

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

*promoting quality public transport.....*

*Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)*

## **Annual Review 2015-2016**

### **Incorporating Business Plan 2017-2019**



***Integration at Fleetwood!***

***Working for an integrated and  
seamless public transport network  
across the North West of England***

# ***TravelWatch NorthWest Annual Review 2015-2016*** ***(incorporating Business Plan 2017-2019)***

## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
• Chair's Foreword	3
1. Introduction & Background	4
2. Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority	5
3. Annual Review 2015/16	6
4. Current Workstreams (2016/17)	15
5. Plans for 2017/19	18
• Appendices –	
<b>Appendix A</b> – Administration	20
<b>Appendix B</b> – Principal Persona and Contacts	21
<b>Appendix C</b> – Accounts 2015/16	22
<b>Appendix D</b> – Membership	23

*(Cover Photo; Chris Dale)*

North West Public Transport Users' Forum Community Interest Company trading as TravelWatch NorthWest

Company No. 6181713

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## ***Chair's Foreword***

This year, there is some good news to report in all sectors of the public transport industry, but this is tempered by ongoing funding shortages and the continuing challenges following the severe weather conditions endured last winter across the region.

The damage caused by the flooding was some of the worst in living memory and presented both bus and rail services with many problems. I have to congratulate the various operators who did their best to provide some sort of service to the passengers despite land-slips, damaged and destroyed bridges and many other problems. A few routes are still having problems which are going to take some time to resolve.

The bus industry continues to endure funding cuts to the supported service network and, in some areas, falling passenger numbers on the commercial network are leading to reductions in service level. Whether the Buses Bill will help this situation is still unclear. There is a strong focus on urban services, but the rapidly diminishing, but vital rural networks seem to have been forgotten. On the positive side, many new environmentally friendly buses have been introduced.

Tram passengers in Greater Manchester are still experiencing disruptions to services due to the continuing Second City Crossing works, but the end is gradually coming into view with the re-opening of the line through St Peters Square. In Blackpool, good news came for Wyre residents being allowed to use their concessionary passes on the trams as well as Blackpool residents. Expansion of the network is also on the way with the line to Blackpool North station approved.

Major investment is now on the way for rail passengers across the region after the award of the new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises. This is long overdue and all passengers will be looking forward to 2019 when the new fleets and services will be in place. New franchises are due for the other routes across the North West and we shall be involved in the consultation process for all of them.

Finally, a mention for ferry passengers, who were delighted to see the Wyre ferry service from Fleetwood to Knott End continue despite threats from Lancashire County Council to remove the subsidy.

TravelWatch NorthWest will continued to press for the passengers to be at the centre of all transport planning, both for major schemes and also local changes to the current networks

Finally, I must thank all our members for their input during the year and also the Board for their dedication to TravelWatch, with a special mention for our Company Secretary, John Moorhouse for his invaluable help.



*Chris Dale, Chairman, October 2016*

## 1. Introduction & Background

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) was formerly known as the North West Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF). The NWPTUF was formed in October 2003 and was named TravelWatch NorthWest in 2006. It is an independent organisation representing all users of public transport in the North West. Membership is open to any not for profit organisation representing the interests of users or potential users of public transport. TravelWatch holds regular conferences open to the public at various locations in the North West that debate issues of interest and concern to public transport users who have the opportunity to contribute and raise their concerns. TravelWatches have also been established in South West England, the West Midlands, the East Midlands and Southern England.

1.2 TWNW's chief purpose is to influence, by research and campaigning, public transport policy in the North West always with passengers' interests foremost.

1.3 TWNW's mission statement is :-

***Facilitating an integrated and seamless quality public transport network for North West England.***

1.4 The vision of TWNW is to champion the interests of public transport users in the North West so the network can become:-

- Accessible to everyone
- Affordable and socially inclusive
- Available where and when it is needed
- Acceptable to all
- Attractive to users

1.5 The key objectives of TWNW are to:-

- Give users a platform to express their concerns and needs
- Promote the use of public transport in the North West
- Contribute to the development of regional transport strategies
- Produce influential best practice reports based on evidence

1.6 TWNW has established a relationship with a wide range of stakeholders, and has addressed a number of key issues within the transport agenda in the region. It is increasingly being seen as an important sounding board for consultation on regional transport policies.

1.7 TravelWatch NorthWest was formally incorporated as a Community Interest Company in March 2007. The Company is made up of members who each agree to a liability of £1 and is run by a Board of Directors (***see Appendices B and D***).

## **2. Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority (Merseytravel)**

2.1 Merseytravel is the Executive body that provides professional, strategic and operational transport advice to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (comprising Merseyside and Halton) to enable it to make informed decisions. It is also the delivery arm, making transport happen.

2.2 TravelWatch NorthWest welcomes the generous support it receives from Merseytravel. Merseytravel has made great strides in improving the public transport network in Merseyside and continues to be forward looking and inventive.

2.3 At our conference in Liverpool in October 2015, Cllr. Robinson spoke of Merseytravel's investment in a new fleet of trains to replace its current fleet which would be in service in the early 2020's. He also alluded to capital projects including the Halton Curve to be completed in 2018, a new station at Maghull North, a new transport hub at Newton le Willows, the Walrus card SMART ticketing project (which will be only the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the UK after Oyster), and a new objective in bus operations targeted at young people up to age 19 offering fare reductions and designed to be attractive to the next generation.

2.4 We aspire to input into the design of the new trains which would greatly benefit from the flexibility to operate both on the third rail system on the Merseyrail system and on the overhead DC system which is now in existence on the City lines to St Helens, Wigan and Manchester. In addition some journeys on Merseyrail can be up to an hour and possibly longer with future extensions and we feel that passengers would appreciate the provision of toilets which are not available now .

2.5 Merseytravel, supported by ourselves, has aspirations for Merseyside to be better served by the long distance rail network and ultimately connected to the High Speed Rail network. It is good news that the new TPE franchise operator - First – has undertaken to provide direct services between Liverpool and Scotland from December 2018. New state of the art Inter City trains are also promised by the new operator. There is also scope for more frequent through trains to the capital and we have pressed for this in the new West Coast franchise (see 4.3.4 below).

2.6 The scheme to develop the Halton Curve which we support and look forward to involvement in, would restore direct connectivity to Wrexham and North Wales from Liverpool and Liverpool Airport. Ultimately we would wish to see the latter directly rail served. We also look forward to an involvement in / input into the service disruption that will be caused by the Lime Street station capacity improvement work in 2017.

2.7 We have always applauded Merseytravel's policy to staff stations on the Merseyrail network with the successful M2Go model of retail found at Merseyrail stations. We would like to see M2Go or similar rolled out more widely.

2.8 We applaud Merseytravel's commitment to the Quality Bus network, working with Arriva and Stagecoach through a formal Bus Alliance with improved and simpler networks, value-for-money fare structures and more investment in the buses themselves.

2.9 We are confident that our long standing good relationships with the Authority will continue into the future.

### 3. Annual Review 2015/16

#### 3.1 Conferences

3.1.1 TWNW held three conferences during the year to debate issues of concern in the North West, to promote best practice to operators and local authorities and to promote the development of forward-looking public transport policies across the region. As well as users, representatives of local transport authorities and public transport providers across the region attended the conferences. At each conference it is our practice to give an opportunity to delegates to make a short statement on any public transport issue of concern of no longer than a minute's duration.

3.1.2 The conferences were held in Blackburn on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Liverpool on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and Manchester on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016. Notes of the conferences are available on our website - [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

3.1.3 The conference in Blackburn was kindly supported by Blackburn with Darwen Council (BwD) and held in the Hornby Lecture Theatre. The conference was opened by Cllr Phil Riley, Deputy Leader, BwD and presentations were made by -

- Mrs Beverley Bell, Senior and North West Area Traffic Commissioner
- James Syson, Transport Strategy Team Leader, BwD Council
- Richard Saint, Capita Symons Ltd (on the Pennine Reach strategy)
- Pete Brunskill, Principal Rail Development Officer, Transport for Warrington (on the North of England Electrification Task Force)

56 delegates attended.

3.1.4 In Liverpool the conference was preceded by the Company's eighth AGM and held at Merseytravel's offices, kindly supported by Merseytravel and Transport Focus. The conference was opened by Councillor Liam Robinson, Chair of Merseytravel and presentations were made by -

- David Brown, Deputy Chief Executive, Merseytravel.
- Liz Chandler, Director of Corporate Development, Merseytravel.
- Gary Iddon, General Manager North West and North Wales, Virgin Trains
- Robin Tudor, Head of PR & Communications, Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- David Beer, Passenger Executive, Transport Focus

81 delegates attended.

3.1.5 The conference in Manchester was held in the Mechanics Centre, in conjunction with Rail North. The main theme of the conference was the new Northern and TransPennine franchises, creating great interest and a record attendance of 116. We were grateful for the support given by Arriva Rail North and First TransPennine Express (TPE). The conference was opened by Councillor Andrew Fender, Chair, Transport for Greater Manchester Committee and presentations were made by -

- Dr Jon Lamonte, Chief Executive, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)
- Roger Cobbe, Policy Director, Arriva Rail North
- Chris Nutton, Programme Director, First Transpennine Express
- Pete Brunskill, Interim Stakeholder Manager, Rail North
- Phil Havenhand, Programme Manager, Cross City Bus Package, TfGM

## 3.2 Bus matters

### *Bus service changes*

3.2.1 In June 2015 we contacted Local Transport Authority representatives/ officers with a view to establishing the position regarding any future reductions in the supported bus network. We said that we were aware that difficult decisions would have to be made and maintained that as the regional body representing public transport users across the North West, it would be appropriate for us to be consulted on any future cuts.

3.2.2 The response received from Andrew Fender, Chair of Transport for Greater Manchester Committee, referred to budgetary pressures and the substantial number of fixed costs in the budget including the ENCTS scheme. He said that TfGM's preferred consultation procedure was to channel information on potential future service changes through elected members, which had been shown to be effective in reaching key groups (e.g. parish councils and other community organisations).

3.2.3 We replied that we fully appreciated TfGM's budgetary pressures. However it appeared that that TfGM had chosen to cut back local bus services rather than non-statutory concessions (ENCTS pass holders to continue to enjoy free travel on trains and trams unlike West and South Yorkshire). The response from Cllr Fender was that the impact of any such change would likely mean that a significant proportion of concessionary journeys that would otherwise be made on Metrolink would instead migrate to bus, where free travel would continue to be available under the statutory English Concessionary Travel Pass (ENCTP) scheme. This would result in an increase in the amount payable to bus operators and therefore little, if any net saving, would be made. In addition, if as a result of this, bus operators needed to add additional capacity into their network, there was a likelihood that TfGM would incur further additional costs.

3.2.4 In July 2015 we learnt that Stagecoach intended to reroute many of their buses serving Kendal town centre away from the main shopping street (Stricklandgate) to the space-limited and difficult to access bus station away from the town centre. There had been no proper consultation with Cumbria or passenger groups. The local bus users group – Kendal and District Bus Users – asserted that the changes would make it impossible for many people to access the services. Stagecoach responded that traffic congestion was the cause and to add more resources was not an option because the services were non-profit making.

3.2.5 It was too late to influence the decision and the changes took place in September 2015. We did propose a meeting of interested parties including ourselves and the Kendal Bus Users Group, (KADBUS) around November, to review the situation post the service changes. KADBUS continued to press for better signage and improvements to the walkway from the bus station to the shopping centre and we understand the group has had some success.

3.2.6 In January 2016 we expressed our extreme distress at proposals by Lancashire County Council (Lancs CC) to end **all** subsidy to bus services in the County. These harsh cuts to public transport lifelines would exacerbate the loneliness and isolation of many people living in rural and many urban areas.

3.2.7 We said that the issue was a major consideration that should not be dealt with in isolation. There would be knock on effects on unemployment, housing benefit and healthcare issues. With centralisation of health service provision and loss of bus services access to health care can be extremely difficult. Local bus services reduced the cost of statutory transport otherwise provided by education, social services, health (and some retailers and employers). But these cross sector beneficiaries did not make any compensatory payments to the public transport sector.

3.2.8 We also expressed concern about proposals to cease support to the tramway link with Cleveleys and Fleetwood which would be a severe blow at a time when extension of the tramway is being mooted and to cease support to the Fleetwood - Knott End ferry which served a useful purpose.

3.2.9 Following our representations a budget of around £2m (instead of the previous bus budget of £7.5m) which had been earmarked to help fund community and parish bus initiatives was redirected back to re-instating some subsidised services in those areas most severely affected by the proposed cuts. We had always questioned the practicability of such services happening and providing any kind of alternative to proper timetabled bus services which cater for all. However although Lancs CC maintained that 60% of subsidised bus services would continue to run in some form or other, some services had been totally withdrawn e.g. Bowland Connect. We also understand that the threat will return in the next financial year as the Council continues to face budgetary pressures.

3.2.10 In March 2016 we were informed by Lancs CC that positive discussions were taking place with Wyre Council and the Ferry Operator about the future of the Knott End Ferry. There was also pleasing confirmation from the Authority that the vital link tramway link between Cleveleys and Fleetwood would continue to be supported with Wyre residents able to use their concessionary bus passes on the tram services from April 2016.

### ***Merseytravel Bus Strategy & TfGM Bus Priority Package***

3.2.11 In July 2015 we responded to these strategies. We emphasised the need for comprehensive bus priority and real time information both at bus stops and on buses. In the latter case we would look for visual and audible information covering stopping patterns and next stop information to be fitted to all new vehicles as standard as per the London model. Drivers should be trained in customer care and passenger facing skills not just safety, communicating with passengers about service interruptions and delays/late running and waiting for passengers to be seated when moving off.

3.2.12 On the subject of complaints we said that the complaints procedures must include accessible information for passengers on buses and elsewhere not only how to complain but also how to appeal if the complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily. We also drew attention to an issue that we have been raising for some time - the difficulty of obtaining information about bus fares before travelling.

### ***English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS)***

3.2.13 At the request of Beverley Bell, Senior Traffic Commissioner, we carried out, during the summer of 2015, a further exercise on how ENCTS passes are dealt with when holders travel by bus. The report was published in November 2015.

3.2.14 114 journeys were made and again the chief concern was that inspection by the driver of the photo on the pass was observed on only a small number of occasions (16 occasions - 14% compared with 11 occasions - 17% in the previous year). One operator pointed out that it was challenging and time consuming for drivers to look at the pass photo as many older people kept their pass within wallets or purses and were averse to taking them out.

(Report available on our website [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk))

### **Transport Workshop 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

3.2.15 TOWNW gave its support to this conference which was entitled Local Authority Bus Services – An Endangered Species? The conference organized by Future North West was held in the St Thomas Centre Manchester and chaired by TOWNW Chairman Chris Dale.

3.2.16 Chris Bowles, Managing Director, Stagecoach Manchester and Alastair Nuttall, General Manager, Arriva North West set out the structure of the industry and its operations. David Beer from Transport Focus added the passenger dimension. There were contributions from Cllr Andrew Fender TfGM and on behalf of Andrew Varley Lancs on the funding difficulties faced by Local Authorities and from Sally Buttifant Community Rail Partnership Officer (CRP) Mid Cheshire CRP on the feasibility of the CRP concept working in the bus world.

3.2.17 The workshop was a useful exposition of the problems and Future North West would endeavour to promote bus champions in the organisation's local groups across the region.

## **3.3 Rail Matters**

### ***Rail electrification and services***

3.3.1 We have previously reported on the publication by The North of England Electrification Task Force (set up by the Secretary of State for Transport) of its report "Northern Sparks" in March 2015. We commended this report which looked at lines outwith those already committed to electrification by Network Rail. The line that achieved the highest ranking was the Calder Valley which we welcomed. However whilst the Skipton to Morecambe/ Heysham line came low down the list, electrification just between Lancaster and Morecambe/ Heysham would have distinct advantages.

3.3.2 We recognise that electrification brings significant benefits to passengers –

- Better reliability, faster acceleration and quicker journey times especially for services with frequent stops. Many local and interurban services in the North West would benefit from this.
- The electrification of Diversionary routes enables services to operate more conveniently for passengers at times of disruption. This helps to minimise the use of replacement buses which are not generally liked by passengers
- Bi-mode operation possible for services extending to non-electrified lines.

3.3.3 During the year we regretted the pausing of the electrification programme for TransPennine (now forecast for 2022) and delays to other North West electrification schemes including Preston to Blackpool and Oxenholme to Windermere. We also forecasted likely adverse knock-on effects of the withdrawal of the class 170 trains from TransPennine and the transfer of services to Northern for passengers on the Barrow and Windermere lines. In August 2015 we expressed concern that the 3 car Class 323 electric trains currently used on the busy commuter routes between Manchester and Crewe, Macclesfield and Hadfield were not to be offered to the companies bidding for the new Northern rail franchise.

3.3.4 In April & August 2015 we visited Long Marston where Vivarail were refurbishing ex London Underground D trains for use on the rail network with diesel engines. We were impressed by the attention to detail and forward thinking and it was clear that a lot of professional expertise was going into this project. We welcomed the detailed attention being given to the passenger facilities such as the seating and accessible toilet. There was and is no suggestion that these trains can go everywhere and do everything, but they do have potential for certain routes where the speed limitations (60mph max.) will not have an adverse effect.

3.3.5 In October the newly refurbished Manchester Victoria station with its spectacular roof formally opened. However the general condition of the gloomy platforms 3 - 6 still left much to be desired, with poor overall level of lighting, lack of on platform seating and generally faded overall ambience. Also the overall roof does not cover the whole of platforms 1 & 2 and a substantial area where trains stand is open to the elements. On occasions a whole train can be standing in the open if an empty unit is at the buffers end. We felt that some form of shelter outside the roof covered area was needed.

3.3.6 There was some reasonable news about fares – the announcement in August 2015 that regulated fares would rise by just 1% next year in accordance with the RPI. However over the years fares have risen inexorably. It was also very concerning to learn that Virgin scrapped the Railcard concession on peak trains from the North West to London from September - something that the former Rail Passengers Committee for NW England had fought very hard to maintain at a time of very high ongoing fares increases around 2000.

### ***Disruption to rail services/ Engineering work***

3.3.7 A long period of major engineering work on Farnworth tunnel between Manchester and Bolton took place during the summer of 2015 in preparation for electrification. This gave rise to significant changes to rail services and replacement bus/coach services. We were concerned that timetable information did not mention alternative services to/from Entwistle on the Bolton – Blackburn line. Following our representations Northern addressed the issue including issuing a supplementary addendum to the line guide and amending line of route timetable posters.

3.3.8 There were issues of signage at Victoria and Bolton, also signing on replacement coaches. We contacted First Group and Northern pointing out that attention to detail can improve what is fundamentally a major inconvenience to passengers' journeys - they need as much help as possible in these circumstances.

3.3.9 We sampled the replacement coach service between Manchester Victoria and Bolton. There were several deficiencies including, in July, no access to the station building at Farnworth, no staff in attendance and no poster showing the location of the replacement coaches and their stops which were on Market Street some distance from the station. The stop showed that rail replacement buses stopped there but no information was provided either to the direction of travel or timetable, despite space being available in the case. No clear identification of being a rail replacement vehicle was provided on the coach. A passenger on a previous journey had reported that there was no indication from the driver of arrival at the Farnworth alternative stop. Following our representations Northern did take action to address the issues.

3.3.10 Throughout 2015 we have taken up, along with the Friends of the Settle – Carlisle line (FOSCL) the case for using the Settle – Carlisle line (S&C) for diversions from the West Coast Main Line when engineering work takes place. Keeping passengers on through services is far preferable to the time consuming inconvenience of changing from train to coach at Preston and reversing the process at Carlisle. This is especially so given that the Preston to Carlisle time comparison using a non-stop replacement road service would be 2hrs 30 mins to 2 hrs 45 mins (taking account of transfers) as against 2 hrs 20 mins diverting via the S&C. It would be quicker and in the best interests of passengers to divert.

3.3.11 Research by Passenger (now Transport) Focus has consistently shown that passengers prefer through rail services even with time penalties, accepting a longer journey time (of up to 30 minutes on a normally one hour journey) to avoid using a replacement bus (*Passenger Focus “Rail Passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works” September 2012*). On the basis of the journey times we felt there was a compelling argument for train services to be diverted over the S&C. Where bus times are similar to or greater than rail diversions passengers will blatantly prefer to travel on a train after they have bought a ‘train’ ticket and avoid the enormous inconvenience of transferring to road services.

3.3.12 Responses from Virgin were not encouraging, citing for example, lack of train crew route knowledge and pressure on paths over the S&C. Although Virgin have said they will run at least one diverted train in each direction we are not convinced especially when greater use of the S&C was a normal practice until recently. We think that cost has much to do with the argument – it may well be that the use of replacement buses is a cheaper option, but it is not in passengers best interests.

3.3.13 There are other cases where we feel that any road replacement sections could be shorter than the inevitable 90 miles between Preston and Carlisle thus minimising inconvenience to passengers. In conjunction with FOSCL we had planned a meeting with Virgin West Coast (as the principal operator) to debate the case for diversions but this has now been put on hold in view of the long term closure of the S&C at Eden Brows near Armathwaite following a massive landslide.

3.3.14 The severe winter weather that caused the Eden Brows land slip also destroyed the West Coast Main Line viaduct over the river Clyde at Lamington in early January 2016. Arrangements at Carlisle for transferring passengers to and from a range of alternative services were initially found to be unsatisfactory. For example on one occasion on arrival at Carlisle there were no direction signs to access the buses or any reference on departure boards. Virgin staff didn't make themselves available and passengers were pretty much left to their own devices. A 10 coach Voyager train

occupied Platform 3 with destination boards indicating it was going to Glasgow Central at 14.40 but no staff were directing passengers. The train left virtually empty.

3.3.15 Matters did however improve as the disruption continued over a period of about 7 weeks whilst the difficult repair job was carried out. However we were concerned that there no comprehensive timetable published that included all operators (Virgin, TPE, Scotrail). There were options of trains to Lockerbie and thence buses to Edinburgh or buses from Carlisle to Edinburgh and Carlisle-Glasgow "diversions" via Dumfries but persistence and knowledge was needed to search all the possibilities.

3.3.16 Following our representations Virgin added a link to TPE's revised timetable to their website and there was a reciprocal link from TPE's website.

*(Report available on our website [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk))*

### ***Rail Franchising & Investment***

3.3.17 Having been heartened by the DfT's announcement in February 2015 about the new franchises for Northern and TransPennine rail services we welcomed the government's announcement in December confirming the new franchise operators to be Arriva for Northern and First for TPE. Arriva promised to remove all the unpopular Pacer trains by 2019 and both operators would introduce new trains – 281 new carriages for Northern (more than double the minimum required in the government's invitation to tender) and 220 new intercity style carriages for TPE.

3.3.18 Other good news included more frequent services on many lines (including on Sundays), increased capacity especially at peak periods and improvements to stations. Northern would introduce a new high quality Northern Connect service for longer distance journeys and a new direct Liverpool to Glasgow service was promised by First TPE.

3.3.19 It will be some time before the new trains arrive though and in the meantime overcrowding could worsen given pressures on current rolling stock availability. For example the loss of the TPE 185 trains from the Barrow and Windermere lines which have been transferred to Northern has led to severe problems of capacity and cancellations on those lines.

3.3.20 By the time the new trains arrive of course demand will have further risen and they will not adequately cater for the ongoing growth in demand. Prospective passengers are already (and have been for some time) discouraged from using rail because of full to capacity trains at peak times and grossly inadequate car parking space at many stations. A further point is that we understand that the design of the new trains for Arriva Rail North will comprise self-contained 2 and 3 car sets with no end corridor connections. This is less flexible and convenient for passengers compared with most current designs running on Northern (except for Pacers) that have end gangway connections.

### ***High Speed Rail***

3.3.21 There has been little to report on this controversial issue, always highly subject to political swings and funding commitments. We have always felt the use of Euston

as a terminus to be problematical, especially in respect of onward travel and the advantages of through running to HS1. We have also previously said that there must be a total regeneration of local and regional lines to connect to HS2 and main lines with modern, comfortable, reliable and efficient rolling stock. HS2 stations should adjoin conventional stations for ease of transition to local/regional rail services

3.3.22 There should be a commitment to run HS2 services through to Liverpool and Scotland using classic lines north of Crewe. As much High Speed stock as possible should be compatible with the standard network to maximise through running beyond HS2. Methods of overcoming passport and other issues to allow through services from Northern cities to the continent should also be examined.

3.3.23 The government, having originally made an announcement about HS3 (a high speed rail link between Liverpool, Manchester, Yorkshire and the North East) in June 2014, the concept seems to have quietened down somewhat. Very careful thought needs to be given to the effect of HS2 on the North and the relationship with and structure of HS3 clarified. No doubt Transport for the North will be a force for good in achieving the Northern Powerhouse and promoting improved rail connectivity across the North and not just HS3.

### **3.4 Light Rail**

3.4.1 The Manchester Metrolink system continues to expand and is widely appreciated by its users. Work continues in the second city crossing which will be a major step forward and enable more flexibility with the ever increasing number of service patterns on offer.

3.4.2 St. Peters Square stop closed for reconstruction in connection with the 2nd city crossing in the summer of 2015 and would not open until the Autumn of 2016. The line was open for some of this time with single line working but trams not stopping at St. Peters Square. Replacement bus services operated.

3.4.3 In April 2015 we drew TfGM's attention to deficiencies in the tram service between Piccadilly and Victoria with no through link before 07.00 or after 20.00 Monday to Saturday. It is good news that there will be an all day, every day link when St Peters Square reopens.

3.4.4 We have previously reported on the need, as Metrolink rolls out, for greater integration with other modes especially through ticketing with rail services. In spite of meetings with TfGM no progress has been made such that -

- It is still not possible to buy a ticket from Metrolink stations to any national rail station outside Greater Manchester (e.g. Bury to London).
- National rail tickets routed via Manchester originating or finishing outside Greater Manchester and involving a change of station between Piccadilly and Victoria do not include travel on Metrolink.
- Other deficiencies include routing anomalies as the system grows. For example a ticket from Hebden Bridge to Oldham would assume route via Victoria rather than the more convenient change at Rochdale. It could be cheaper to buy separate tickets in these circumstances.

- By and large (with some exceptions e.g. Oldham) National Rail Enquiries does not recognise any Metrolink station even though there are through fares from rail.

3.4.5 From the point of view of visitors to the city who are unfamiliar with the system information could be improved. For example we would like to see proper information/announcements in trams about interchange opportunities with heavy rail or buses (TPE *do* announce Metrolink interchange on their trains). We have noticed that many passengers do not appreciate the distinction between Piccadilly Gardens and Piccadilly stations. It would be clearer if on tram announcements stipulated Piccadilly station (not just Piccadilly) to avoid confusion. The Victoria – Piccadilly journey should be recognised as a major link for longer distance travellers and announcements/information should be clearer in this respect.

### 3.5 Consultations

3.5.1 TWNW responded to various consultations throughout the year, including –

- *Monitoring Highways England (Office of Rail and Road 18.6.15)* – as representatives of public transport users on the Strategic Road Network we said that major roads and parallel railways should not be closed for maintenance at the same time, so that there would be no impediment to rail replacement road services.
- *Bus Priority Package (Transport for Greater Manchester 7.7.15)* – we gave general support with the rider that it should benefit passengers and achieve modal shift in favour of buses.
- *Draft Guidance on Complaints Handling Procedures (ORR 28.7.15)* – we emphasised that promoting awareness of how to complain, including notices in train carriages, and rights to compensation (of which most passengers are unaware) were fundamental.
- *Retail Market Review Emerging Findings (ORR 11.9.15)* – we advocated a wider choice of retailers and less bureaucracy and the value of personal face to face services. The fully integrated national network should continue.
- *Ticketing Block Exemption (Competition & Markets Authority 15.9.15)* - we urged that the existing Block Exemption is renewed until 28 February 2026. Passengers benefit greatly from integrated public transport ticketing services which we hope would attract more people to use public transport. But an important prerequisite is the ease and ability of finding out about such fares and indeed all categories of fares. There is still a long way to go with making such information easily available on websites and other information outlets.
- *Surface Transport to Airports (HOCTC 9.10.15)* – much can be done to improve public transport links to airports in our region. Liverpool John Lennon Airport, for example, is poorly served and a direct rail line to the airport is badly needed.
- *Connecting Northern Cities (National Infrastructure Commission 7.1.16)* – we advocated improvements in rail capacity and services and further electrification. Car parking provision at stations and some re-opening of selected rail lines should be examined.
- *Replanning of Network Rail's Investment Programme (DfT 17.3.16)* – notwithstanding slippage we said that the highest priority should be given to the implementation of North West, TransPennine and other electrification

schemes affecting our region. We expressed particular concern about the slippage to the Oxenholme – Windermere line electrification.

- *West Midlands Rail Franchise (DfT 22.3.16)* – we advocated that the Crewe – Stoke – Euston service should be extended from Preston and continue to run via Stoke. The Liverpool - Birmingham service should be enhanced to Inter City status with rolling stock appropriate to that standard and with limited stops.

(Responses available on our website [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk))

## **4. Current Workstreams (2016/17)**

### **4.1 Conferences**

4.1.1 Blackpool 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 with kind support of Blackpool Council and Blackpool Transport Services Ltd. The conference was opened by Cllr. Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Streets and Transport, Blackpool Council and there were presentations from –

- Jane Cole, Managing Director, Blackpool Transport Services Ltd.
- Jeremy Walker, Transport Policy Manager, Blackpool Council
- Hannah Lomas, Senior Sponsor, North West Electrification, Network Rail

After lunch Blackpool Transport Services Ltd kindly afforded the opportunity for delegates to enjoy a heritage tram ride to Fleetwood and return.

69 delegates attended.

(Conference report available on our website [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk))

4.1.2 Planned to be in Preston on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016 with kind support of Lancashire County Council. To feature

- David Brown, Chief Executive, Transport for the North,
- Andrew Varley, Public Transport Manager, Lancashire County Council
- Alex Hornby, Managing Director, TransDev Blazefield
- Donna Atkinson, Chief Executive, Little Green Bus

4.1.3 Planned to be in Warrington on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017. To include, provisionally, HS2, Network Warrington and Northern & TPE franchises - “One Year On”.

### **4.2 Planned disruption to rail services**

4.2.1 In April 2016 we reported on a sample of experiences using rail replacement road services during a 10 day complete closure of Manchester Victoria station over Easter 2016 whilst work took place in preparation for the Ordsall Chord.

4.2.2 All services sampled were replacement Calder Valley services. Most buses displayed destinations on the windscreen e.g “Rail Replacement Manchester via local stations”. There was only one experience of tickets being checked but generally good quality double decker buses were used with plenty of helpful staff. There were though instances where a better knowledge of the sometimes intricate service plan would

have benefited passengers. Rose Grove station (which was affected by the changes) had no information at all displayed about the replacement road services.

4.2.2 In July 2016 we published a report on West Coast Main Line Improvement works between Warrington, Carlisle and Scotland in April and May 2016. An elaborate network of rail replacement road services (RRRS) was provided between, generally, Preston and Carlisle and intermediate points. On some weekends RRRS were also operating between Carlisle and Glasgow/ Edinburgh.

4.2.3 This was a major protracted and complex operation of rail replacement services affecting long distance and local passengers and visitors to a major tourist area – the Lake District - at a popular time of year. Many passengers had to inconveniently change from train to road coach at Preston, then change road coaches at Oxenholme to get to Windermere. Revising the arrangements to provide more through coaches running Preston - Lancaster - Oxenholme - Windermere would have helped. However in the main our observations encountered much to commend with helpful staff at interchange points and timely action taken to rectify problems when they occurred.

4.2.4 We made recommendations for further attention -

- Provision and quality of information at unstaffed stations (e.g, Kendal - a large town).
- Capacity and suitability of buses/ coaches. e.g. inadequacy of minibuses for luggage and use of a school service vehicle with very cramped seating area and a narrow gangway. A detailed vehicle specification for planned replacement services would be useful.
- Inconsistency of destination information on RRRS, though this is improving.
- RRRS driver conduct and route knowledge – again there is a need for more consistency.
- Revenue inspection was non-existent – is this acceptable?
- Inconsistency and arbitrariness in the rules and practice governing the conveyance of bikes, prams, wheelchairs, food and drink, etc. on RRRS. Passengers need clearer direction.
- Ensuring clear information on trains affected by the RRRS – especially on train announcements of onward arrangements.

### **4.3 Rail Franchises**

4.3.1 We have been disappointed with the performance of Northern trains over the first few months of the new Arriva franchise. There have been a high number of train cancellations and service curtailments on some routes in the region, due to staff shortages and high levels of breakdowns. In many cases these cancellations have taken place at short notice with no alternative transport being provided often leaving passengers with delays over 60 minutes. Short formations of trains have also been witnessed leading to overcrowding and in some cases, passengers being left on stations unable to get on the trains. Indeed the loss of a Class 185 train from Northern to TPE (a knock on effect of a DfT reallocation of Class 170 trains from TPE to Chiltern) has resulted in some services running with a reduction in capacity and deterioration of vehicle quality.

4.3.2 In September this year Northern Off Peak Day Return fares in Greater Manchester were increased and Duo tickets withdrawn on some Lancashire and Cumbria services. There were also other changes including, on the positive side, the introduction of some new day return offers (an effective fares reduction) on some lines including the Lancaster – Leeds line. However we were concerned that the changes have been applied without any consultation with passenger groups and with very little advance notice.

4.3.3 Consultation on Northern's plans for refurbished and new trains has been lacking so far. Northern has assured us that the passenger view is highly valued and we trust that this procedure will soon be rectified and that the deterioration in customer care and service will be corrected as the franchise progresses.

4.3.4 We responded to the West Coast Franchise consultation on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016. A wide range of passenger issues was covered including station and train environment and facilities, toilet facilities, service patterns, engineering work disruption and relationships with passenger stakeholders. We emphasised the need for a more frequent London service from Liverpool to improve on the current hourly offering. As far as relationships with passengers are concerned we would expect to see proper stakeholder consultation on changes during the franchises on a range of matters of passenger interest including disruption planning, timetable changes, fares alterations, and rolling stock developments including the design of new trains.

*(Response available on our website [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk))*

#### **4.4 Bus Services**

4.4.1 The 4.5 mile long Leigh Guided Busway was opened in April 2016 and services using it also take advantage of a prioritised route along the East Lancs Road to give a journey time of around 50 minutes from Leigh and Atherton to Manchester city centre. This is part of Greater Manchester's Bus Priority package that we support. We understand that passenger numbers are increasing. This is good news as roadworks in Central Manchester have caused considerable disruption to bus services with increasing congestion and reduced bus speeds/lack of priority.

4.4.2 Merseytravel is also at the forefront of promoting its bus services and we look forward to its Bus Alliance with Arriva and Stagecoach getting more people using the bus by creating a better bus experience. In this context, St Helens is the latest area, following Kirkby, to be reviewed as part of a wider review of the whole Liverpool City Region bus network over the next 12 months. Reviews of Sefton, Wirral, Liverpool and the rest of Knowsley will follow.

4.4.2 We have long advocated that all new buses should incorporate the features that are standard in London i.e. visual and audible next stop information for passengers. It was therefore pleasing to hear in June that Blackpool Transport's order for new buses would include the provision of next stop information on board.

4.4.3 We remain concerned at threats to local bus services especially in rural areas and the challenge of getting the passenger voice effectively heard. For example we understand that the services retained in Lancashire were only on one year initial contracts so the threat could arise again. It is difficult for Community Transport/ Demand Responsive Transport to replace bus services as such services are not accessible for all visitors, not just tourists, to the area. It can also mean a high cost per passenger compared with bus services. A widely advertised scheduled bus service provides a means of transport which anyone can choose to use.

4.4.4 We have made an input, through a House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry into the Bus Services Bill now going through Parliament. We will seek maximum benefits for passengers.

## **5. Plans for 2017/19**

### ***Conferences***

5.1 Continuation of the pattern of 3 conferences per year at locations in the North West. Conferences will feature presentations, discussion and input into the planned workstreams. Opportunities will also be presented for users to make representations on any public transport issue at the conferences.

### ***Projects***

5.2 TWNW is considering a number of areas of proactive work on behalf of public transport users and these are listed below. However, in addition TWNW appreciates that it must have the capacity to react to issues as they arise and in particular to matters on which it may be consulted.

5.3 Also TWNW is keen to continue with undertaking project/ consultancy work. TWNW has within its membership a considerable depth of resource of experienced public transport users together with professional transport expertise. This makes the organisation well capable of carrying out passenger based research to inform and assist Regional and Local Authorities, PTEs and Operators in their transport planning and operational functions.

5.4 As well as working with other TravelWatches on interregional issues, TWNW is committed to work in partnership with other user bodies including Transport Focus, Bus Users UK, the Campaign for Better Transport, Railfuture, Community Rail Partnerships and passenger users groups.

***The following areas of work are being considered for 2017/19 -***

### ***5.5 Buses/ Coaches***

- Further work on monitoring passenger travel experience on buses. To include planning bus journeys, real time information provision, the quality of waiting environments at bus stops and bus stations and disruption to services.
- Encourage the creation and sustainability of local passenger groups

## **5.6 Rail**

- Further monitoring of the passenger experience including the on-train environment, information, ticketless travel, station facilities including the adequacy of car parking provision and engineering disruption, connections at interchanges.
- Continued liaison with all rail franchises and Network Rail.

## **5.7 Air travel**

- The passenger experience at airports including public transport connectivity and the delays caused by check in and security.

## **5.8 Multi modal issues, Journey Planning and Integration**

- A review of progress with multi modal ticketing (including PLUSBUS) since the publication of TWNW's report on this subject in December 2005
- The availability and accuracy of journey planning and multi modal information on transport websites and at rail/ bus stations and transport interchanges.
- An assessment of transport integration & car parking at stations and door to journey options.

## **5.9 Consultation**

- TWNW will respond to consultation on public transport developments on behalf of users. In determining its responses TWNW has the capacity to conduct independent passenger based research as appropriate, subject to the availability of funding.

## **5.10 Passenger Transport User Representation**

- TWNW will continue to be well placed to feed user input into consultations on regional and local government planning issues
- TWNW will continue to strive to bring forward passenger concerns to the attention of the appropriate providers and procurers and to achieve improvements on their behalf

## ***Appendix A Administration***

TWNW is managed by a Board of Directors. The Board considers topical issues for debate at conferences and manages actions arising from each conference. It also considers and determines the issues that the company should give its attention to.

The work of the Company is administered by a part-time Company Secretary, with other support.

A National Liaison Group comprising TravelWatch Chairs has also been established to promote TravelWatch nationally and to co-ordinate work on national issues and with Transport Focus.

*TravelWatch NorthWest is most grateful for the generous support it has received and receives from various sponsors as follows-*

- Merseytravel, First TransPennine Express, First UK Bus, Stagecoach NW & Manchester, Transport Focus, Blackpool Council, Lancashire County Council, Transport for Greater Manchester, Blackburn with Darwen Council, Arriva Rail North, Blackpool Transport Services Ltd., TransDev Blazefield Ltd. More information can be found on our website [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk). This website has links into the other websites so far established in the other regions which have TravelWatch organisations.

***Follow us on Facebook -***

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1408838502725860/>

The registered title, company no. and registered address of the Company is -

***North West Public Transport Users Forum Community Interest Company trading  
as TravelWatch NorthWest Company No. 6181713  
Registered Office (and address for all correspondence):  
11 Harvelin Park, Todmorden Lancs OL14 6HX  
Email; [admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](mailto:admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)***

## **Appendix B Principal Persona and Contacts**

TravelWatch NorthWest is chaired by **Chris Dale**. A retired hospital theatre technician, living in Macclesfield, he has been actively involved in public transport campaigning for over 25 years and is a dedicated user of public transport. Chris chairs the East Cheshire Lines Rail Users Group, the Crewe to Manchester Community Rail Partnership and the Cheshire local group of the Campaign for Better Transport. He is also involved with the Campaign for Better Transport at a national level and has served as a member of their Board of Directors.

The Company Secretary is **John Moorhouse**. John was Secretary of the Rail Passengers Committee for North West England from 1985 until 2004. He is also Chairman of the Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company. See contact details below.

Advisory and Research Consultant **Paul Fawcett** is a semi-retired University lecturer in transport studies and has been an Honorary Visiting Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University. He is a former transport adviser (Northern England) to the Countryside Agency and the author of over 20 transport text books, papers and monograms.

Directors who served on the Board during 2015/16 -

Chris Dale (Chair)  
David Butterworth  
Lillian Burns  
Malcolm Conway  
Leonard Green  
John Hart

Chris Holmes  
Colin Kennington  
John Owen  
Richard Rollins  
Robert Talbot  
Tony Young

For further details about the work of TravelWatch NorthWest or about this Annual Review, please contact:-

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website: [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

# Appendix C Accounts 2015/16

## DETAILED PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

	2016		2015	
	£	£	£	£
<b>TURNOVER</b>		<b>10350</b>		8582
<b>COST OF SALES</b>				
Project fees			80	
Administration fees	3170		2665	
Totals		<u>3170</u>		<u>2745</u>
<b>GROSS PROFIT/(LOSS)</b>		<b>7180</b>		5837
<b>OVERHEADS</b>				
Travel and subsistence	1075		908	
Conferences & Meetings	2521		1517	
Office costs	1168		1005	
Accommodation	2340		2160	
Insurance	186		186	
Subscriptions	164		30	
Publicity	204		4	
Totals		<u>7658</u>		<u>5810</u>
		<b>(478)</b>		27
<b>OTHER OPERATING INCOME</b>				
Members income	355		285	
Sundry donations	629		438	
Totals		<b>984</b>		723
<b>OPERATING PROFIT/(LOSS)</b>		<b>506</b>		750
Interest receivable		<b>10</b>		10
<b>PROFIT/(LOSS) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES</b>		<b>516</b>		760

### **Directors Expenses (there were no fees paid to Directors for specific assignments in 2015/16)**

Name	Expenses (£)
Chris Dale	704.51
John Owen	164.25

# ***Appendix D Membership (at September 2016)***

## **Organisation/Name**

Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association (RUA)  
Bus Users UK  
Campaign for Better Transport Cheshire  
Campaign for Better Transport Lancashire  
Copeland Rail Users Group  
Campaign to Protect Rural England (NW)  
Crewe & Shrewsbury Passengers Association  
Blackburn & District CTC  
East Cheshire Lines Rail Users Group (RUG)  
Friends of Eccles Station  
Friends of Hindley Station  
Friends of Reddish South Station  
Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line  
Goyt Valley RUA  
Greater Manchester Transport Campaign  
Kendal & District Bus Users  
Lakes Line RUG  
Lancaster & Skipton RUG  
Merseytravel  
North Cheshire RUG  
NW Transport Activists RoundTable  
Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association  
Railfuture NW  
Ribble Valley Rail  
Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership  
Support the East Lancashire Line Association  
Support the Oldham Rochdale Line Association  
Wirral Transport Users Association  
Wrexham Birkenhead RUA  
Mr JF Aaron  
David Butterworth  
Malcolm Conway  
Jim Davies  
Adrian Dunning  
Leonard Green  
Philip Harrison  
John Hart  
Christopher Holmes  
Alan Hurst  
Colin Kennington  
Geoff Kerr  
Stuart Murray  
Brendan O'Friel  
John Owen  
Keith Pennyfather  
Malcolm Richardson  
Ian Stuart  
Mr JM Warner  
Ian Watson  
Keith Whitmore  
Tony Young