the light rail tram system. Since any through trains to/from Windermere travel through the TfGM area, it thus has some influence over Lakes Line services. “We have recently consulted on a new publication, ‘Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040: Our Vision’. It sets out a vision for the transport network that we believe Greater Manchester needs by 2040 to deliver “World class connections that support long-term sustainable economic growth and access to opportunities for all”.

There are other similar transport authorities in the North, Merseytravel, Metro (West Yorkshire), and Nexus (Tyne and Wear) which also have influence over their rail services.

With all these integrated bodies and their visions the future should be truly ‘world class’. However, right now, it is not always clear who takes which decision. Looking through the list above there is often overlap between bodies, which cannot help the decision making process. With this background in mind, we come (overleaf) to reports of the meetings attended.

Snippets

- Nick Donovan left his post as Managing Director of TPE just before Christmas, and Liz Collins took over as Interim Manager till the end of the franchise. Nick was originally Engineering Director for TPE, so worked on the introduction of the class 185 units. He visited the Lakes Line regularly, and on one of his visits he was co-opted into the interview team for the summer survey. We wish him well in the next stage of his career.
- The class 185 diesels are to have their engines refurbished before the end of the franchise on 31st March.
- The Lakes Line got away lightly in the floods, with just a couple of cancellations due to flooding near Burneside. Virgin Trains has introduced special offer tickets in a bid to entice more visitors to Cumbria and other flood-hit areas they serve.
- Malcolm Conway and Robert Talbot have met members of the Fylde RUG to compare notes ready for the new franchise. Services to Blackpool North will, like ours, become Northern routes from April, and both lines serve the tourism market.

Summary of seven meetings attended

Members of the committee have attended as many meetings as possible about the new franchises. So what have we learned so far? Well, we knew that we will be part of the *North-ern Connect* network from December next year, and that we will have a minimum of four trains with Manchester Airport via Wigan, including for the first time on Sundays, but we learnt all of this at the time of the franchise announcement. Since then we understand that the new build rolling stock will have what is always referred to as 1/3 - 2/3s door spacing. Actually it's considerably nearer 25%/50%/25%, i.e. the sensible current spread on our class 185s and TransPennine Express's 'electric Scots'. The other snippet we have managed to glean is that even with 45 current unstaffed stations to have some staff presence, Kendal will not be one of them, in spite of having one of the larger footfalls and larger populations than many. Windermere Station is to be an eco-station (I suppose a bit like Accrington and Liverpool South Parkway) and will be enhanced beyond the transport hub it already is.

Other points which came up during the meetings round:

West Coast Rail 250, Carlisle 28th January.

Mike Roberts from the DfT outlined the programme for the next Inter City West Coast franchise: public consultation in May/June this year, with the franchise to commence on 1st April 2018. DfT acknowledges different markets - business (London to Birmingham and Manchester), and tourism (the Lake District and Blackpool).

Two reps from Network Rail spoke about HS2, mainly at the London end. Disruption at Euston flagged up.

Transport for the North/Rail North Conference, Leeds 5th February.

David Brown, CEO Rail North, explained there will be a comprehensive transport plan; it's a 'Pan Northern' view.

First TransPennine Express (FTPE) Update, Manchester 16th February.

Liz Collins, Interim MD, reported Network Rail has responded to TPE concerns about train regulation at Golborne Junction. All too often trains for Oxenholme and Scotland are being held here, and then lose more time on the West Coast Main Line because other trains are using their path. Leo Goodwin, MD of the new FTPE, spoke about the introduction of three Liverpool to Glasgow services December 2018.

TravelWatch North West Conference, Manchester 18th February

Dr Jon Lamonte, Chief Executive of TfGM, announced Transport for the North's Strategy Report would appear in March. Later, Roger Cobbe, from Arriva Rail North (ARN), announced improved Sunday services. Now there's something to look forward to!

Rail North Briefing, Leeds 26th February

Nothing new to report from this one.

(continued on next page)

News from the Line

At Oxenholme, the west (town side) car park has been closed to allow Network Rail to carry out more work in preparation for electrification. We understand that, in order to make operation of the main line more flexible, the curved approach to platform three is to be eased. While this work is going on, Virgin Trains (VT) has arranged an extra car park behind the Station Inn, and is operating a free shuttle bus to connect this car park with the station. It is really encouraging to see VT providing this service. Dragging heavy luggage up the hill would not be anyone's idea of the way to finish a holiday journey. The car park is due to re-open in June

Also at Oxenholme, some of the station name boards have been changed: It is quite common to see universities advertising their presence on stations, and if it encourages more passengers, a good idea.

It's worth noting that the work done on panelling the subway appears to have passed the test of this exceptionally wet winter. It's a big improvement.



Group members have been helping TPE staff in their efforts to sort out the announcements at Lakes Line stations. Trouble began before Christmas, as the information screens began to show incorrect information, and sometimes the announcements over the tannoy were also wrong. We have been giving staff back at HQ information about what the system showed at what time, and since mid-February the situation has improved a good deal. Otherwise our stations have been in generally good condition. At the Group's request Network Rail organised an extra litter pick on the track at Kendal, and we thank them for that. Rail safety rules don't allow the cleaners working for TPE to go onto the track.

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ACoRP, Huddersfield 25th February

Jim Trotman attended this and reported that both FTPE and ARN will support and contribute to CRPs. Good news.

Railway Development Society, Preston 29th February

Malcolm Conway attended this one, and heard again from Arriva Rail North

Attending these meetings was a bit like having a tape loop played. RN, ARN and FTPE repeated their presentations without any new or additional information at their last sessions from the earlier ones.

RT.

Engineering Work

Once again Network Rail has a full programme of engineering work planned for spring. The timetable is:

Easter weekend: line closed through Norton Bridge, London trains diverted.

Weekends from the end of April throughout May: main line closed at Oxenholme.

May Day Bank Holiday

The new timetable starts on May 15th; engineering work affects Spring Bank Holiday.

As ever we find ourselves torn; on the one hand, we accept that upgrade work has to take place at some time, on the other, just when there are extra marketing campaigns to attract visitors to Cumbria after the floods, the quickest way of getting here from the south east is upset at weekends and holiday times. Unfortunately, Oxenholme seems to suffer more than it ought from the skip-stop pattern. In addition there are some retimings over Spring Bank Holiday which will break connections from Windermere. For example, the first three direct trains to London on bank holiday Monday will leave Oxenholme earlier than usual, and miss the Windermere connection. We recommend that anyone travelling over these periods checks the journey times either with National Rail Enquiries, or at a staffed station.

Electrification

You may recall that Baroness Kramer, a Minister in the then coalition Government, visited Windermere on Friday 28th November 2014 and announced that the Lakes Line would be electrified by 2017, with money ring fenced for the project. The small print of the press release said the work 'could be completed as early as 2017.'

Sir Peter Hendy, Network Rail, in his recent review of the finances and procedures of Network Rail, stated that the Windermere Branch was now at GRIP Stage 3, and might not be electrified before Control Period 6 (2020). GRIP stage 6 is the actual construction phase. Furthermore, it has been placed behind the Wigan to Lostock (Junction) line. This route was not even on the radar for electrification back in the Autumn of 2014. LLRUG has sought clarification on the matter from both the DfT (via our MP Tim Farron) and Sir Peter Hendy himself.

However, in order to fulfil the requirements of its new Northern Franchise contract, Arriva Rail North must provide four trains a day between Manchester Airport and Windermere by December 2017, and the class 156s can only achieve a maximum speed of 75 mph. This is totally inadequate for West Coast Main Line running between Oxenholme and Golborne Junction, the specified route, when the other passenger trains are running at up to 125 mph. Until Arriva Rail North's new rolling stock is built, with the class 185s expected to have returned to FTPE, the only rolling stock capable of speeds of 100 mph are the class 319 electric units from Thameslink. How will the franchise condition be met?

Meanwhile work is going on at Oxenholme to prepare for electrification. Network Rail has made a new entrance from Burton Road into its depot, and masts for the overhead wires have been delivered and some already installed ready for the new alignment into platform 3.

Really the work in progress now is an upgrade to the main line, and not electrifying the Lakes Line. The present 10 mph turn off from the main line into platform 3 means a train for the Lakes Line has to slow down so much it blocks the main line for some time. It's rather like the effect of a car turning sharp left off a busy road: following traffic is held up. By making the entrance to platform 3 through the goods loop, the turn off speed can be raised, so the main line is blocked for less time.



Two new gantries for supporting the overhead wiring, installed just to the south of the road bridge at Oxenholme station.

This stage of work will see wiring extended along platform 3, but no further. Electric trains will be able to use this platform, perhaps as a temporary terminus at times when the main line north of Oxenholme is closed.

When the line was electrified in the 1970s most of the catenary supports were slimline ones, so they didn't have such a visual impact. The new ones seem to be of an older, chunkier and hopefully more robust design.

Meanwhile, at the other end of platform 3, the signal controlling access to the Branch has been changed to a modern LED unit, and moved to the right hand side of the track.

The February Survey

This year's survey, back to the first Wednesday in February, followed the usual pattern. Volunteers travelled on all the trains of the day apart from the 06:21 from Oxenholme, counting the numbers of people who used the trains. Malcom Conway did a longer journey, going to Preston in order to travel back to Oxenholme on the through train from the Airport. This enabled him to count how many passengers had travelled from stations further south. The overall total was slightly down on the 2015 number. We logged more schoolchildren, but fewer adults. This could be because main line services were affected by the Lamington Viaduct closure, and were running to a special timetable. Last year's figure showed an increase of 37% since the current timetable pattern came in in 2009, this year's just 32%. Once again, we found that, in general, when a Lakes Line train could wait to keep a connection with a late running main line train, it did.

All our surveys so far have been conducted under First Group's management of the Lakes Line, beginning in November 2002 with First North Western. Throughout this time we have enjoyed the permission of the senior management, free travel for the surveyors, and a cheerful welcome from the conductors. Thank you, all of you.

News in brief

- The Group's Sales Stand had a very successful weekend at the Kendal model railway show. Plenty of interest, some new members joined, and healthy sales. Thanks to all who came by and stopped and shopped.
- Once again the Group will be welcoming visitors to the Lakes Line over the Easter bank holiday. Members will travel on the busiest trains to give advice on travelling on from Windermere station, and things to do on a day out.
- Virgin Trains has named Pendolino train 390010 'The Cumbrian Spirit' to acknowledge the courage and resolve shown by local people as they rebuild their lives and businesses after the floods. The Cumbrian Spirit was unveiled by Andrew Hunter of Grasmere Gingerbread, in front of flood victims and representatives from organisations who helped them throughout December and continue to support the region's recovery. Grasmere Gingerbread's warehouse flooded, resulting in their stock being damaged. There is a Lakes Line connection: Grasmere Ginger is one of the firms which has supported our CRP teams on 'Community Rail in the City' days by giving us samples to hand out to passers-by and so give the volunteers a chance to extol the virtues of visiting our area by rail.
- Virgin Trains wifi is now available at Oxenholme station.

Useful contacts

Train Operators:

For this edition we are not showing contacts for the train operators. We do not have details for Arriva Rail North, as their franchise has not yet started, and some details for TransPennine will change when their new company takes up its franchise. We recommend contacting one of the enquiry sources listed below. We will post the new details on the website, and have a full list the next edition.

Enquiries:

National Rail Enquiries: 03457 48 49 50 (24 hour service)

www.nationalrail.co.uk

Train Tracker 0871 200 4950

Train Tracker Text 84950 (text 'dep' + name of station for next trains)

Transport Direct (Door to door journey plans)

www.transportdirect.info

Traveline Cumbria (Trains, Buses and Boats)

0871 200 22 33 (7.00 am to 8.00 pm in Cumbria), 7 days a week

www.travelinenortheast.info/

Security:

British Transport Police 0800 40 50 40, or www.btp.police.uk

Twitter: @BTPLancs

Report crimes or incidents discretely by text on 61016

Spare a thought

In the nineteenth century there was a tradition where writers of letters to newspapers used pen names. This next piece appears to follow that tradition, contributed by 'Cynisismus'.

“Amidst the turmoil of the change of franchises on April 1st, spare a thought for that most unfortunate group of staff, the Public Relations (PR) department.

These poor people live in a world where only good news is allowed. Yet they face at least a couple of years in the new franchise when little can change, as it's already been planned. Today's trains will continue to operate basically today's timetable on largely today's lines. How will PR manage with little good news to announce? There's only so much excitement you can generate about new staff uniforms, train liveries, and new ticket machines.

Expect them to fall back on an old ploy: when there's nothing new, re-announce what you last said, but in a slightly different way. There are complaints about overcrowding? Announce yet again how many new carriages have been ordered. The old trains are uncomfortable? Sound (another) fanfare to announce Pacers will be banned from Northern rails by 2020.

Adverse reports about punctuality? Two possibilities here:

“There are more trains on the network now than in (insert date between 1847 and 1997)”. Probably true, though it's of little comfort if your train is held up.

“There will be temporary disruption while we upgrade the network to be worthy of the Northern Powerhouse” (Note how by adding 'Northern Powerhouse' they tap into local patriotism.)

When all else fails, PR executives can try the 'it'll be all right on the night' strategy, in this case appearing as 'when we have our full fleet of new trains in operation this problem will disappear.' Just don't mention that you know that, by then, you'll have different problems to drench in good news.”

Bulletin and Publicity

The wonderful photo of a class 185 on the front cover, and the historic photos on the back, are by David Dockray. He is a local railway enthusiast, amateur photographer and LLRUG member. As his pictures show, he enjoys photographing trains in scenic landscapes, not only in Cumbria but also further afield. If you would like to see more of his photos, go to his website at <http://daviddockray.smugmug.com/>.

This Bulletin is available as a pdf. If you would prefer to receive the electronic version rather than a paper copy, please let Malcolm Conway or Dick Smith know. But, if you are one of the many who hates reading news on a screen, rest assured there are no plans to go e-version only.

The website has needed regular updating with flooding and franchise news, and it has helped us find a few new members.

Arriva grew out of the Cowie bus operation in north east England, and after various mergers became Arriva in 1997. Since 2010 it has been a subsidiary of German State Railways, Deutsche Bahn.

Can we then expect the legendary German efficiency to sweep away all the annoyances of rail travel? Not if the German cartoon book 'Der ganz normale Bahnsinn' (roughly translated as 'normal railway madness') is anything to go by. For more, go to miguelfernandez.de (and yes, despite the name, the author is German).



Looking back:

A class 175 in the old First Group 'barbie stripe' livery of First North Western waits at Oxenholme for an evening connection from London.





More liveries from the past. Above, a class 156 in BR Regional Railways livery approaches Bowston in August 2000, and below, a class 175 in Arriva Trains Wales colours on a TransPennine Express service at Black Moss in August 2006

