

Community Rail Cumbria Annual Report for 2015

The Cumbrian Coast Line The Furness Line The Lakes Line



Introduction

In previous years, there have been separate annual reports for the three community rail lines that lie predominantly in Cumbria. This is the first combined annual report and follows on from the first combined Strategy & Action Plan produced earlier in 2015. Following guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT), the Cumbrian Community Rail Partnerships are working together more closely under the newly formed umbrella of Community Rail Cumbria (CRC).

This annual report sets out the achievements of the past calendar year and also shows how these have built on past achievements. It also outlines some of the future aspirations when CRC will be working with the new franchises that start operating from April 2016. The main operator will be Northern, following re-mapping of rail services, but relationships with the new TransPennine and Inter-City West Coast (Virgin Trains) will be maintained.

The report comes as major changes are taking place within the rail industry and at local authorities. In future, there will be considerably less funding through local authorities but additional funding for CRPs through the new franchises. Although the CRPs will be more dependent on funding from the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), they will retain their role as “critical friend” for the TOCs and assist in the local delivery of improvements to railway services and facilities.

Background

The Cumbrian Coast CRP was established in 2009 and was designated as a Community Railway in September 2010. The Furness Line CRP was founded in 2010 and designated as a Community Railway on the 1st June, 2012. The Lakes Line CRP was founded in February, 2006, and was designated as a Community Railway in April, 2008. The current CRP Officers, Laurence Hilland and Jim Trotman have been in post since 2009 and 2010 respectively.

During 2014, the Cumbrian Coast CRP has been funded by Cumbria County Council, Sellafield Ltd, Northern Rail, Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council, with additional support from Virgin Trains, Network Rail, Natural England and DRS. It has worked closely with Cumbria County Council, 'Friends' groups, station adopters, parish and town councils, etc. The Cumbrian Coast railway is 86 miles in length, covers a coastal route which extends from Carlisle to Barrow-in-Furness, and has 24 intermediate stations along the route. The Partnership relates to services along the West Coast Main Line and routes leading to the north-east.

The Furness Line CRP has also been funded by Cumbria County Council, First TransPennine Express, Northern Rail, Lancashire County Council and South Lakeland District Council, with additional support from Virgin Trains, Network Rail, Barrow Borough Council and the Lake District National Park Authority. The CRP works closely with the Furness Line Action Group (FLAG), the Morecambe Bay Partnership, parish and town councils and community groups. The Furness Line CRP covers the 28 mile long Barrow-Carnforth part of the route that extends as far as Manchester International Airport (MIA). The partnership takes a close interest in services along the West Coast Main Line and the stations where connections are made for services running on this line and onto the neighbouring Lakes Line.

The Lakes Line CRP covers the 10 mile route from Oxenholme to Windermere, a major tourist destination, in southern Cumbria. It has been funded by Cumbria County Council, First TransPennine Express, Windermere Lake Cruises/Lakeland Motor Museum and South Lakeland District Council with additional support from Virgin Trains, Network Rail, Cumbria Tourism and the Lake District National Park Authority. The CRP works closely with the Lakes Line Rail User Group (RUG) plus local businesses, councils and organisations.



Northern Rail at Ravenglass – picture from Sam Dixon

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of CRC is to contribute to the economic wellbeing and growth of all areas served directly or indirectly by the Cumbrian railways through the operation, services and facilities of the lines. This will be achieved through the priorities set out in the CRC Strategy & Action Plan and will involve:

1. contributing to and influencing rail and transport strategies affecting Cumbria via the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) Network Rail, Cumbria County Council (CCC), the Local Enterprise Partnership, and any other organisations with an involvement or interest in the railway;
2. working closely with rail industry partners, and particularly the TOCs responsible for the Cumbrian network;
3. developing community goodwill and involvement with the local railway; and,
4. stimulating rail infrastructure and service developments.

CRC will work with, and lead where appropriate, all organisations involved in the operation of Cumbrian railways in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify and quantify potential growth markets for the rail service;
2. To actively respond to the rail needs of the Primary Stakeholders with specific regard to key industries such as nuclear, defence and tourism together with local community requirements;
3. To advise on and respond to consultations on rail matters representing the common interests of all stakeholders;
4. To assist in the development of businesses directly or indirectly served by the railway, with particular emphasis on projects which create employment;
5. To support station development projects across the Cumbrian rail network and act as a catalyst for other projects;
6. To work with all appropriate agencies to attract essential rail infrastructure investment;
7. To ensure that the railway is an active participant in local regeneration strategies;
8. To identify new potential stakeholders in the community;
9. To identify and secure funding for projects which meet the aims and objectives of CRC;
10. To work with community organisations to harness people's energies and creativity; and,
11. To participate in community based events and activities which promote the local railway taking into account of the needs of groups disadvantaged by circumstance or location.



CRP Reports

1. Cumbrian Coast Line

The year began with the issue of the Invitation to Tender document by the Dept for Transport which reflected the need for a transformational approach to rail services throughout the Northern franchise area. This was particularly relevant to the Cumbrian Coast owing to the major industrial and nuclear developments planned for the future.

The subsequent engagement with the three bidders for the franchise provided the opportunity to emphasise Cumbrian rail need – whether in services, frequency, capacity, rolling stock, community involvement, etc. Whilst this engagement process was time-consuming and detailed, it provided a real foundation for the incoming franchisee to effectively plan for the future.

Running alongside this franchise process was a high-level of engagement with the Rail Strategy Group, with the aim of analysing the essential rail infrastructure interventions required along the Cumbrian Coast line to facilitate the planned developments in the nuclear and other industries. All industry partners contributed to this process, which resulted in detailed plans for a wide range of enhancements along the line, particularly affecting the line between Maryport and Drigg.

A high-level of engagement with Cumbria County Council was also undertaken, with specific reference to the ‘hub’ station developments at Maryport and Workington which will result in additional car-parking facilities and platform improvements. The importance of developing such projects cannot be overstated, especially as it is envisaged that the Moorside development will result in huge passenger movements on a daily basis for the lifetime of the next rail franchise.

Whilst input to the Moorside planning process has been a specific focus for the Partnership’s work over the last twelve months, other vital work has been undertaken. The suppressed demand at Sellafield (and adequacy of station and rail services) was highlighted during the engagement process with the bidders, whilst the impact of such projects as West Cumbria Mining, National Grid and BAe expansion at Barrow will have major impacts on the rail network during the forthcoming franchise.

However, planning to respond to these major developments has been just one aspect of the Partnership’s work. Assisting and supporting the work of other community groups along the line has been a highpoint of the year, resulting in the majority of stations now being adopted.

Other points of focus include;

- Completion of project plans and funding bids for the ‘Rail Room’ project at Millom, an educational resource centre aimed at children of primary school age to enhance basic skills through involvement with the railway.
- Developing new markets to coincide with the new franchise
- Involvement with projects associated with Coastal Community Funding bids and local economic development strategies

- Planning for new marketing and tourist strategies
- Development of community hubs

To conclude, the challenges which lie ahead cannot be overstated. The position of Cumbria County Council with its diminishing resources will mean additional reliance on all the Cumbrian CRP's for provision of advice and technical support. Nonetheless, the formation of Community Rail Cumbria will strengthen the position and role of CRP's on all lines, and enable the sharing of available resources to best effect. The critical need for large-scale infrastructure investment on the Cumbrian Coast will remain a top priority, and the opportunities available under the new transformational franchise will benefit all our Cumbrian communities.

2. Furness Line

Last year, the Furness Line CRP responded strongly to the Department for Transport's (DfT's) consultation on the re-franchising of TransPennine Express and Northern, using the Cumbria Better Connected Study of the line to press for additional services to Manchester Airport and for high quality rolling stock.

The resultant Invitation to Tender (ITT) subsequently issued by the DfT confirmed that the Furness Line would be transferred to a new high quality regional brand within Northern, which will be classed as a transformational franchise as opposed to the previous steady state franchise from 2004. Importantly, the ITT specified that there will be a minimum of eight weekday return services between Barrow-in-Furness and Manchester Airport plus more weekend trains from December 2017. The new franchise will also have to provide a minimum of 120 new high quality coaches and retire the Pacers from service before 2020.

There are three bidders for the new franchise and the officers of the CRP have met all of them at least once, presenting them with a shopping list of improvements for the line. The whole process has been very time consuming, and I wish to thank my fellow officers, John Owen and Robert Parker, and our Community Rail Project Officer, Jim Trotman, for their support and hard work during this busy period for us.

However, franchising has been just one aspect of the Partnership's work. The CRP has been meeting with the Morecambe Bay Partnership to maximise the role of the railway in their plans, obtaining new community rail notice boards for stations, arranging a new shelter at Kents Bank and assisting with the funding of CCTV at Dalton, to name just some of the projects that have been undertaken.

For the future, I should like to see more stations along the line being supported by their local communities. We have, just recently, seen new groups established at both Silverdale and Kents Bank which wish to work with the CRP and TOC to improve the environment at these stations. I hope that this will encourage other communities to follow suit and eventually for all stations to become inspirational hubs within their respective communities. It will take time, but a start has been made.

The next twelve months will, I am sure, continue to be challenging for the CRP, particularly with regard to the appointment of the successful franchisee, and subsequently working with them to implement their plans and develop new ideas. In addition, there will be changes emanating from the enhanced role of Rail North, and also the pressures on County Council resources, which could well result in greater reliance on the CRPs to manage rail affairs in the county.

I conclude by thanking everyone for their support during what has been another busy year for the Furness Line CRP.

Tim Owen, Chairman



Cark station during Cartmel Races - picture from Tim Owen

3. Lakes Line

It has been another busy and fruitful year for the Lakes Line CRP.

The continuing liaison with the GoLakes and SeeMore sustainable travel project has helped to transform Windermere station into an outstanding example of an intermodal interchange, of which both TransPennine Express and the CRP can be proud. The latest station footfall statistics published by the Office of Rail and Road, for 2013-2014, revealed that the usage at Windermere had topped 400,000 and was nearly seven per cent up on the previous year. It is pleasing to note that the station has again been extremely busy during the 2015 holiday season.

The Invitation to Tenders for the new TPE and Northern Franchise confirmed the Department for Transport's decision to move the Windermere branch into the new Northern franchise. This was against the wishes of the CRP, but it is pleasing to note that the Northern franchise is to be let on a transformational basis (as opposed to the previous steady state). Although through trains to Manchester Airport have been specified, the CRP would have preferred more than two each way and considers that this should be the minimum requirement.

Officers of the CRP have met with each of the bidders for the franchise and presented them with a shopping list for them to consider in making their bid. The successful bidder for the franchise is scheduled to be announced in December and it is intended to meet with them

as soon as possible in order to share ideas and assist in the smooth implementation of their plans. Having three operators involved in the operation of the Lakes Line in future (Northern, TPE and Virgin) instead of the current two will add to the challenge, and the CRP is an obvious forum for all these TOCs to come together to ensure the smooth running of the line.

Planning for the forthcoming electrification of the Lakes Line continues although it is disappointing to note that the timescales have been delayed by a further six months. The CRP will continue to press for swift implementation of this scheme in order that connectivity of the line is assured for the future. The CRP is also working with Staveley with Ings Parish Council to further the case for better access at Staveley station, which requires passengers to negotiate a steep staircase of 41 steps.

I should like to conclude by thanking the hard working members of the Lakes Line Rail User Group and all the organisations who have funded the CRP this year. I also wish to express my appreciation for the help and assistance of my fellow officers, Dick Smith and Ian Wilkinson, and that of Jim Trotman, our Community Rail Project Officer.

Tim Owen, Chairman

Achievements

- During 2015, much time and effort has been spent engaging with the franchise bidders for the new Northern and TransPennine franchises. The Cumbria Better Connected Report, organised and funded through the Furness Line CRP, showed that the existing services were “not fit for purpose” and many of the recommendations in that report were included in the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the new Northern Franchise.
- Engagement sessions were held with all the franchise bidders and evidence was supplied to help them prepare submissions for running services on Cumbrian lines.
- The CRPs also responded to consultation documents regarding Manchester International Airport, the start of the Inter-City West Coast Franchise (ICWC) renewal process and the timetables for local lines.
- Electrification of the Oxenholme-Windermere route has been confirmed but completion is not expected until 2017/18 even though preparatory work has started.
- The first combined Strategy & Action Plan for the three CRPs was produced, approved by the individual CRPs and was adopted by the DfT. A new standard format will be used in 2016.
- Officers have attended the ACoRP Designated Lines Seminars and meetings, Travel Watch North West meetings and meetings with the TOCs.
- Meetings have also taken place with industry partners including NuGen, Sellafield Limited, local authorities, parish councils and rail user groups plus a growing number of “Station Friends” groups.
- The year has seen a rise in volunteer efforts including 50 people getting involved with cleaning the Maryport station area and others getting involved with gardening

and restoration work at Kents Bank, Grange, Silverdale and Wigton, plus the ongoing volunteer staffing at Millom.

- At the national Community Rail Awards held at Torquay in October, two First Prize awards were accepted. One was for the completion of the station art project with 110 panels at local stations, and the other one was jointly with the Grange in Bloom Volunteers and TPE for the station gardens.
- The underpass near Kendal station has been transformed with the completion of the mural funded by local councillors and coordinated by the CRP. This was nominated for a Community Rail Award but was not successful.
- A new passenger shelter has been provided at Kents Bank station.
- Restoration work has commenced at Silverdale station's old shelter where a new Friends group has become very active.
- The Cumbrian Coast Line CRP had considerable input into the development of 'hub' stations proposals at Maryport and Workington. The project at Maryport has now been confirmed and work continues into other proposals for similar enhancements at other locations.
- Two new shelters have been provided by Northern Rail at Dalton station along with CCTV.
- New state-of-the-art customer information screens (CIS) has also been provided by Northern Rail at Askam, Dalton, Cark, Millom, Seascale, Sellafield, St Bees, Wigton and Workington stations. These are even an improvement on the CIS installed at Maryport in 2014 and the CIS screens installed by TPE at stations along the Lakes Line last year.
- Community Poster cases have now been purchased, with grant funding from ACoRP and Cumbria CC, and are being fitted at stations around the coast during late 2015.
- The new Walks from the Furness Line leaflets (50,000) were launched in the summer and have been distributed widely. These match the Discover Cumbria by Train leaflets that were launched in 2013/14. They will also match the Walks from the Lakes Line leaflets that will be launched ready for 2016.
- The Cumbrian CRP lines were represented at the Community Rail in the City day at Preston station in the spring. It was not possible to exhibit at Glasgow or London in 2015 but the CRPs did also promote the lines at the DfT's Civil Service Live events and at the Lake District National Park.
- Questions about the age of current Northern Rail rolling stock and the need for fit for purpose rolling stock were raised at the All Party Parliamentary Group for the North in October.
- Ongoing meetings are taking place regarding possible station relocations or access developments at Staveley, Burneside and Kendal and feasibility studies are to be initiated as part of Network Rail's GRIP process.
- A comprehensive development plan for a new educational initiative at Millom station has been completed and discussions with the HLF are currently ongoing.
- A redevelopment scheme is planned for Dalton station, an important commuter route into Carlisle.
- New loco hauled services have been introduced on the Carlisle-Barrow-Preston route, operated by Direct Rail Services (DRS) in partnership with Northern Rail and

the DfT. Although aging rolling stock has not always been reliable, these services have been popular with enthusiasts and tourists.

- Passenger surveys have been carried out, using new SNAP software, plus the summer Welcome programme on Lakes Line trains. This involved much volunteer time and effort from the rail user group
- The three individual CRP websites have continued to promote the lines and cover the news stories as they arise. The usage figures for all three CRP websites continues to do well with a total of almost 2 million hits and visits to them between mid November 2014 and mid November 2015 (details below).
- Good press coverage has been achieved for the Furness Line Walks leaflet, the new shelter at Kents Bank station, the Kendal underpass mural, the Cark station mural, the gardens sculpture at Grange and the community rail awards.



Winners at the 2015 Community Rail Awards in Torquay, 1st October, 2015.



Cumbria CC, Cumbria Tourism, The Lake District National Park and Lakes Line CRP working together.

Some statistics

- It is difficult to estimate the hours spent by volunteers providing services for the railways but some can spend up to 40 hours per week at certain times of the year. Overall, about 5,500 hours of volunteer time has been committed to the CRP lines in Cumbria over the past year, including the hours spent by gardening groups and rail user group members. The hours spent by level 1 station adopters have not been included the estimate of time and effort committed to the railways.

Websites+	Cumbrian Coast	Furness Line	Lakes Line
Hits	931,111	399,002	642,240
Visits	905,519	388,326	624,995

+ The peak month for visits to all the websites was August. All lines have shown significant growth in visits since 2014.

Station footfall*	Cumbrian Coast**	Furness Line	Lakes Line***
Total 2013/14	1,415,053	1,606,638	1,132,958
" 2014/15	1,558,685 (+9%)	1,650,860 (+3%)	1,193,944 (+5%)
Busiest stations			
	Whitehaven	Barrow	Oxenholme
	Sellafield	Ulverston	Windermere
	Millom	Carnforth	Kendal

* ORR figures are based on ticket sales – entry plus exit.

** Barrow and Carlisle station figures excluded.

*** including Oxenholme.

- In total, the three lines carried at least 4.403 million people in 2014/15 and adjusting for ticketless travel and passes, this is closer to **4.8 million passengers**.



A new shelter at Ravenglass station

Future Plans

Once the new franchises are announced in December 2015, CRC will be meeting with the new operator of the Northern franchise and finalising plans set out in the draft Strategy & Action Plan for 2016-2019. With additional funding for CRPs being promised as part of the franchising process, it is likely that infrastructure projects will be a priority as new rolling stock will take a couple more years to deliver.

CRC will also maintain a close working relationship with the other TOCs providing services into Cumbria and connections to the community rail lines.

The CRC future projects list includes the following:

- Continued promotion of the Cumbrian lines through and agreed marketing plan with the new TOC.
- To work closely with the new franchise to get the best possible train service for the line during the life of the new franchise.
- To assist with planning future train services and infrastructure investment that meets the needs of the nuclear and engineering sectors of the economy.
- To develop long term plans for access improvements at Arnside, Burneside, Silverdale, Staveley and Ulverston stations.
- Continue to seek funding for station improvements and restoration work at Askam, Carnforth, Dalton, Silverdale and Wigton stations, along with the development of Hub stations at Millom, Workington and Whitehaven.
- Continue to lobby for investment in the lines including future electrification of the coastal routes.
- Seek the installation of Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) and Customer Information Screens (CIS) at more unstaffed stations along the lines.
- Launch the “Walks from the Lakes Line” brochure in early 2016 with the funding partners.
- Work with the Morecambe Bay Partnership to provide a viewing area across Morecambe Bay at Kents Bank station.
- Further develop plans with the TOCs for additional “Hub stations” at Arnside and Grange to utilise HLF funding becoming available through the Morecambe Bay Partnership.
- Seek improved and closer engagement with local and regional business and industry leaders to encourage their greater involvement and partnership with the CRC.



Press coverage

Good publicity for the lines in Cumbria is an on-going priority. During 2015, the CRPs had coverage on Border TV, BBC Radio Cumbria and articles in the Westmorland Gazette, the Barrow Evening News and other local newsletters and trade magazines. Positive press stories will continue to be delivered in 2016/17.

ACCOUNTS – 2015/16 BUDGET

Cumbria County Council acts as the Accountable Body and main banker for the CRPs. The financial position outlined below is based on figures provided by Cumbria County Council at the end of 2015.

CRC maintains a small operational account for small items of income and expenditure. The CRC budgets are rolling budgets, i.e. rolling over from one financial year to the next.

The CRP Officers are employed by the County Council but are answerable to the CRC Steering Committee as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between CRC and Cumbria CC.

The overall budget for the Cumbrian CRPs at the end of 2015 is made up as follows:

Budget Summary	Cumbrian Coast	Furness Line	Lakes Line
Income*	£145,000	£79,900	£49,800
Expenditure**	£45,000	£38,200	£29,000
Current balance	£100,000	£41,700	£20,800

* Includes carry forward from previous years, grants and financial support from members.

** Includes salaries, on-costs and projects.

Note: the figures do not include 'help in kind' provided by Virgin Trains and Network Rail.

This gives a carry forward into 2016 of **£162,500**.

This sum has been carefully managed in anticipation of cuts to local authority funding and the future need to increase staffing levels from 2 FTE to 4 FTE. From the end of 2015/16 there will be no direct financial support from Cumbria CC and very limited financial support from other local authorities. It is anticipated that this shortfall will be more than matched by additional TOC funding in the new franchise.



Some images from the Lines



Children from Flookburgh CE Primary School with their mural at Cark station.



Transformed Underpass at Kendal.



New shelter at Kents Bank.



Vital connections – Oxenholme.



Continuing environmental challenges – Aspatria land slip.



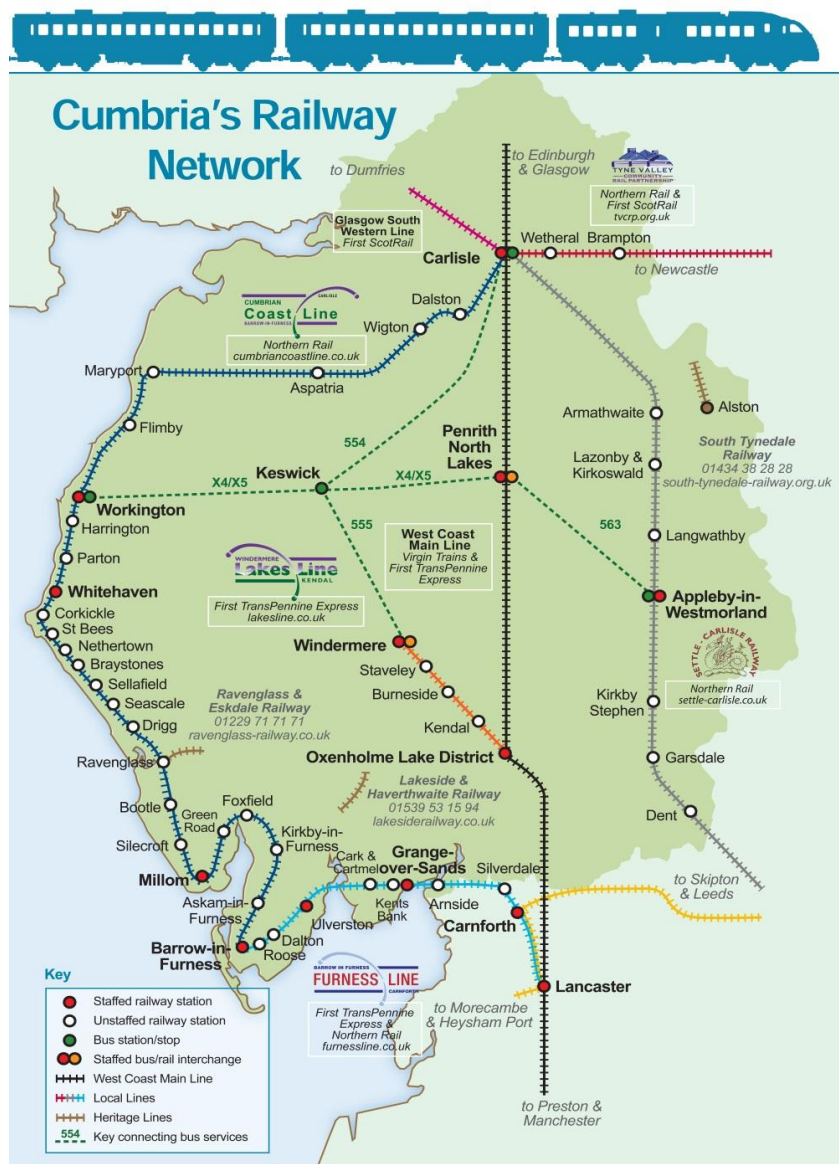
Getting information into the community – Ambleside.



Promoting rail travel in Cumbria – Community Rail in the City at Preston station.



Award winning gardens at Grange-over-Sands.



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