Our picture of a new Northern train is good news. But Northern’s franchise is effectively bankrupt, performance has been abysmal and committed new services have not been delivered. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps seems to agree with regional leaders like Greater Manchester’s Andy Burnham that this can not go on. Arriva Rail North will (in some sense) be “stripped of the franchise”, meaning either takeover by a government-owned company, or a management contract awarded to Arriva itself. Extra Calder Valley services linking to south Manchester and the Airport, should have been introduced in the current timetable but are on hold. Mytholmroyd and Sowerby Bridge have had their service cut with May’18 improvements taken away. The Brighouse (and Elland) line is desperate for a better service. Failure of the franchise must not mean letting the railway collectively off the hook. A lot of Northern’s problems stem from late delivery of Network Rail infrastructure projects and, critically, failure at the Department of Transport to approve capacity works in Manchester. Transport for the North as calling again for those works to be approved. HADRAG has also written (again) to the Secretary of State (see inside). We say that whoever is running the trains must be charged producing a timetable that works, and using imaginative solutions to give our line its fair share of benefits. —JSW

Future HADRAG Committee meetings: Monday evenings, 7pm in Halifax (venues to be confirmed—contact us for details) open to all members: March 9th, May 18th, July 13th. **2020 AGM** will be a Saturday late May or early June, hopefully in Brighouse, details to follow. • To join HADRAG or renew membership for 2020 see form with this newsletter.
Dear Secretary of State,

Northern railways and the Calder Valley Line – towards solutions

HADRAG is a campaigning rail users’ group, a supportive, positive and respected “critical friend” of the railway. We seek a modern, sustainable railway that more and more people want to use. Failure of the railway collectively to deliver either day-to-day service reliability or promised enhancements is a desperate disappointment. We welcome your recent statements. We understand that you have a process in place to resolve the Northern franchise issues. From a passenger viewpoint, we wholeheartedly agree that action is needed. Thank you in anticipation for considering the following.

We were concerned by reports of a proposal to split Northern (Arriva Rail North) into two separate east and west companies:

- Such a suggestion poses more questions for our Calder Valley Line than for on any other Northern-operated route. Four cross-boundary services per hour penetrate deep into east and west Pennine territories. Yorkshire commuters travel regularly into Manchester and Lancashire, using services that span York, Leeds, Preston, Blackpool, Manchester, Wigan and Chester.
- We agree that Northern is geographically large. But we believe an already fragmented railway needs to be re-integrated, not split into further smaller parts
- Such re-integration should, we believe, go beyond the existing Northern TOC bringing in TransPennine Express and the infrastructure operator Network Rail. Vertical integration – literally across the “wheel-rail interface” is perhaps more critical than geographical boundaries. But the cross-Pennine services of Northern and TPE should also be brought together since they are complementary and need to be operated in cooperation.

Whatever the future structure, the railway in the North must be collectively tasked with the duty, and provided with the financial and physical resources, to achieve the following priorities:

a) To run a reliable and punctual and comfortable service in the short term and going forward.

b) To deliver benefits that were promised by the 2015 franchise. These must include enhancements such as (on our line) increased frequency between Bradford and Manchester, and a regular link with the south side of Manchester, for which we know there is demand in terms of access to employment, education, attractions and connections. Locally, it is a major disappointment that the present franchise is unable to deliver these commitments.

c) To plan for further improvements to services and new services. In the Calder Valley there is a pressing need for a better service on the Brighouse route (which will hopefully have an additional station at Elland in 2-3 years). Since December 2019 Brighouse has only one train an hour Leeds-Manchester plus a Bradford-Huddersfield shuttle – a cut in service which fails to comply with the Train Service Requirement (TSR) in the original franchise agreement.

The recent collapse in service performance on both Northern and TransPennine Express sadly coincided with the introduction of new rolling stock, turning good news into bad. We hear that new trains were introduced with staff training insufficiently complete on both TOCs. Meanwhile, regular late-running by TPE causes hold-ups at Manchester, Leeds and York, hitting the performance of Northern-operated Calder Valley trains, showing the inter-dependence of the two TOCs.

The train companies seem to have offered too much with too little resources or allowance for contingencies. But failure to deliver franchise commitments for the Calder Valley Line is due in part to capacity on the Ordsall and Castlefield route through south Manchester. The Ordsall chord was built to carry both long-distance TPE trains and Northern’s Calder Valley services. Complementing Ordsall, we should by now have two more through platforms in use.
at Manchester Piccadilly and other works completed to allow longer dwell times and more trains. But the go ahead for this work was not given. We know other possible enhancements in the area are being considered. Meanwhile, Northern have told us they are banned from bidding for the additional Calder Valley services. Yet TPE is allowed to run 2 trains/hour from North East England to Manchester Airport via the Huddersfield line and Ordsall.

**We respectfully ask therefore:**

- **That you give the go-ahead** – now – to the Castlefield enhancements planned originally for CP5 (2014-19). These are essential to deliver the priorities (1) and (2) above – franchise commitments.
- **That service planning** should treat Northern and TPE as complementary and equal priorities. As we wait for more capacity, it may be necessary to run fewer trains – for now – via Castlefield. All we ask, however, is a fair share of the available paths, and delivery of promises that were made for our line. We look for imaginative interim solutions to deliver benefits.
- **For a realisation** that Calder Valley line passengers find it unreasonable that present reliability and potential future services are being damaged because other train operators take priority. Connectivity across Yorkshire, Manchester and Lancashire are at least as important as connectivity between Tyne/Tees and Manchester Airport.
- **For further infrastructure enhancements** to allow better timetabling and performance. Examples include additional tracks at pinch points, passing loops so that freight traffic does not hinder the passenger service, and of course electrification – essential for decarbonisation.

Whatever the short-term fix, we call for “one railway” involving both TOCs and Network Rail. We have no wish to pre-empt the (overdue) Williams Review. But:

- Please do not keep us waiting any longer for publication of Williams and of your White Paper!
- Could some of the ideas generated by Williams be brought forward as a pilot to tackle the problems of the railway in the North of England, a process that is now urgent?
- Train planning functions at present seemingly in “silos” at the separate TOCs and in Network Rail have obstructed apparently easy service improvements. Two local stations one of which serves the significant catchment area of Sowerby Bridge have seen cuts in service with trains missing out stops late at night, their latest blow being loss of daytime services to York, Preston and Blackpool. Planning must be unified, and devolved as far possible to ensure that decisions are informed by local detail and responsive to common sense proposals.

We look for an alliance of train operators, Network Rail, local/combined authorities and Transport for the North to plan a service pattern that is fair to all, design a timetable that works, and operate it through a system that is adequately funded, swift-acting, and well -communicating within the railway and outside it.

Yours sincerely, and with thanks again,

(by email)

J Stephen Waring, Chair, HADRAG
cc MPs, local leaders, media, neighbouring rail user groups, Railfuture

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**Franchising dead?**

*RAIL* magazine (15 January) reports a DfT spokesperson saying the suggestion of splitting Northern was not something the Government had considered. This contradicts items in several news media last month: “The Government is preparing to scythe one of Britain’s biggest rail networks in two as part of a potential re-nationalisation of train services across the North of England. Northern rail would be separated into two franchises – North West and North East – under plans prepared by Whitehall officials, senior industry sources said” (the Telegraph online, 25/12/10). So has there been a U-turn, or just media confusion? We should know the short-term future for Northern by the end of this month with a promised announcement by Grant Shapps.

Could the break-up come later under proposals by the Williams Rail Review, still to be unveiled? A White Paper is expected soon. There is a widespread view that franchising is not working. Other train operators including TransPennine Express, South Western Railway and West Midlands Trains are also in trouble with issues to do with performance, finance or both.

HADRAG’s letter to Shapps reflects the submission we made to Williams a year ago. We pointed out the folly of service planning: Northern and TPE each with their own train planners proposing services over the same or closely linked routes, bidding to Network Rail whose own train planning officers remote in Milton Keynes decide the timetable. No wonder its so difficult to implement no-brainer ideas like extra stops at Sowerby Bridge and Mytholmroyd. Devolution, and putting fragmented operations back together must be more important than geographical boundaries.

The rail-wheel interface is a precision machine. Does it not seem crazy that its two parts are run by different organisations?
APOLOGIES for the long wait for this update! Back in August the Charter wrote to Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP when he was still fairly new in the job of Secretary of State for Transport. We made the argument for restarting a rolling programme. A reply from the Department for Transport (DfT) felt very much like a standard answer to letters raising similar points. The DfT says policy is “that rail investment decisions are based on assessments of value for money and passenger and freight benefits [with] enhancements based on the needs they are fulfilling, rather the methods of fulfilment.” They are “committed to electrification where it delivers benefits for passengers and value for money”. What about where it offers the best way of rail playing its part in the battle against climate crisis? There was no mention at this point of the climate benefits of decarbonisation, although there was discussion of air quality and introduction of “progressively more stringent EU standards to drive down emissions from new rail engines” with the aim of a 90% reduction in particulates. That’s good for the quality of the air we breathe, but unfortunately even clean hydrocarbon fuelled engines emit carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas.

The final paragraph says “Our work to improve air quality sits alongside our plans to decarbonise the rail network,” and restates the “ambition to remove all diesel-only trains by 2040”. Note, just “diesel-only”. There is the truism that “since 2010 we have delivered 25 times more route miles of electrification than was delivered between 1997 and 2010”. So, when was that wiring first planned, and where are the plans now for now for the next ten years of electrification of lines such as ours? Serious cost savings are now predicted with a 10-year rolling programme, teams retaining skills moving on to the next project. Finishing the Huddersfield line then moving on to the Calder Valley.

Also in an open letter to Grant Shapps, David Shirres, editor of...
Another of those nice trains, this time a TPE one at Liverpool. Another bimode, as it has to run on diesel from Manchester to York en route further north-east. The DfT still has to clarify details, funding and timescale for the TransPennine Route Upgrade, which is currently expected to include electrification but with gaps Stalybridge-Huddersfield and most of Leeds-York. We understand the Department for Transport has said Network Rail will continue to develop plans for electrification of the whole route. Thinking seems to be towards later phases, so instead of getting the disruption over at one go it could be spread over as yet unspecified years.

Network Rail launched a public engagement late last summer towards an application to increase tracks from two to four between Huddersfield and Dewsbury. Deighton, Mirfield and Ravensthorpe stations will be rebuilt. Huddersfield will get more and longer platforms.

For strategic cross-Pennine routes gapped electrification seems ludicrous. How difficult can Church Fenton to Leeds (Neville Hill) be? The central section climbing the Pennines, Huddersfield to Stalybridge is the very part where electric would have most advantage over diesel. Batteries might replace diesel for short gaps. But Network Rail needs to pick up the challenge to electrify the whole route within the budget for the gapped scheme.

Causes for hope? In October the government launched a “ground-breaking plan to achieve net zero emissions across every single mode of transport”. The plan should be ready for action this year; it surely must have substance and can not be delayed. During the election campaign Boris Johnson hinted in Derby that he might reinstate the full Midland Main Line wiring project.

There continues to be much interest in hydrogen (H₂) but let’s not forget that producing the gas (whether from electrolysis of water or from reforming of methane), transporting it, and then using fuel cells to convert its energy back to electricity is highly inefficient, with well over half the total energy wasted. And making hydrogen from hydrocarbons like methane releases carbon dioxide as a by-product. The H₂-enthusiasts’ answer is “CCS”: carbon (dioxide) capture and storage, requiring a whole infrastructure yet to be developed. Hydrogen may have a role particularly in places such as the Tees valley where a supply is available from existing industry, but electric railways are tried and tested technology that we should be expanding now.

Battery technology will continue to develop. A recent report by Norwegian railways recommended batteries plus partial electrification to replace diesels. Norway already has 60% of rail lines electrified, compared with less than 40% in the UK. Nearer home, Vivarail, the company repurposing former London Underground stock, has developed a battery version of its “D-train” that could work for some currently diesel branch lines. A range of up to 60 miles is predicted and, crucially, a quick charging bank enables a full charge in 10 minutes between trips.

This all helps towards the essential goal of getting rid of diesels. But it certainly does not remove the need for full electrification of strategic routes like our Calder Valley Line.

Recently David Brown, managing director of Northern, told RAIL magazine “We would like to see additional electrification from Manchester Victoria to Stalybridge or Rochdale.” Such a modest proposal should be just the start. – JSW
Up, and over the odds

On January 2nd train fares regulated by the government went up by 2.7% (average), driven by the July annual increase in RPI (retail price increase). The link to RPI has changed over the years, but as the table by Railfuture shows (below), a £100 fare in 2003 would now be £181.33. That 83% increase in ticket prices over 16 years compares with just 45% inflation in consumer price index. CPI is calculated differently to RPI (for example it does not include housing costs). CPI is nearly always less than RPI meaning train fares are based on the higher measure of inflation, meaning they don’t just go up but go up (arguably) over the odds.

Rail businesses and DfT have said for years that fare rises are needed to pay for improvements. We’ve seen increased services, even at long last new trains (working through their defects). But as travellers continue to suffer too many late trains, too many cancellations, too many trains overcrowded, and franchise failures to increase services as promised can any fare rise be justified?

TransPennine Express, after a terrible Autumn for its passengers (even worse than Northern’s) announced a 3% rebate on season tickets. Shouldn’t other operators be made to do the same?

Getting Halifax connected

Anne Lister, Shibden Hall, and the BBC drama Gentleman Jack have put Halifax on the map. Thousands of fans will descend on the town for the Anne Lister Birthday Weekend on 1st-5th April this year. Would it not be wonderful if lots of them came by rail? Women in Community Rail and Discover Amazing Women by Rail are doing a stall in the Piece Hall on Saturday 4 April at the Makers Fair. Most of the weekend’s paid events are already sold out with people coming from the USA and beyond. Some events are at the Minster right next to Halifax station. Shibden Hall could be extremely crowded that weekend.

Maybe choosing a less busy time, for walkers it’s an invigorating climb (give yourself an hour) from Halifax station to Shibden Hall and Park via Magna Via, the ancient packhorse route over Beacon Hill, with spectacular views. The route also links to a 9km Anne Lister Walk around the delightful Shibden Valley (map and guide for sale from www.christophergoddard.net).

For the less adventurous a shuttle bus would help. And actually we could do with a permanent “hopper”, linking stations, town, Dean Clough and heritage attractions such as Bankfield Museum as well as Shibden Hall. With regeneration plans in the pipeline for both bus and train stations and new round-town bus circulation, let’s hope inter-modal links will be transformed over the next few years. —RL/JSW

ACTUAL VERSUS JUST CPI RAIL FARE INCREASES

The government has imposed RPI-based fare rises since Jan 2004. These were RPI+1% between 2004 and 2013, and RPI since. These figures show the difference between actual increases and CPI inflation. It was RPI-1% between 1999 and 2003, and was RPI before that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>RPI</th>
<th>CPI</th>
<th>Diff</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Govt</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>£100.00</th>
<th>CPI</th>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
<td>£104.10</td>
<td>101.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>RPI+1%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>£108.26</td>
<td>102.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>RPI+1%</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>£112.49</td>
<td>105.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>RPI+1%</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>£117.32</td>
<td>107.60</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>RPI+1%</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>£122.95</td>
<td>109.65</td>
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<tr>
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<td>£129.81</td>
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<td>RPI+1%</td>
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<td>£137.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>£160.31</td>
<td>134.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<td>RPI</td>
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<td>2017</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
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<td>RPI</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>£181.33</td>
<td>145.33</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Based on a £100 fare in 2003, actual fares have increased that fare by £36 above CPI inflation

Note: figures apply to England (except Southeastern). In recent years Scotland and Wales may have differed.

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ORR station usage figures to 31/3/19

Calder Valley Line stations lose passengers, but Mytholmroyd surprises!

IF SERVICE is poor people will vote with their feet. Latest statistics from the Office of Road and Rail cover the year including May 2018 timetable chaos. So it’s no surprise that many stations show a drop in passenger footfall. Bits of good news include figures for Mytholmroyd where the ORR records nearly 15% annual growth and attributes it to improved service in May 2018. But Sowerby Bridge had the same improvement at the same time and appears to have lost passengers to the tune of 5½%. Other factors affect our valley, such as traffic problems on the dreaded A646. Sadly, increased service frequency given to SOW and MYT in 2018 has now been taken away—likely to be reflected in next year’s statistics. But when Mytholmroyd gets its big new car park (soon!) with spaces for a couple of hundred daily park and riders the station could see another surge. Mytholmroyd has real potential to relieve Hebden Bridge — but only if the service is improved. Usage also increased at Todmorden where upcoming access improvements could attract even more. Walsden is another to watch, a 6.3% surge reversing gradual decline over ten years — and only an hourly service! Brighouse still tops the CV Line league for biggest 10-year percentage growth, but its messed-up service over two years (effectively only one train an hour to Leeds) has begun to throw away the gains. We’ll keep an eye on how the Bradford-Huddersfield shuttle performs. Great start for first two years of Low Moor.

Our table adapts the ORR’s spreadsheet. Explore link above for national picture. Interpretation may require a pinch of salt. Nobody’s been counting actual passengers: figures estimate total entrances and exits from ticket sales, with adjustments for multimodal tickets like MCard. Note comment on methodology for the GM stations, where free concessionary travel has been evaluated and included for the first time. So apparent surge over the border is journeys suddenly being counted and high growth compared with the Yorkshire side is more apparent than real. It is right to include these journeys and the comparison will again become valid in future results.

Halifax is 324th busiest station nationally (down from 300th). Leeds is third busiest station outside London, behind Birmingham and Glasgow Central. London Waterloo retains the overall title.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calder Valley Line footfall</th>
<th>Growth last yr</th>
<th>10-year Growth</th>
<th>Station code</th>
<th>ORR comments on single-year change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Manchester Vic</td>
<td>357,431</td>
<td>5,789,892</td>
<td>8,202,118</td>
<td>8,949,698</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moston</td>
<td>41,837</td>
<td>76,736</td>
<td>55,688</td>
<td>70,464</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mills Hill (GM)</td>
<td>104,935</td>
<td>228,836</td>
<td>293,408</td>
<td>328,616</td>
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<tr>
<td>Castleton (GM)</td>
<td>49,576</td>
<td>122,678</td>
<td>167,114</td>
<td>178,582</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rochdale</td>
<td>447,254</td>
<td>971,588</td>
<td>1,236,316</td>
<td>1,487,760</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smithy Bridge</td>
<td>64,351</td>
<td>125,274</td>
<td>166,542</td>
<td>197,834</td>
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<tr>
<td>Littleborough</td>
<td>118,257</td>
<td>358,176</td>
<td>420,880</td>
<td>466,526</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walsden</td>
<td>68,412</td>
<td>112,608</td>
<td>110,600</td>
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<td>Todmorden</td>
<td>233,244</td>
<td>416,364</td>
<td>624,416</td>
<td>636,040</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hebden Bridge</td>
<td>298,369</td>
<td>581,936</td>
<td>795,554</td>
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<td>78,753</td>
<td>142,526</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sowerby Bridge</td>
<td>120,409</td>
<td>255,378</td>
<td>393,214</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>146,714</td>
<td>404,894</td>
<td>388,522</td>
<td>371,668</td>
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<td>Halifax</td>
<td>724,400</td>
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<td>1,948,692</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Moor</td>
<td>133,060</td>
<td>140,690</td>
<td>133,060</td>
<td>335,624</td>
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<td>Bradford Int</td>
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<td>2,225,363</td>
<td>2,768,524</td>
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<td>New Pudsey</td>
<td>349,111</td>
<td>642,172</td>
<td>850,162</td>
<td>822,632</td>
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<td>Bramley (WY)</td>
<td>112,305</td>
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<td>Leeds</td>
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<td>22,421,732</td>
<td>31,107,672</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

TOD: happy community rail initiatives make train travel more attractive.
DEPOT PROBLEMS

PERFORMANCE issues taking the shine off a new timetable are, sadly, not news. Calderdale commuters have been suffering early morning cancellations due not just to staff shortages but to “problems at the depot”, “train late leaving depot” (so it’s late because it’s late!), “trains needing more maintenance than usual” and the rest. New trains require new procedures, such as emptying of toilet retention tanks (thankfully, the deposit of human excreta on the track is to be phased out). Did no-one plan for this? Northern’s main Yorkshire train depot, Neville Hill, is stuck out on the wrong side of Leeds and not big enough. Many empty stock workings have to come through Leeds to get anywhere useful to pick up early bird commuters. We hear serious talk of building a new depot somewhere less inconvenient. Somewhere in the Wakefield area springs to mind as accessible to much of West Yorkshire.

How good is your train?

BRAND new “Class 195” trains already working Calder Valley-Manchester/Chester services began phasing in to York-Halifax-Blackpool in December.

We remain concerned about the need for more peak-hour strengthening. Units can be coupled together but platform lengths at Leeds (notably short bays like P10) are a limitation. New “Platform 0” and lengthening of P1-6 will help, but it will be another year before these works are complete. The evening peak is highly stressful for commuters and staff coping with overcrowding. There used to be four trains from Leeds to Calderdale between 1700 and 1730 but with standardisation of the hourly pattern this is now just three (1712 to Manchester, 1717 via Brighouse and 1727 to Halifax). Surely strengthening is essential but, it seems, does not happen.

On the Leeds-Brighouse-Manchester-Wigan service, use of 3-car Class 158s marks progress, but a miscellany of more old-fashioned types continue including single “153s” coupled to a 158, impairing acceleration and limiting maximum speed. To us, the new trains look ideal for this line with smart acceleration between frequent stops. The new Bradford-Huddersfield “shuttle” is usually a single-car “153”. Pacers (fingers crossed) seem to have gone.

Having only one toilet on the new trains is surely a serious design error. Dare we hope for a later order of extra coaches with more facilities for services taking commuters to work, students to college, families to the seaside or historical attractions, and hens and stags on happy weekends?

CATCHING UP WITH SMART TICKETS

ONE DAY the whole of the North will have smart ticketing. Touch in, touch out, “pay as you go” and the system will cap your total fare daily and weekly at a reasonable maximum price for the zones you travelled in. Just like they’ve had in London with Oyster for nearly two decades. Smart travel in most of the rest of the country is laboriously catching up, every authority seemingly reinventing the wheel. West Yorkshire Ticketing Company Ltd runs the MCards now familiar as replacement for the old MetroCards. So, for example, a pink MCard can be loaded up with weekly or longer period travel for the zones you want, rail+bus or bus only. But it seems sales of rail+bus multi-modal tickets have fallen relative to rail-only daily/season tickets. Work patterns are changing; the “9 to 5”, 5-day week is not what it was. And if your train is seriously delayed you can claim “Delay Repay” on rail-only but not multimodal tickets.

Pay-as-you-go could be (sorry) just the ticket. But we need the technology installing.
To join or renew membership of Halifax & District Rail Action Group please send this form with payment (see below) to Peter Stocks, Membership Secretary, HADRAG, 32 Hillside View, SOWERBY BRIDGE, West Yorkshire, HX6 1AF. Membership subs are paid by calendar year. (New memberships in last quarter of year valid for whole of next year.) .................................................................Thank you!

Name(s)_________________________________________________________________________________________
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