

Spring 2010



On a snowy 6th January 333 011 waits to leave for Leeds with the 10.18 train. All is running smoothly on the railway in spite of the snow.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We hope you enjoy our new look newsletter. Steve Broadbent has moved on – with all his publishing expertise. To read his wise words you will now have to purchase 'Rail' magazine. We are however thankful that Andrew Noble has stepped into the breach and offered to produce this newsletter. It may not look quite as professional but we hope that you consider it to be 'fit for purpose'.

Our AGM is coming up soon. It's the usual venue, Saltaire Methodist Church on Saturday April 10th at 14.00. Please do come along to support us and, as ever, any offers of help will be welcomed. Jenny Whiteside should be able to show us some of her recent work on our website and we have, as guest speaker Dr. Paul Salveson MBE. Many of you will know him for his work at Northern Rail, building up community links. We look forward to hearing his reflection on this work and to hear about his current work as External Relations Manager at Grand Central. The press release quotes Paul as saying "Grand Central is a dynamic, locally based, open access operator running InterCity trains so you could say that I've joined Britain's longest Community Railway!". In that case we are looking forward to develop our links with a second Community Railway Company!

AIREDALE OVERCROWDING AND INVESTMENT

Unfortunately there is still little in the way of progress to report. The main sticking point appears to be the availability of rolling stock. Until extra coaches have been identified, Network Rail is unsurprisingly holding back on the development of the plans for lengthening the platforms along the line. This leaves us with severely overcrowded trains.

It currently appears that any substantial amount of additional rolling stock in Northern England is likely to be dependent on the plans for modernisation of the railway around London, in particular of the 'Thameslink' route. This will free up substantial quantities of relatively modern class '319' trains. It is planned that they will be refurbished (and air-conditioning added). They will be then used on newly electrified routes elsewhere in the country.

The first routes to benefit are in the north-west where a triangle of routes connecting Manchester, Liverpool and Preston (plus onwards to Blackpool) are to be electrified. Larger numbers of the class '319' trains are then to be used on the newly electrified 'Great Western' services out of London to Reading and Oxford. Both of these transfers will displace diesel trains (our favourite 'Pacers' in the north-west and the rather more modern class 165 and 166 units from Great Western) enabling a further cascade of diesel trains to ease overcrowding across the country.

This is all at least four to five years away – and the recent announcement of delays in the procurement of the new units for the 'Thameslink' route suggests that it could easily be further delayed. In all the speculation in the railway press there is little mention of our 'Leeds North Western' system with its all too small fleet of electric trains...

We haven't been sitting back however. Recent articles in the Bradford Telegraph and Argus and the Craven Herald have given considerable space to our views of the need to invest. We have also been speaking to local MPs. Philip Davies (the Shipley MP) has been particularly active on our behalf.

We pointed out the way that the overcrowding statistics fail to represent the true overcrowding on our services because they show loadings as a % of the seating capacity. Thus a First Capital Connect service out of Kings Cross with a load factor of 171% has 44 passengers standing per coach. This is about the same number standing per coach as on some of our services – but because there are 360 seats in our 4 coach trains that is a load factor of “only 150%”.

Philip Davies is concerned, as we are, about the lack of investment here in Yorkshire (compared with the London City Region) and he has written to both the DfT and Yorkshire Forward. In reply, Chris Mole at the DfT says “We are currently in discussion with Northern Rail on measures to increase capacity on as many as possible of the operator’s busiest trains, and shall make an announcement in due course when discussions are concluded”. Yorkshire Forward “recognise the need for additional and new trains to be introduced in the region” and are “involved in regular dialogue” but their “funding constraints mean it is very unlikely we would be able to fund the Airedale fleet or other projects”.

THE NORTHERN HUB

“The Northern Hub: Transforming Rail in the North” is the ambitious title of a recent report by Network Rail. The focus is on infrastructure improvements around Manchester but the aim is to be able to improve rail services across the north of England. It talks of 700 extra trains each day between major towns and cities. The main improvements envisaged are:-

- a new curve at Ordsall to enable trains from Manchester Victoria to swing round through Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations and onto the Airport. Trains from Leeds via Huddersfield would no longer need to reverse at Manchester Piccadilly. Trains from the Calder Valley line could potentially access Manchester Airport and Victoria and Piccadilly stations would have a direct rail link.
- major improvements to Manchester Victoria so it could serve as a major interchange station
- extra tracks on the key Trans Pennine routes which would enable fast trains to overtake stopping local services, opening the way for improved frequencies and speeds of trains.

There is a whole page devoted to the improvements for rail services in Leeds and Yorkshire. The focus is however entirely on the potential improvements to Leeds to Manchester services (6 trains per hour with a journey time of 43 minutes). The report is undoubtedly a step forward and improvements are needed to the railway infrastructure around Manchester. However it doesn’t really touch on the major issues of Leeds, Bradford and Yorkshire local services. There is no mention of our local services. In short the report would more fairly be entitled ‘The Manchester Hub’.

ALL CHANGE AT NORTHERN RAIL

We are sad to report that Heidi Mottram, Managing Director at Northern Rail for several years is moving on to take up post as Chief Executive at Northumbrian Water. We have appreciated her contribution and her consistent efforts to involve stakeholders, like us, in the business. In the short term Ian Bevan will be interim managing director while our Area Director, Steve Butcher will be Interim Deputy Managing Director.

Another familiar face who has moved on is Dr. Paul Salvesson who is now External Relations Manager at Grand Central. We will welcome him as guest speaker at our AGM in that new capacity.

TRAIN PERFORMANCE



333002 at Crosshills on the 1026 from Leeds

Train services on our line have run remarkably well in the very difficult winter weather this year. We haven’t had the Eurostar disaster with the snow – or indeed the strange failure of large parts of the Trans Pennine fleet because the snow stopped the horns working (it would be funny had it not resulted in extensive train cancellations). There have been some problems with the electric class ‘333’ units. It appears that snow found its way into some of the high voltage cabling where it duly melted and caused

electrical short circuits. This resulted in some units running on half-power, some diesel substitutions and a couple of failures on the line. The worst failures happened fortuitously on Saturday afternoons when traffic was not so heavy (on 9th January at Bingley and 23rd January near Steeton). So it has to be a big thank you to the staff who turned up at work throughout the big freeze and to the fitters who frequently were working overnight at Skipton to get the trains fixed for the next morning.

It appears that the immediate problems with the electric trains have been sorted. A permanent fix will be sought before next winter. Let's look forward to Spring!

FIRST CLASS TRAVEL BY 'SOUTH WESTERN'



158 888, often seen in the Aire Valley but on the 8th March it accompanies 153 328 on the 15.48 from Manchester Victoria to Selby. It is seen here leaving Bradford Interchange

The more sharp-eyed amongst you may have noticed a 'South Western Trains' liveried unit running up and down our line. It is '158 888' and is on hire until May to enable Northern Rail to strengthen Cumbrian Coast services. I would recommend trying out the first class section (at one end of the unit). The seats are very comfortable and there's loads of legroom!

POTENTIAL FOR CLASS '333' ENERGY SAVINGS

Like many of you, I travel regularly in the Aire Valley and am most impressed by the effective air conditioning on the modern class '333' electric trains. It seems to work, even when the trains are overcrowded on hot summer afternoons. It's such a contrast to the older diesel units on which the air conditioning often struggles to cope. I had however wondered about the energy efficiency of these modern trains seeing them stood with the passenger doors wide open at Bradford, Leeds or Skipton. There must be a substantial energy cost as the air-conditioning strives to bring Leeds station to a nice comfortable 20 Centigrade on a frosty winter or sweltering summer day.

It also leads to some unpleasant draughts for passengers seated closer to the doors.

I had read all about Northern Rail's efforts to reduce their energy consumption (there are more details available on their website at <http://www.northernrail.org/northern/environment>) and wanted to follow up about the energy consumption of our trains.

I have therefore been in touch with Dr. Karen Booth who is Head of Sustainability at Northern Rail with a remit that includes environmental improvements. She commented that the fleet was introduced with saloon Auto Door Close in 2000 so that the doors automatically shut after a set time period. However in the first year there was an incident where the conductor was left on the platform and as a result the decision was made to remove this facility. This has resulted in the doors being left open until either the door close button is operated or the Conductor closes the door.

Northern Rail have been working with Siemens to resolve this. They are now proposing a modified Door Control Switch that cannot be left in the open position so eliminates any risk. With these new switches fitted, the existing Door Auto Close function could be re-instated. The formal Change Control Pack has been provided by Siemens and Northern and Angel Trains (the vehicle owner) will be reviewing this over the next few months. The modification must clearly be both safe, reliable and meet the relevant standards, so there will be detailed trials before the system is re-instated.

Also, in the next few weeks Northern will be installing new energy meters which produce data that can be downloaded. This should give a clearer picture of energy demand. It will be possible to monitor the effect of different driving styles on energy consumption – as well as to quantify the energy savings from the automatic door closure software when that is brought back into use.

Keep a look out then for those automatically closing doors. They should be (back) with us some time soon.

curement of the new InterCity trains. The deal

ENGINEERING WORK

Engineering work meant bus replacements between Leeds and Shipley on Sundays February 7th and 14th. There were some issues with the number of buses provided and with difficulties accessing Leeds station.

We are not aware of any planned work on the Aire Valley line over the next month or two. There will however be alterations to Saturday afternoon services to Morecambe during March due to engineering work in the Carnforth area. Look up the times if you are travelling.

More work is also planned along the Settle & Carlisle line with the replacement of another 23 miles of track. The work starts in April but will be concentrated on overnight possessions. We are promised that there will be "virtually no disruption to passenger services". We are also promised that this £12m project is the culmination of the five year plan to replace jointed track on that line.

METRO CONCESSIONARY FARE INCREASE

Members of Metro's Integrated Transport Authority's Executive Committee agreed a new rate of 50p for concessionary off-peak train travel in West Yorkshire. The 15p rise is the first since 2005. It means that the county's concessionary card holders, including people over 60 who now also have free off-peak local bus travel throughout England, can still travel the length and breadth of the county by train for just 50p.

Cardholders can take advantage of the 50p fare after 9.30am Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and on Bank Holidays. The new fare is scheduled to be introduced from 23 May this year (until then it's even more of a bargain at 35p).

EAST COAST NEWS

We described the proposed new timetable in the last issue. The headline news since then is a five month delay in its introduction, now expected in May 2011. This will give more time for planning – and especially to try to find paths for a couple of super-fast services. A sub 2 hour morning peak service from Leeds is desired, along with a pair of Edinburgh to London services in under 4 hours (probably with just one stop at Newcastle).

There are no additional services to Bradford or Skipton in the plan.

A further delay recently announced is in the pro-

will not be signed before the general election and meanwhile is subject to a Value for Money review by the National Audit Office. We wait to see what this produces.

Meanwhile East Coast are promising better service through attention to detail. They have highlighted attention to the WiFi, catering, staff training and train cleaning.

Letters

AVRUG welcomes letters to the Editor, whether questions about our railways or comments on them for possible inclusion in airlines. Please address them to the editor, as below and we will do our best to fully answer points raised. Letters will be published as space permits and may be edited.

Longer contributions to airlines are also welcome. Please contact the editor in advance to make sure space is available and to agree content and deadlines.

Subscriptions and donations

AVRUG works by lobbying for better and more reliable services along the Aire Valley thanks to its loyal membership who pay just £3 a year for the privilege. Donations or sponsorship to allow us to do even more are gratefully welcome. For subscriptions, please contact the Membership Secretary whose details are in this newsletter. For donations, please contact the Treasurer.

Further information about our work can be found on our website.

Next newsletter...

... is due to be published Summer 2010.

Thanks to...

... Northern Rail for generous sponsorship and support for the group. And to Tim Calow and Rod Tickner for the words and to my wife Rachel for proofreading and design.

Leeds Lancaster Morecambe Community Rail Partnership



Key comments are given below from the Executive Group meeting held on 9th March 2010.

The AGM will be held on Tuesday 15 June 2010, at a venue still to be decided but probably Carnforth.

There has been a 6% increase in journeys from 405,000 to 431,000 over the calendar years 2008 compared to 2009. Revenue has also increased. Performance : punctuality has peaked at 94% although some of the winter problems have allowed that figure to drop. It has to be remembered that with only five trains a day, a single problem immediately drops possible punctuality figures to 80%.

As reported last time there is a desire to get the Sunday summer service extended to the whole year as there are no trains on a Sunday morning after September. There was also some discussion about filling in the gaps in the timetable and later trains. It has to be accepted that the service on this line has to fit in around the West Coast Main Line and Trans Pennine Express at the Lancaster end, dovetail into the very busy commuter route in the Aire valley and the complexities of access to Leeds: inevitably, this will lead to some degree of compromise.

Some have thought of an additional Skipton-Lancashire shuttle to add more journey opportunities but it is known that the bulk of the demands is for journeys originating east of Skipton to West of Lancaster and vice versa, and thus this would mean most passengers changing trains. For future time table planning it is imperative to know what passengers specifically want. The knock on effects of changes must also be always examined carefully – what solves one problem for one group can so easily create another problem for another group. So if you have any specific suggestions could you please let me know – rod@avrug.org.uk – then I can raise them at a future meeting.

It was also agreed to go for Service designation

which would give official recognition and increase the Rail Partnership's credibility. This means a 'prospectus' will need to be prepared, and go to consultation to all the relevant bodies including Network Rail.

R Tickner



On 1st February 158 904 and 153 351 arrive in Skipton on the 08.49 from Leeds to Carlisle.

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Aire Valley Rail Users' Group

www.avrug.org.uk

Affiliated to RailFuture

TWENTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at Saltaire Methodist Church Hall
Saltaire Rd, Saltaire, BD18 3HJ
(5 minutes walk from Saltaire train station)

Saturday 10th April 2010
Commencing at 14:00 hours

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 19th AGM held on 16th May 2009
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of Committee officers:

Chair
Vice chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Newsletter editor
Membership secretary
7. Election of committee members
8. Any other competent business