

Spring 2011



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Once again I am having to start this newsletter with an apology. We are late once again. It's a good job we don't have franchise targets to meet. We would be failing badly on punctuality (and cancellation) of our newsletters! The problem (as before) is that we squeeze in the work on the newsletter between our other commitments. Both Andrew and I have studies to complete and I am afraid publication of the newsletter has to take its place in the queue. Unfortunately any schemes that will increase our capacity look to be even more distant than investment in the Airedale line. However, if any of you out there can help then please get in touch with me at [chair@avrug.org.uk](mailto:chair@avrug.org.uk)

## OUR AGM

The agenda for our AGM is included with this newsletter. The meeting is on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May – usual time (14.00) and the usual place, Saltaire Methodist Church, George Street, Saltaire – just a 5 minute walk from Saltaire station. Stan Hall, the well known railway author, will be our guest speaker. His books include “Hidden Dangers” and “Railway Disasters; Cause and Effect”. He will talk about his early railway career at Airedale stations – before he progressed to be a Senior Accident Investigator with British Rail. Do please come – and if you have ever wanted to know about signalling and railway safety – then have your questions ready!

## NORTHERN FRANCHISE EXTENSION

Northern Rail have been granted a two year extension to the franchise after meeting the performance targets set out in the franchise (which started back in December 2004). The extension takes the franchise up to 15<sup>th</sup> September 2013. We are pleased that the extension has been granted as it reflects the generally excellent quality of the local train service.

We wait to see whether this will actually mark the end of the franchise. The new coalition government has been consulting about franchise reform. The idea of longer term franchises has reappeared. The theory is that the longer term will enable the train operator to invest in new trains and even infrastructure enhancements. The example of Chiltern with their investment in new trains and substantial infrastructure upgrades is hopeful. However they have done this by abstracting InterCity traffic from Virgin and expanding their share of the London commuter market. It is difficult to see how upgrades to Yorkshire services can be made without some support (in the form of cash) from those of us who pay taxes.

## NEW TRAINS FOR THE NORTHERN FRANCHISE?

One of the questions frequently asked is why if overcrowding is such a problem do Northern Rail not invest in additional, new trains. Passengers comment that the Leeds to Morecambe and Leeds to Carlisle trains should be formed of better quality rolling stock and should have more seats. The class ‘158’ trains which are rostered on Carlisle services are now around 20 years old. There are issues with them – especially with the ineffective air conditioning. The Pacers used on most Morecambe services are not suitable for a journey of over two hours. Our class ‘333’ trains are ‘fit for purpose’ but there aren't enough vehicles. So why hasn't Northern Rail invested in new trains? The answer lies firstly in the complexities of the franchising system and secondly in the economics of running regional rail services. Finally over recent years the Department for Transport (DfT) has taken responsibility for the procurement of new trains.

The Northern franchise which started in December 2004 is due to run until September 2013. This is for less than 9 years. The working

life of a train is much longer, perhaps 30 to 50 years, so it will need to be used beyond the end of the franchise - if a return is to be made on the considerable investment. Thus investment in trains needs to be agreed with the DfT who will be responsible for re-letting the franchise in 2013.

A number of franchise agreements have included a requirement to invest in trains. The DfT have then guaranteed the longer term use of the new train fleet. The Northern franchise included no such requirement. Northern Rail bid to operate the franchise at minimum cost to the government and on a steady state basis. There has in fact been sustained growth in passenger numbers across the franchise due to a combination of economic growth, road congestion and improving reliability of the rail services.

Over the course of the franchise there have been some amendments to cope with the growth in passenger numbers and to operate additional services required by the DfT. Thus Northern Rail now operates a fast service from Leeds to Nottingham via Barnsley and Sheffield. Additional second hand class '158' units were acquired from across the country to operate the extra and strengthened services. They are used on the Carlisle line and do represent some improvement over the older class '156' units which operated the services until May 2007.

So why doesn't the government guarantee the long term use of new trains and require the franchise to lease new trains? The principal reason is the cost. The only 'commercial' train services in the UK are the long distance services to and from London. High (even extortionate?) fares are charged for peak travel. For the 3 hour journey from Skipton to London the open return fare is now a whopping £253 Standard class. High fares like this enable the service overall to operate on a commercial basis. Neither the Leeds to Skipton day return fare of £9.50 (£8.10 off peak), nor even the Carlisle day return fare of £29.40, do this!

Over recent years the DfT has taken responsibility for the procurement of trains on behalf of the franchises and for planning the deployment of new and older trains. Their initial plans did include a fleet of new diesel trains many of which were to be used by Northern Rail and Trans Pennine. The plans for new diesel trains were however dropped when the DfT decided on a rolling plan of electrification.

There are now no plans for new trains for the Northern franchise. In theory additional trains will reach the region as trains are displaced following the Thameslink modernisation and Great Western

electrification. This is some years away. Until then the only diesel units available will be a handful of cascaded Sprinters (from London Overground and London Midland) and the five class '180' InterCity units which East Coast was to have used for its new service to Lincoln. Northern Rail currently has three of these class 180 units on short term lease until May and is using them on local services on the Manchester to Blackpool axis. The DfT will decide whether these five units can be used by a franchised operator from May. It is currently rumoured that they may return to provide extra capacity for First Great Western.

So what are Northern Rail actually responsible for? They are responsible to fulfil their franchise agreement while making a financial return for their shareholders. They have to turn out the trains on a daily basis, maintained and cleaned to an appropriate standard. They have to ensure that the staff are there to operate the trains and man their stations. If the train is cancelled because of crew shortages or unit failures or short-formed because the units won't couple then that is the fault of Northern (though probably not the fault of the front-line staff who we then meet).

In many ways our local services use resources very efficiently. Fourteen (of the sixteen) electric units work round the Leeds NorthWest system all day. Turnarounds are tight. The operation of the Leeds – Settle – Carlisle service is remarkably efficient. Six units are out on the line each day between the peaks. However the timetable is



designed so that five of these units are available in the morning for commuters into Leeds – and four are available in the evening for the commuters as they return home. The line has the most modern units in the long-term Northern diesel fleet (compared with the Pacers on many Morecambe trains!).

I have to agree that much more could be done to improve the train service. This will however require both investment and increased public subsidy. It's a tough job but we all have to make that case – that the wider benefits make the extra costs worthwhile. So let's talk to our Members of Par-

liament about the benefits to the environment, for social inclusion and for the regional economy!

### LATEST ROLLING STOCK PLANS

The latest information which I have on rolling stock cascades is based on a DfT freedom of information act response dated 24<sup>th</sup> January, kindly forwarded by Christopher Hyomes of Railfuture. It states that Northern are due to receive 28 class '150' carriages (14 units?) from London Midland (once their new diesel units have been delivered and commissioned). This will release 4 class '156' units which are to go to East Midlands trains and the three class '180' units which are on sub-lease from East Coast. My arithmetic suggest that leaves 'Northern' with 5 extra vehicles – the DfT however make the figure 8 (answers on a postcard, please!). Other class



'150' units head to First Great Western, releasing their 7 Class '142' Pacer units. These may return to Northern, subject to the conclusion of financial negotiations. There are another 26 class '150' vehicles freed in the cascade. These might be leased by Northern (or another operator).

There is no mention of the additional electric units which are needed to relieve overcrowding on the Leeds North West system. I have been officially told that rumours of the imminent acquisition of five class '322' units from ScotRail are not true. Shame! **BUT SEE PAGE 5 for STOP PRESS NEWS! THEY ARE COMING>>>>>>>>**

### ENGINEERING WORK

Engineering work has meant bus replacements between Leeds and Shipley on recent Sundays. I would like to thank Peter Johnson (Wharfedale Rail Users Group) who spotted that the last buses from Leeds to Airedale and Wharfedale had no connections beyond Guiseley / Shipley in the printed timetable. These last bus services were duly extended to Skipton and Ilkley. The posters haven't been changed but the correct details are present on the National Rail Enquiry website. Your Chair used the bus replacements on 13<sup>th</sup> March and had no problems. Do get in touch if

you have any comments.

This work is to continue. The line is due to be blocked between Leeds and Shipley (also Guiseley) on Sundays 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April. On 17<sup>th</sup> April then 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> May the line will be shut between Shipley and Skipton.

### ALONG THE LINE

**The Leeds Station Southern Entrance Project has been approved** after cost reductions were found. The DfT is to contribute £12.4m towards the total cost of £14.4m. There will be a substantial time saving for passengers leaving Leeds station to the south and the many office developments along the River Aire.

**In Bradford** the Council is investigating the possibility of safeguarding a route across the city between the two rail stations.

The West Yorkshire PTE continues to work on the scheme for new stations at **Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge**.

**Saltaire.** The monthly village newspaper 'The Saltaire Sentinel' has carried correspondence about the amount of litter on the station. Ray Wilkes, the station adopter, explained that the station is cleaned twice a week (Tuesdays and Fridays) and that litter bags are normally emptied at the same time. Between these visits the state of the station depends on how tidy station users are. Keith Preston (our committee member) has been pressing for action to reduce the large gap between the platform and trains on the Leeds / Bradford platform. He has received a promise that work to reduce the gap will be done this May.

**At Keighley** the new station car park has opened (on the site of the College campus). The 'old' car park is currently closed for refurbishment. The Worth Valley are looking into the financial and practical issues of running a daily commuter service between Oxenhope and Keighley in order to connect with our services onwards to Leeds and Bradford.

**CCTV cameras** are now fitted to all our class '333' electric units. This should help to reduce instances of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

### DISRUPTION ON THE LINE

There was some disruption due to severe winter weather – especially in December. Recent performance has been much better. There were problems on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March when an explosion and fire in industrial premises near Kildwick caused the railway to be shut between about 16.00

and 19.00. Replacement bus services were provided but there was considerable disruption to services.

### **EARLY MORNING CARLISLE TRAINS**

We are not aware of any changes to local train services this May. Early morning through Carlisle trains are however restored / introduced. The 05.55 Leeds to Skipton will now run through to Carlisle. It will call all stations to Skipton, then Hellifield, Settle, Kirkby Stephen and all stations to Carlisle (08.41). We hope that the pathing constraints that prevent the train calling at other local stations beyond Skipton may be addressed in due course. The southbound train leaves Carlisle at 05.58. It also misses some local station stops in order to reach Ribbleshead at 07.16 and continue in the existing path to Leeds.

### **TEN YEARS OF '333s'**

Ten years – I can't believe it! This landmark was reached on January 24<sup>th</sup>. A small ceremony saw Malcolm Brown of Angel Trains (formerly our Area Director) return to Leeds station.

### **EAST COAST NEWS**

We described the proposed new timetable in the last issue. Full details of East Coast services are now available via <http://www.eastcoast.co.uk/22May>

Connections from Airedale are generally good. Arrivals in Leeds from Skipton at xx.58 and xx.28 are well timed for the London departures at xx.15 and xx.45. Travelling back from London the standard arrival times in Leeds are at xx.19 and xx.50. Officially this is too little time to connect into the xx.26 and xx.56 departures to Skipton. In practice there is a generous allowance into Leeds on the London trains (Charter minutes) and the connection should usually be possible.

There are some minor changes (even improvements!) to the through services from Bradford / Skipton. On Mondays to Fridays the Bradford train will leave at 06.33 (and Leeds at 07.00). It will be non-stop from Wakefield and will be due in London at 08.59. The Skipton train continues to leave at 06.55. It has extra stops at Doncaster and Peterborough and will arrive in London at 10.02. The return services leave Kings Cross at 18.03 (Skipton) and 18.33 (Bradford). The 17.33 slot is taken by a new through service to Harrogate. A new development is that the Skipton train is scheduled to be operated by an electric train (class '91'). This hasn't been allowed to date. It is assumed that a recent trial

run to Skipton was a success.

On Saturdays services leave Skipton (06.55) and Bradford (07.33). The return trains are at 18.35 (Skipton) and 19.30 (Bradford). The earlier 17.35 slot is taken by the new service to Harrogate. A new development, to be welcomed, is the Sunday 18.35 through train from Kings Cross to Skipton (21.46). This too is scheduled to be an electric train.

### **SELRAP**

SELRAP has been busy campaigning for the reopening of the Skipton to Colne railway. They have recently held meetings with MEPs in Brussels and the DfT in London. They are encouraged by increased interest from local councils.

### **Grand Central Railway - Any use to us in the Aire Valley? By Rod Tickner**

I recently travelled to London twice at short notice and tried out the Grand Central service. I wondered whether it would be viable to use the 662 bus which runs between Keighley, Bingley, Shipley and Bradford Interchange to link into this service.

Standard off-peak return is £67, available even if you board on the train, whereas the cheapest last minute East Coast fare from Leeds – London was £83.70 return.

One of the return trips was on a Saturday when we were kept in check by the preceding East Coast service which stops at some stations before Doncaster and I have summarised the timings. The East Coast timings assumes you would not catch the 1656 Skipton train (only two minutes which would be a real piece of luck if you did it) but added on the bus journey from Keighley Railway Station.

*East Coast leaves 1430, arrive Leeds 1654, then change to local Airedale service Leeds 1726, Keighley 1751, then a bus to home with arrival about 1815.*

*Grand Central leave 1439, arrive Bradford 1754, then change to 662 bus at interchange towards Keighley with arrival about 1850.*

About 30 minutes extra I make it with just the single change at Bradford. Slightly annoying that the trains and buses are on the same level but you have to go downstairs and upstairs to transfer – however that is the price of a safer system.

The 180 units have five cars: the seats are



generally in line with windows, which makes a welcome change. Unfortunately some of the views as we dawdle through the industrial West Yorkshire are less impressive. One feature of slower speeds with the throb of the diesels meant writing neatly was out of the question! The noise level was noticeable, however once beyond Doncaster when cruising within their expected operating speed it sounded better. I understand that there are speed restrictions particularly on the section of line from Askern Junction (north of the Doncaster-York line) and Knottingley which was formerly freight only, the passenger service closed in 1947. However I am informed that timings will be improved from May 2011.

Until then the last train arrives at 2312, missing the last 662 bus timed for 2310. On a Sunday the last train arrives at 2236 and the last 662 bus leaves at 2245 – this might be a bit tight. As the tickets are only valid on Grand Central trains this could be a drawback. The first buses leave Keighley in time to connect with the first train of the day at 0651 Monday to Friday and 0620 Saturdays. However there is no connection for the first Sunday service up to London. But the middle service (1022 off Bradford and 1420 from London (1439 Saturdays) works well.

I found the staff very helpful and polite. On one return journey there were some delays but good and helpful information was given and the Senior Conductor stated that he would walk through the train to answer any questions.

It certainly seems as if the two stage journey, especially with some speeding up and the pricing structure could mean it is a viable alternative to East Coast. Better financial deals may be available if you can book a longer time in advance but for me, Grand Central is a viable alternative.

## **ALLIANCE RAIL**

This new open access operator has plans to develop a wide range of high speeds services from Euston to Blackpool and Carlisle and from Kings Cross to Cleethorpes, Ilkley, Skipton and Huddersfield. Their Managing Director attended a public meeting in Keighley. He explained their plans to purchase a fleet of new 'dual fuel' high speeds trains (140 mph capable). Services from Skipton would run approximately 2 hourly. Their ambitious plans said to be backed by the state railway 'Deutsche Bahn' and they are looking to a starting date of 2014.

## **STOP PRESS NEWS: CLASS 322 UNITS**

We are delighted to be able to tell you that five 4 car class '322' units are to be moved to West Yorkshire this Autumn. These units that are currently used between Edinburgh and North Berwick and are being displaced following the introduction of new Siemens electric units.

These five class 322 units are very similar to the '321' units already used on the Doncaster line (and they may well be reclassified). Northern Rail will then have eight of these units to supplement the class '333' fleet.

There will be additional peak services on the Airedale, Wharfedale and Doncaster lines. Our extra trains are at 07.39 from Skipton to Leeds—and back at 17.39. The 07.01 Skipton to Bradford will also be a 4 car electric instead of a 2 car Sprinter.

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## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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# Aire Valley Rail Users' Group

[www.avrug.org.uk](http://www.avrug.org.uk)  
Affiliated to RailFuture

## TWENTY FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at Saltaire Methodist Church Hall

Saturday 7<sup>TH</sup> May 2011  
commencing at 1400 hours

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### AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> AGM held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010
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

Light refreshments will be served at 1445 hours before a talk from our guest speaker – Stan Hall.

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Minutes of the twentieth AGM held on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010  
in the Church Hall, Saltaire Methodist Church.

PRESENT

Fifteen members were present together with James Vasey of Bradford Rail Users' Group.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Steve Broadbent, Keith Renshaw, Paul Kampen, John Bearpark and Kathy Pitt.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 16<sup>th</sup> May 2009

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed nem con as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Tim Calow reported that it had been a steady year of stability: despite the heavy snow during winter the service continued which indicated the level of staff commitment to get into work to keep the service running. There had been some problems with the electrical circuits of 333 stock due to snow but the service had been generally reliable. His own various travels had all gone well and illustrated how good Northern were, relatively speaking, in the checking of tickets compared to some other companies. He was, personally, still unsure of the usefulness of ticket barriers at Leeds which caused long delays for those unable to but a ticket on a train having boarded at an unstaffed station.

In response to questions raised from the meeting it was also noted that the platform height at Saltaire was especially problematic and could be causing potential customers to be lost.

The principal challenges for Northern were the loss of Heidi Mottram and Paul Salveson at management level; and the low levels of investment as the service required more trains and longer platforms as well as additional car parking. Plans for replacement rolling stock were less well developed than envisaged at last year's AGM – with a small amount of additional stock being available for the Manchester area although there was some possibility of further class 321 EMU stock becoming available.

The enhanced Leeds-London service had been postponed for six months and the replacement stock for the HST had been delayed. However the new Grand Central service from Bradford to London via Halifax and Pontefract was due to start in May.

New stations at Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge were progressing.

With regard to the committee Jenny Whiteside had updated the website and new publicity leaflets were available, all while becoming a mother; Steve Broadbent had to relinquish the editorial chair of the news letter but his place had been filled by Andrew Noble. Marten Lougee was now also chair of the BTP Advisory group. Tim Calow remained busy with an impending 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and ordination in July.

Finally he thanked those attending for their support; reminding those present that more help was always welcome especially for the vacant role of secretary.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Although there was a larger deficit, a grant from Northern Rail had been promised towards newsletter costs and as there were reserves the subscription rates should remain unchanged. However with increased copying and postage costs it was likely that the rate would need to be reviewed in 2011.

The report's acceptance was proposed by Peter Bewes and seconded by David Lowe and was carried.

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following were proposed by Alan Ward, seconded by John Heaton and agreed:

Chair	Tim Calow
Vice chair	Marten Lougee
Secretary	vacancy
Treasurer	Rod Tickner
Membership Secretary	Keith Renshaw
Newsletter Editor	Andrew Noble
Publicity	Jenny Whiteside

## ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

The following were proposed Jenny Whiteside, seconded by Alan Ward and agreed:

Peter Bewes  
Keith Preston  
Malcolm Riley

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Peter Bewes reported on developments with SELRAP.

After refreshments Paul Salveson joined the meeting and presented latest details from Grand Central and answered questions.