

Lakes Line Bulletin

Winter 2016-17

**AGM Report
Electrification – when?
Tickets and Fares**

Issue No 125

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Editorial: Is it all about two little words?

In recent weeks there have been news items about the electrification of the Lakes Line. It's made depressing reading or hearing. The date for this major development, which promises the reconnection of Windermere to our regional capital and its International Airport, has receded with each announcement. The last scare was that the scheme would not be finished till 2024 – eight years later than the first estimate.

To sum up what is definitely known at the time of going to press:

- Electrification to Windermere has slipped from Network Rail's Control Period (CP) 5 to CP6. CP6 runs from April 2019 to March 2024.
- A statement is promised in March 2017 from Network Rail about when in CP6 the project will go ahead.
- Given the length of CP6, we could see electrification at the earliest ready for the December 2019 timetable change, or at any December timetable change up to 2024.

It could be that the 'up to' 2024 have been missed out in some of the reports. The Rail User Group is following the story, using all means at its disposal to find out what is happening, and will publish the information when we have it.

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM was held in a venue new to us, the South Lakes Foyer. Around 40 people, mainly members along with our guest speakers and several non-members, gathered for the event. After an introduction from our member, mayor of Kendal Stephen Coleman, our Chairman Robert Talbot got the formal business of the evening under way. Reports had been circulated, and all were accepted after a brief discussion and clarifications where appropriate. The officers and committee members were all re-elected, though Robert pointed out that there is a need for new faces in the running of the Group. Treasurer Ian Conway recommended subscriptions remain the same for a further year, a suggestions which was naturally welcomed.

We then moved to the more interesting part of the evening, a presentation by our guest speakers from Northern, Sharon Keith, the Regional Director, and Craig Harrop, the Stakeholder Manager. Jane Murray, our Station Manager, was there to note any concerns about the stations.

Sharon began by assuring the audience she would be honest about the recent problems as well as talk about the plans for the future. She was as good as her word, covering important recent questions:

- Cancellations due to crew shortage: recent agreements with the unions about covering vacancies should help reduce this cause of cancellations
- Bus substitution during service disruptions: experience had shown that arranging cover from HQ in York was not efficient, so the western Regional office would take this on.
- Cleaning: problems in transferring competency certificates from the old contractor to the new had meant staff were not able to do all the jobs they should owing to safety regulations.

Craig then took over with the good news, as he outlined the new franchisee's plans. By the time the £500 million or so earmarked for new trains have been spent, the Northern fleet will be 15% bigger than now, even after getting rid of all the Pacers.



"The Bums Of Northern Customers Have Spoken!" runs the press release from Northern. Sample seats for the new trains were tried out by passengers, including some LLRUG members, at main stations.

The bigger fleet will be a major factor in the plans to run more services, especially on Sundays. Some of the new trains will be dedicated to the 'Northern Connect' services, which will offer high quality inter-urban services across the network. Windermere, classed as a Northern Connect station, will see improved facilities, and other stations will also see upgrades. The Rail User

Group would like to see Kendal added to the Northern Connect network, as it is a significant town in the terms of this secondary lines plan. The Group would also like to see Kendal station staffed, at least at peak times, to offer a better service to passengers and reduce ticketless travel on the Lakes Line.

Naturally there were lots of questions, including:

- As there's no 1st class on Lakes Line trains, you can't book a ticket from Kendal including 1st class on the main line. Craig would investigate. *Update: an LLRUG member has now tried booking a through 1st class ticket from Kendal, and found it works. Thanks, Craig.*

- Delays causing missed connections at Oxenholme: among other reasons, Network Rail's signallers in the North West do not have such clear priority rules as desirable, so a delay to one train can be made worse than needed. Northern is pressing for clearer rules.
- Why are rail services to the Lake District so often disrupted at Bank Holidays? This is a problem which Northern would like to see sorted out, but is a nation-wide problem.
- Northern will try to have the announcements on the TransPennine trains used on the Lakes Line changed so it says they are Northern services.
- Members urged Northern to make sure the new Northern Connect trains have better luggage space than present trains. We must expect visitors to bring luggage such as walking gear with them.



After the Q&A session John Owen, a Director of TravelWatch NorthWest, spoke about political developments. A new organisation, Transport for the North (TfN), will take over responsibility for transport policy across the north of England from central government, during 2017. TfN will be based in Manchester, and work closely with Rail North, based in Leeds. At present it doesn't seem that TfN considers tourism as an economic driver in the region, nor does it appreciate that most rail travel north of Preston is for leisure and social reasons.

As TfN is still being developed, we are not clear where its responsibilities for rail travel finish and those of Rail North start. More on the roles of these two organisations as we learn it.

Tickets and fares

With the annual announcement of fare rises there is a lot of comment on Britain's rail fares and ticket types again. To give us an insider's view of selling, we are very pleased to include an article by Henry Richardson, who did an apprenticeship with the independent ticket seller Chester-le-Track (www.chester-le-track.co.uk/), and now works in their booking office at Eaglescliffe.



Eaglescliffe station with Middlesbrough Football Club supporters waiting for their train to the match.

“Working in a ticket office has proved to be the job I never thought it would be. It's different everyday which is great as the job never gets predictable. In this article I am going to tell you about the general goings on in my ticket office and what ways we try and save our customers money. Eaglescliffe train station is in the North East of England, we are just an independent ticket office so we try our best to keep the customers happy as they're all we have.

The day usually starts with getting the commuters to work by making sure they don't miss their trains and letting them know of other travel arrangements if their train's cancelled. The most important thing is to make sure they pay for their ticket *before* travelling otherwise they may get charged more on the train.

Usually around mid morning we then get the leisure travellers who are going on day trips to local cities such as York or Newcastle, which are both just an hour away. After we have the groups of leisure travellers then we start to get the people who come to buy advanced tickets and this is when we get to do what we enjoy the most.

We have customers who go all over the country so we always look forward to selling a ticket to somewhere new, because it makes us have to think about the best way to get them to their destination and also the best way for us to get their price down to save them money.

We had two customers on their way to Kidderminster, the ticket should have cost them £97 each. We knew that price was much too high so we split the ticket down into four separate tickets and saved them just over £35 each, which they were very pleased with!

We split a ticket nearly every day as it is a great way for us to help our customers out by saving them money whilst also keeping them coming back to us which helps us out as they spread the word to their friends and family.

We have lots of customers who use the trains to go on their holidays and I had one customer who was going on a tour of Scotland by train. This was a good booking as I was able to organise her holiday with her and make sure she had good seats on all of the trains so that she could enjoy the views of Scotland. It's a great experience when you get to make a customer happy and I was pleased to hear that her trip went perfectly without any slip ups.

We have sold tickets all over the UK ranging from Penzance all the way up to Thurso, a total of 571 stations all over the UK. Each time we serve a different station we mark it off on a map. Even though all our geography is pretty good in the station we still get surprised with stations that we haven't heard of and we have to Google them to find them on our map.”

Editor's note: 'splitting' a ticket involves separating the journey into different parts, to see if this reduces the price. As an example, a search using the TPE website on 4th December for travel on Tuesday 13th from Kendal to Leeds, leaving at mid-day, showed the through single fare as £36. Splitting the journey to two legs, to Manchester Piccadilly, and from there to Leeds, showed the same journey as costing £22 using two advance purchase tickets. Given the complicated structure of tickets and conditions, this is not a straight comparison. The advance purchase tickets are for designated trains only, and you will be charged extra if you use a different train. If your first train is delayed and you miss the connection, the operator of the second one is not obliged to allow you to use the ticket on a different train. Advance ticket prices also vary according to the train you want to travel on and when you actually book.

Datablog's spreadsheet of stations on the Network Rail system shows a total of 2533 stations from Abbey Wood to Ystrad Rhondda, so Eaglescliffe booking office list has plenty of new stations to add!

Fares for 2017

The Rail Delivery Group issued a press release on 2nd December:

‘Train fares will go up on average by 2.3% next year, rail industry leaders have confirmed.

- 2.3 per cent average increase next year
- 97p in every £1 from fares pays to run and improve services
- Money from fares supports £50bn-plus Railway Upgrade Plan
- More than 5,500 new train carriages by end of 2020

The average overall increase covers all national rail fares with effect from 2 January 2017.

Paul Plummer, chief executive of the Rail Delivery Group which represents train operators and Network Rail, said: “We understand how passengers feel when fares go up, and we know that in some places they haven’t always got the service they pay for. Around 97p in every pound passengers pay goes back into running and improving services.



"Fares are influenced by government policy, either through government-regulated fares such as Season tickets or as a result of the payments train companies make to government. This money helps government to support the biggest investment in our railway since Victorian times."

Train companies are working with government to bring about regulatory reforms that will make fares simpler in future.

Rail companies are working together to deliver more than £50 billion of improvements, including £11.6 billion being spent on more than 5,500 new train carriages by the end of 2020.

To find out more about the work to upgrade Britain's railway and why the investment is needed go to www.britainrunsonrail.co.uk.’

‘Fare rises are paying for improvements’ is difficult for local users to accept as we have seen the quality of our trains go down this year, and the prospect of electrification is receding. Sadly, we must also point out that the promise to simplify the fare structure has been trotted out regularly with little obvious change seen. Nor

do any press releases remind passengers it is government policy to increase the share of the railways' costs which they pay.

As ever the headline figure covers much variation between different operators. The Guardian reported that VT West Coast fares would rise by 2.4%, just above the average. Northern's press release showed a just-below-average change, and as there is little good news about at the moment, concentrated on the future: "From January 2017 customers using Northern's trains will see an average fare increase of just 2.2%. We understand any fare increase is likely to be unpopular, though overall fares will remain low. Money raised as a result of the fares increase will go towards delivering better journeys and improving customer service." TransPennine Express is reported as freezing its advance fares, so its overall increase comes in at the low 1.4%.

Transport Focus, the government-funded official watchdog, commented: "Passengers will be disappointed that fares will rise by 2.3 per cent – higher than the last two years. Passengers will now want to see the industry's investment deliver a more reliable day-to-day railway. The Government should consider setting rail fare rises around the Consumer Prices Index instead to bring rail fares into line with other recognised measures of inflation."

The Campaign for Better Transport, a voluntary body which carries out research into all forms of public transport, released this comment: "Lianna Etkind, Public Transport Campaigner, Campaign for Better Transport said: "With next year's regulated rail fares rising by nearly 2%, with some unregulated, walk-on fares rising even further, people are now finding themselves priced off the railways. The train operating companies and the Government need to work closely together to provide fairer, simpler and cheaper fares making sure people are always sold the cheapest ticket available.

Between 1995 and 2016 passengers have seen average fares increase by 23.5% and much more needs to be done by train operators and the Government to give them a truly affordable railway."

Lianna continued: "It is also time the Government stopped dragging its feet and introduce flexible season tickets with fair discounts for the eight million part-time workers across the UK as promised. It is not right that part-time workers have to buy expensive one-off tickets, or season tickets which they then waste on the days they don't work."

Our surveys of passengers back this up. We know there are local people who do not travel to work by the Lakes Line as often as they would like to, as their part-time work makes it not worth getting a weekly or monthly season ticket.

Presented by
Kendal Model Railway Club

MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION

PRICES HELD



28-29 Jan 2017

10am-5pm Sat / 10am-4.30pm Sun

Kendal Leisure Centre LA9 7HX

www.kendalmrc.org

Adult £5.60

Child £3.00

Over 65 £4.60

Family £15.20
(2 adult + 2 child)

Sales Stand

Ian Conway writes: We went to the Ambleside Lights switch on Saturday 19 November. Phil Wearing and myself ran the stall with Malcolm Conway helping to put it up. Sales were very brisk even though we had a couple of showers. We talked to a few people about the lack of through trains and electrification. We were doing well with the sales and by mid- afternoon I looked at what we had taken and was surprised by how much we had. By the end of the day we had taken over £140 which

is more than double what we normally take. This was due to getting some soft toys; between them the toys and Thomas items made up two thirds of the sales.

So we had a very good day.

Our stand is out next at the Kendal Model Railway Exhibition on the 28/29 Jan at the Leisure Centre in Kendal. If anybody wants to come and help on the stall please contact me on 01539 733844, times are from 9-30 till 5-00 Sat and 9-30 till 4-30 Sunday and packing up afterwards. If you could only manage a few hours that would be o.k.

Advance notice: our coffee morning in Staveley will be on 17 June next year.

Department for Transport announcements

On 6th December the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, announced a new ‘initiative’ to improve the working performance of our railways. He said: “We want to see closer working across the industry, to resolve problems more quickly – putting the needs of the passenger first. When things go wrong, a lack of a joined up approach can make things much worse for the passenger.

“I intend to start bringing back together the operation of track and train on our railways. Our railway is much better run by one joined up team of people. They don’t have to work for the same company. They do have to work in the same team.”

The DfT plan is “to have integrated operating teams between train services and infrastructure” by having the train operator work closely with Network Rail. It sounds very good, but as Robert Talbot points out: “I have lost count as to the number of previous attempts to achieve this. Locally, we have already been promised better co-operation between Network Rail signallers and the train operators on a day-to-day basis to improve punctuality at Oxenholme of TPE’s northbound Scottish service and Virgin Trains’ services via Birmingham. We still do not have the level of punctuality we need to ensure the connections to Windermere are really reliable. Network Rail disrupting access to tracks to and through tourist areas at bank holidays and peak holiday periods is another ongoing issue.

What difference, if any, the proposals will make to our fragmented privatised railway is anyone’s guess, but we live in hope. Passengers deserve better, especially with year on year fare rises.”

Annual Station Usage Statistics

The annual station usage statistics from the ORR (Office of Rail and Road) now come out a little earlier, at the beginning of December, hence we are able to report on them in the calendar year to which they refer. The current figures refer to the year to 31st March 2016.

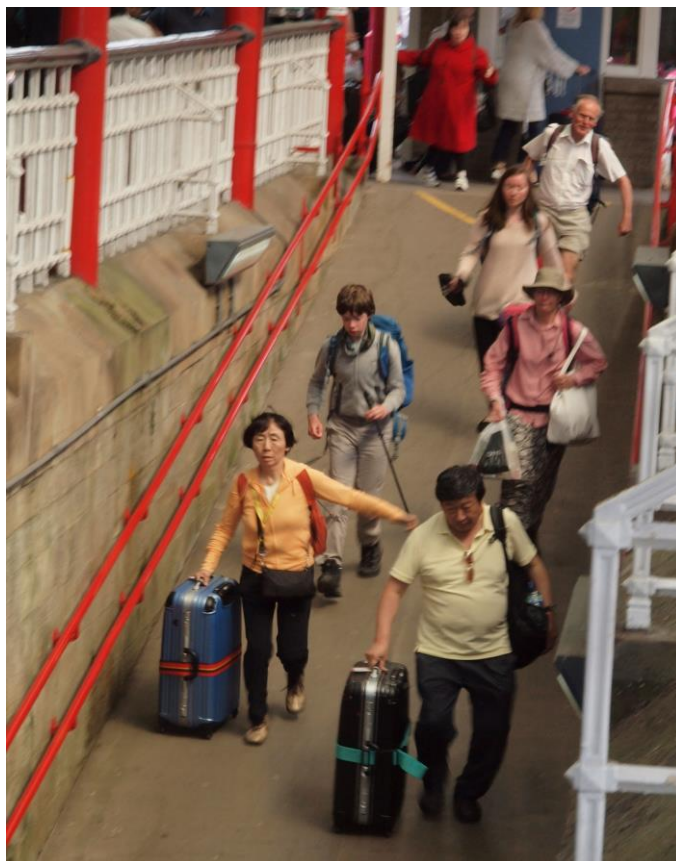
The year recorded coincides with the change of franchisee for the Lakes Line, and so in 12 months' time will give a clear indication of how Arriva Rail North has fared.

Year ending	2014/5	2015/6 and (change)	% Change
Burneside	14,258	16,066 (+1808)	+12.66%
Kendal	224,580	215,398 (-9182)	-4.9%
Staveley	47,492	44,660 (-2832)	-6%
Windermere	418,456	419,710 (+1254)	+0.3%
Lakes Line total	704,786	695,834 (-8952)	-1.3%
Oxenholme *	489,158 (+244,503 interchange)	521,768 (+277,031)	+6.6% (+8.9% including interchange)

*Includes West Coast Main Line as well as Windermere Branch passengers.

These are the final statistics whilst FTPE operated our services, and provide a perfect baseline for Northern. In 12 months' time it will be interesting to see what impact, if any, the poorer rolling stock and fewer through services with Manchester have had.

Against the national backdrop of 5% growth, the four stations on our line saw a slight decrease of 1.3% in 'total' usage. The decline is largely attributable to Kendal's loss in traffic. This is probably due to the continuing reduction in through services and the unreliability of connections. Together these make it sensible for Kendal-based passengers to access direct through trains at the town's other station. I can't begin to explain the slight switch in fortunes of Burneside and



Interchange! Passengers hurry from a late-arriving Lakes Line train to platform 1 for their connection south.

Staveley. Is it due to changes in the collection of fares? ORR only records actual ticket sales. Over all, has the continuing growing trend in visitors been offset by a corresponding decline in local usage at the terminus?

December 2016 timetable

Few changes to report this time. The West Coast Main Line (WCML) schedules at Oxenholme may well see some adjustment in the future, but the new Inter City West Coast franchise has been put back a further year (or more – see below) in order to accommodate HS2 services at the southern end. Therefore, any changes affecting us have been delayed, so I still have to report those unacceptable 3-hour gaps in ‘service’ to Crewe and Birmingham to access Cross Country services, and from Euston to Oxenholme. Nobody at Virgin Trains, the Department for Transport or Rail North seems to appreciate the problem or our concern.

Virgin Trains won the race to have the first copies to my house five weeks before they were due to start, and Northern were just two days later. RT

We must, with sadness, report the loss of the last surviving through train from Windermere to Manchester and its Airport. In the old (to December 10th) timetable, at 11:51 the 10:56 from Windermere ran into platform 5 at Preston, where it was eventually joined by another Northern service, from Blackpool North, and together they left for the Airport at 12:09. From 12th December, the times remain the same, though the two trains run into platform 6. However, according to Real Time Trains, which is usually reliable, it does not appear that the Windermere train will link up with the Blackpool train and continue to the Airport.

It has taken just a few years for us to go from five return weekday through trains to none. Let’s hope Northern’s plans for restoring four daily return trips aren’t delayed for long.

New Intercity West Coast Partnership

This is the grand name for the next franchise to run services on the WCML – and also the first trains to run on HS2. Since constructing HS2 will affect WCML services, especially in the Euston area, it makes sense for one operator to supervise the whole process. In addition, HS2 Ltd has been set up as a construction company, whereas a rail franchisee knows about actually running trains, and in most cases, taking on new trains and getting them into service. Rail Minister Paul Maynard said in the press release on November 4th that the aim was “to ensure excellent passenger services in the run up to HS2 introduction, and a smooth transition to the next generation of rail franchising as HS2 becomes the new backbone of Britain’s railways”.

The new West Coast franchise was to have started in April 2018, but the curse of delay has struck again, and the Department is now to negotiate a one year extension (or two, depending on which DfT announcement you read) to the Virgin Trains contract, to take it up to April 2019 or 2020.

Car Parking

Question: should we feel sorry for Virgin Trains about the car parking at Oxenholme? They have managed to re-open the west (town) side car park, and there still isn't enough space on a weekday. On the other hand, the price of £9 per day (*not* per 24 hrs) is about to go up to £12. This is apparently to bring it into line with local shoppers' car parks. There should be a prize for anyone who can find a local, paying, shoppers' car park, let alone one charging £9 or £12 a day.

Cynicism aside, there is clearly a problem. We know that Oxenholme draws passengers from a very wide area, as the last survey showed. Passengers then had driven from area bounded by Hawes, Carnforth, Barrow, Seascale and Clifton, so there is bound to be pressure on space. The unreliability of connections with the Lakes Line may well persuade more passengers to drive to Oxenholme rather than use the train from Windermere, adding to the pressure. Three (at least) local entrepreneurs have set up their own parks, which seem to be full too, and lots of unofficial, free spaces near the station are being used.

There's no obvious solution, but something does need to be done.

Meeting the Rail Minister



Westmorland & Lonsdale Conservatives invited Robert Talbot and Dick Smith, along with Nigel Wilkinson (Windermere Lake Cruises) and Jim Trotman (CRP Officer) to meet Transport Minister Paul Maynard MP (left) when he visited Kendal in November. Mike Nicholson, who suggested the meeting, also took part.

In a good natured exchange, we asked the Minister about electrification – his answers helped write the editorial on p3 – and reminded him about the vital role the Lakes Line plays in the local economy, which is so heavily reliant on buoyant tourism. As he represents Blackpool, Paul Maynard is well aware of tourism as a provider of jobs, and also understands our point about *not* disrupting rail access to this area at bank holidays and summer weekends, when more people actually want to travel. We also pointed out that the railway is important for local residents for journeys for work and leisure, both along the line and for travelling out of the district.

In a meeting like this no minister can promise to sort everything out as if by magic, but he left with much more knowledge of the situation of the Lakes Line.

Cover photos: Front: the 11:20 from Oxenholme crosses the Kent on 12th November 2015.

Rear cover: Santa (above), and another kind of seasonal regular (below).

Great Western Electrification

Why write about this, when we are miles away? We'll explain.

Under the scheme, as a route was electrified, older trains replaced by shiny new electric ones would be 'cascaded' to other parts of the network, including the North of England. The original timetable for this has been rewritten, and so improved services planned for the North for 2017 will now be phased in, in other words they can't all happen as planned because the trains to run the services will still be needed elsewhere. It's still not clear how this will affect the Lakes Line. Taken with the delay to our electrification, it's another blow to our hopes of early improvements in services.

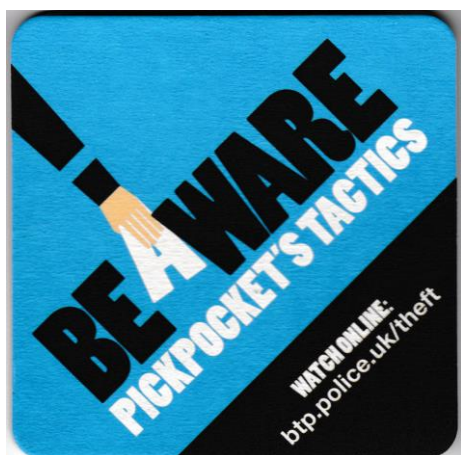
Windermere Christmas Market.

'Santa was asked if could he go to Windermere Station to help as part of the Windermere Christmas Market on the 10th and 11th of December. He did but could not use his normal mode of transport as the reindeer were having a health check and his sleigh was having its annual MOT, which this year was being done at Newton Heath so he had to use Northern Trains. He was met at Windermere Station by Jane Murray (Northern's Station Manager for Cumbria) who was handing out Hot Ribena and Children's drinks with mince pies and goodies for all and was assisted by other members of staff and officers of the User Group.

The station was well decorated and there was festive music playing. Northern gave Santa a couple of free rides on the train but did not let him drive it.' *Santa (MC)*

All sorts of publicity

At the recent Community Rail conference in Manchester various railway organisations had stalls at the 'market place'. Here are two of the freebies they offered to get their message across.



Left: a beer mat from the police, and right, a notepad with safety message.



We wish all
our readers
compliments
of the
season.



Above: Santa on his way to the Windermere German Christmas Market.
Below: Big diesels on the Lakes Line. The regular night-time rail head treatment train at Burneside at 23:30 on Sunday 4th December.

