

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

promoting quality public transport.....

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

Annual Review 2016-2017

Incorporating Business Plan 2018-2020



Grasmere - Stagecoach Open Top Bus in the wettest part of England!

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

TravelWatch NorthWest Annual Review 2016-2017 ***(incorporating Business Plan 2018-2020)***

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(Cover Photo; Chris Dale)

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

Company No. 6181713

Registered Office: 11 Harvelin Park, Todmorden, Lancs OL14 6HX

Chair's Foreword

Another year has passed by with TravelWatch NorthWest continuing to ensure that passengers of all forms of public transport are at the centre of planning decisions and are uppermost in the thoughts of transport providers.

Unfortunately, I have the sad duty to report the death of one of our leading lights, Paul Fawcett, who was the Research and Advisory Consultant to the Board. His knowledge and experience helped to provide high quality responses to many consultations and inquiries. He will be missed by everyone in TravelWatch, not just for his work, but for his friendship and our thoughts are with his family.

We have seen the first year of the new Northern and TransPennine franchises complete with the grand, and long overdue, promises of extra trains (including new build) and continued electrification. It soon became obvious that schemes in other parts of the country were falling apart and would have a knock-on effect for the North West plans. We will be pressing for the implementation of the full Northern Hub and electrification programmes.

There are going to be many major engineering blockades starting this year for various projects, including HS2. We will be monitoring their progress and reporting on the way the passengers are treated during these disruptions.

Local authorities are still having their funding streams reduced by Central Government and thus continuing the trend of reduced sums of money available to subsidise the socially necessary bus services not provided commercially by the operators. Nonetheless, it is heartening to see that the trend is being slightly reversed by the new administration in Lancashire.

Greater Manchester and Liverpool now have elected mayors and we have yet to see their full plans for transport. We will seek to have meetings with their teams as soon as possible.

The Metrolink network upgrade is continuing with trams now using the Second City Crossing and the full fleet of 120 trams now in service. This is not the end of the story, as work has now started on the next phase with the extension to The Trafford Centre. In Blackpool, work is due to start soon on the Blackpool North extension. Both schemes will require extra trams to be ordered.

Overall, a mixed picture, but we hope that real progress can be made to give the region the transport network it deserves.

Thanks are due to all the members of TravelWatch for their involvement and invaluable input into all aspects of our work. None of this would mean much without our Company Secretary, John Moorhouse, who brings it all together.



Chris Dale, Chairman, September 2017

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 June 2017, Shane Fitzpatrick, Merseytravel's Head of Operations, spoke of the long term 30-year Rail Strategy which commenced in 2014 and is under 3-year periodical reviews. The strategy which will dovetail into the £340 million investment in the City Region includes a major upgrade to Lime Street station, City Centre improvement with emphasis on Liverpool Central, Park & Ride at Maghull and Newton le Willows, faster journeys with more capacity and step free access for the less abled.

2.4 Another component of the strategy is a new fleet of electric trains for the Merseyrail network to replace its current fleet to enter service by 2021. In a separate presentation at the conference we learnt that whilst the trains will be dedicated to the 3rd rail operation of the Merseyrail network they will have a pantograph fitted and battery operation capability to cater for future operation to certain destinations off the network, such as Preston and Wigan. We were pleased to hear that with potentially longer journeys toilet provision would be reviewed.

2.5 We support Merseytravel's pursuit of the provision of a hub for HS2 in Liverpool. Merseyside also deserves to be better served by the long distance rail network and it is good news that the TPE franchise will provide direct services between Liverpool and Scotland hopefully from December 2018. There is also scope for more frequent through trains to the capital and we have pressed for this in the new West Coast franchise.

2.6 Another major scheme to benefit Merseyside is the restoration of the Halton Curve which would restore direct connectivity to Wrexham and North Wales from Liverpool and Liverpool Airport. It is good news that work has now started and services proposed for December 2018. Ultimately we would wish to see the Airport directly rail served.

2.7 We have always supported 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 its Bus Alliance with Arriva and Stagecoach to improve bus travel across Merseyside. Other operators need to join but there may be commitment problems. Bus operators are faced with problems of traffic congestion and re-regulation.

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

3. Annual Review 2016/17

3.1 Conferences

3.1.1 TOWNW 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 Blackpool on 7th June 2016, Preston on 12th October 2016 and Warrington on 9th February 2017. Notes of the conferences are available on our website - www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk

3.1.3 The conference in Blackpool was kindly supported by Blackpool Council and Blackpool Transport Services Ltd. and held in the Council Chamber, Blackpool Town Hall. The conference was opened by Cllr. Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Streets and Transport, Blackpool Council and presentations were made by -

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

70 delegates attended and after lunch a number were treated to a heritage tram ride to Fleetwood and back, courtesy of Blackpool Transport Services Ltd.

3.1.4 In Preston the conference was preceded by the Company's ninth AGM and held at County Hall, kindly supported by Lancashire County Council and TransDev Blazefield Ltd. The conference was opened by Oliver Starkey, Head of Service, Public and Integrated Transport Lancashire County Council and presentations were made by -

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

70 delegates attended.

3.1.5 The conference in Warrington was held in Winmarleigh House and was supported by Arriva Rail North, First TransPennine Express & Transport & Training Services Group (UK). The main theme of the conference was the Northern and TransPennine franchises, 10 months on. The conference was opened by the Senior Traffic Commissioner, Mrs. Beverly Bell, a continual supporter of TOWNW, who was sadly retiring from her position at the end of May. Speakers then were -

- Alex Hynes, Managing Director, Arriva Rail North
- Leo Goodwin, Managing Director, TransPennine Express
- David Blainey, Operations Director, Network Warrington

92 delegates attended

3.2 Bus Services

3.2.1 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 understood that passenger numbers increased with extra buses brought in. 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.

3.2.2 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.

3.2.3 We remained concerned at threats to local bus services especially in rural areas and the challenge of getting the passenger voice effectively heard. In November we urged Lancashire County Council to continue the subsidy to local bus services as they had been retained only on one year initial contracts. We said that it would be beneficial if a (hopefully) positive decision were to carry with it a longer term guarantee than a further 1 year term which would do little to reassure local people who relied on these services for essential needs and had no access to other forms of transport. At least 3 years would be more desirable. Young people as well as the elderly and mobility impaired are particularly at risk.

3.2.4 We have always maintained that 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. Recent government guidance on financing of Community Transport could exacerbate its financial standing.

3.2.5 Following our representations, it was pleasing to hear that Lancashire County Council decided, in December 2016, to extend bus service contracts for a further 12 months, until the end of March 2018. We will continue to strive for this to continue beyond that date.

3.2.6 In January 2017 we noted with approval that following input from TravelWatch EastMidlands and ourselves Derbyshire CC agreed not to impose bus service cuts for at least 2 years. We also noted that Cumbria had underspent £130,000 of bus grants – this money could have been used to keep some services going!

3.2.7 In August 2016 we made an input to a House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry into the Bus Services Bill. As well as the need for real time information on and off the bus the following points were amongst those covered in our response.

- The greatest issue facing bus operation currently is the concessionary fare and lack of full re-imburement to operators
- There is a need for passenger involvement in the creation of all partnership and franchising agreements

- Complaints procedures are currently not well publicised. We would like to see a notice prominently displayed in all vehicles used on Registered Local Services explaining how and to whom comments and complaints can be made and giving contact details of the appeals procedure.
- One of the major problems for operators is unreliability and increased costs due to congestion, especially in urban areas and at peak times. It is difficult to see how the provisions of the Bill will make any significant improvement.
- We welcome the commitment in the Bill to ensure that LTAs continue to make multi operator ticketing schemes. Single-operator ticketing means that a return or multi journey ticket is not always available on all services on the route.

(Response available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

3.2.8 Towards the end of 2016, TOWN Board Director David Butterworth instigated a successful campaign to ensure the Clitheroe town service was funded through a section 106 agreement – an enforceable obligation entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to help make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. When it became apparent that the requirement to do so by a housing developer would not be enforced by the local authorities, David successfully persuaded Lancashire County Council to rethink their decision and ensure that the developer would carry out the obligation to fund the service. One favourable spin off was that the money saved had enabled the previously withdrawn Sabden services to be reinstated. It may well be that such obligations are being overlooked or indeed not being imposed under the terms of the Act in other parts of the country.

(More details of this campaign are on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

3.3 Rail Matters

Rail Franchises

3.3.1 We were disappointed with the performance of Northern trains over the first few months of the new Arriva franchise. There were 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 took place at short notice with no alternative transport being provided often leaving passengers with delays over 60 minutes. Short formations of trains were also 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) resulted in some services running with a reduction in capacity and deterioration of vehicle quality.

3.3.2 We should mention poor performance of Northern Trains in respect of revenue collection since the start of the new franchise on some lines used by our members, with very differing standards in trying to prevent ticketless travel. Additionally we have noticed a deterioration in station maintenance, notably where Northern have taken over station management from previous franchisees.

3.3.3 In September 2016 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 had been applied without any consultation with passenger groups and with very little advance notice.

3.3.4 Consultation on Northern's plans for refurbished and new trains was somewhat lacking, though Northern did assure us that the passenger view is highly valued. In the Autumn of 2016 we were able to view a refurbished Class 158. The result was brighter but with cosmetic changes only. More refurbished units are in service but internal realtime displays are lacking and no automated announcements yet experienced. Some timetable improvements originally proposed for December 2017 slipped to May 2018.

3.3.5 We responded to the West Coast Franchise consultation on 2nd 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)

Planned disruption to rail services

3.3.6 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.

3.3.7 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.

3.3.8 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.

3.3.9 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.

3.3.10 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.

3.3.11 At Christmas and New Year 2016 work on the Ordsall Chord gave rise to an elaborate system of bus substitution in the Manchester area. We sampled some of these on 29/30 December and 2nd January.

3.3.12 The buses/ coaches in themselves worked reasonably well but the overriding issue was lack of or poor information. The following were examples –

- Arriving at Bolton on a train from Chorley on 29 Dec, no information was given about the bus service to Manchester Airport and there was no information on the platform or overbridge. Posters and timetables were available in the booking hall.
- At Manchester Airport station on 29 Dec, the only information on display was beyond the booking office near the platform entrances. This consisted of a Network Rail general works poster and reprint of the Northern timetable 14, which was also available from the racks at this point. No other timetable information was on view and no signs were visible to direct passengers to the rail replacement buses.
- On 2nd January (and presumably over the holiday period) Manchester Oxford Road station and all its facilities including toilets were closed. There were small inadequate notices displayed about replacement buses but, incredibly, no signage /indication of where they operated from and incomplete information about the bus options. The buses departed about 150 yards away on Whitworth Street West.

3.3.13 In January 2017 we participated in and contributed to a workshop organised by Transport Focus and involving Northern and TransPennine Express. The event focussed mainly on how well the Xmas and New Year Manchester blockade had operated and how the experience could be improved for passengers. The following

are examples where improvements could be made and these and others were embodied in an action programme for the operators to take forward –

- Need for better customer service from bus drivers (the only contact passengers may have with the industry at that point).
- Need to improve information about buses and where to find them, for example at Manchester Airport.
- Ensure misleading information is eliminated, such as signage about bus replacement at Oxford Road and Bolton.
- Need for more proactive staff seeking to help passengers rather than waiting to be approached.

We look forward to progress in these and other areas.

3.3.14 We welcomed the complete reopening of the Settle-Carlisle line at the end of March 2017 following the successful extensive repairs to the serious land slip at Eden Brows north of Armathwaite. Following the 15 month partial closure of the line it is pleasing to note that passenger numbers have soared. We have always advocated that the line could fulfil a potentially more important role for through journeys between Yorkshire/ the Midlands and Scotland.

3.4 Integration

3.4.1 In January 2017 we published a report examining the reality of provision of information and guidance for passengers when changing from train to bus at rail stations and how easy it is to do this.

3.4.2 In October/ November 2016 we had surveyed 42 stations (including 3 Metrolink stops) in the North West, mainly medium sized with footfall ranging from about 100,000 to about 4,500,000. We looked at information /guidance displayed from stepping off the train to that displayed in the station concourse. We also looked at information about the proximity of bus stops/ stations and services offered from there. We assessed the use of car parks at the time of the visit and recorded information and facilities available at bus stops and similarly for bus stations.

3.4.3 At most of the stations we visited there **was** information to be found about where to catch a bus and it was evident that strides had been taken to promote the opportunity to interchange to bus. However the ready accessibility of such information varied considerably. Virgin West Coast stations were particularly poor, with no less than 5 out of the 10 stations visited having no discernible information anywhere on the station about the availability and proximity of bus services. From the limited survey, stations in PTE areas (Merseyside and Greater Manchester) did not appear to be better provided than those in the Shire or Unitary Counties.

3.4.4 **We recommended** that train & station operators and where appropriate Local Transport Authorities, Transport for Greater Manchester and Merseytravel undertook a comprehensive review of all stations in our region to assess the provision of this information. This review should aspire to maximising as far as possible the accessibility, standard and appropriateness of information at stations relating to the availability and location of onward bus service facilities.

(Report available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

3.5 Light Rail

3.5.1 The Manchester Metrolink system continues to expand and is widely appreciated by its users. The second city crossing opened early in 2017 and offers a useful additional link between Victoria and St Peters Square. An additional stop between Exchange Square and St Peters Square would have been welcome as the two stops are quite a long way apart, given the city centre ambience.

3.5.2 We have previously reported on the need, as Metrolink expands, for greater integration with other modes especially through ticketing with rail services. Unfortunately 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.

3.5.3 From 15th July this year a new operator - KeolisAmey Metrolink took over the operation of the Metrolink network. Key features of the new contract include a major focus on improving operational reliability, and customer service and security – with an increased staff presence on the network, particularly in the evening and at weekends. Before this we have noticed some welcome improvements in on-tram announcements, including interchange with other modes - at Victoria for example. This is good news especially from the point of view of visitors to the city who are unfamiliar with the system. A further improvement would be for on-tram announcements to stipulate Piccadilly station (not just Piccadilly) to avoid confusion, particularly for those unfamiliar with the distinction.

3.5.4 In June 2016 at the conference in Blackpool we received a presentation on the proposal to extend the Blackpool Tramway from North Pier to Blackpool North railway station. The proposal to extend the current tramway network from the Promenade, up Talbot Road to a terminus adjacent to North Station. Works were planned to take place from 2018 with completion and tram operations commencing in early 2019.

3.5.5 The scheme forms part of the Talbot Road enhancement and will feature stops at appropriate intervals, double track and a terminus as part of the regenerated Wilko store site adjacent to the station. Trams would operate at 10 minute intervals with northbound and southbound services alternating. 2 additional trams would be required in order to deliver a robust service.

3.5.6 This is a welcome project though we are not sure how it is progressing.

3.6 Consultations

3.6.1 TOWN responded to various consultations throughout the year, including –

- *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.
- *Public transport ticketing block exemption (Competition and Markets Authority 24.5.16)* – we commented that the Ticketing Block Exemption was essential for enabling public transport users to travel unimpeded by unnecessary single operator ticketing. We strongly support the continuation of the Ticketing Block Exemption, welcome the opportunity to comment on the revisions and are pleased to see it incorporates new form of ticketing such as smart cards.
- *The Rail Passenger Experience (House of Commons Transport Committee 25.5.16)* – we commented on, inter alia, the provision of information especially during engineering disruption, ticketing and on train facilities.
- *Reducing disruption on A Roads (DfT 27.5.16)* – with bus services in mind we advocated much better dialogue amongst the various agencies, including agreement on a maximum number of pre-planned works over specific sections of road. All classes of road should be covered.
- *Rail Franchising (HOCTC 2.6.16)* – we set out again the need for a truly independent review of the whole franchising philosophy, taking into account a properly researched and considered view of whether the benefits of private enterprise within the tightly controlled franchising regime outweigh all of the costs of the fragmented rail industry that was set up by the 1993 Railways Act.
- *West Coast Franchise (DfT 2.8.16)* – see paragraph 3.3.5 above.
- *Bus Services Bill (HOCTC 28.8.16)* – see paragraph 3.2.7 above.
- *Greater Manchester Strategy 2040 (Transport for G Mcr 23.09.16)* – we generally welcomed this though pointing out that much more needed to be done on achieving better integration and quality and making public transport sufficiently appealing to attract more of the vast number of car users.
- *Urban Congestion (HOCTC 9.12.16)* – we expressed surprise that this inquiry made no reference to rail travel as a means of reducing road congestion and also no reference to land use planning which has a major influence on the length of journeys in urban areas and the mode of travel chosen.
- *Bus Services Bill : Draft Guidance (DfT 16.3.17)* – we pointed to the rural bus problem and the need for community transport services to be integrated into the network of commercial and supported services, offering a service to **all** users with national as well as local publicity to ensure maximum awareness.

(Responses available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

4. Current Workstreams (2017/18)

4.1 Conferences

4.1.1 Liverpool 8th June 2017 with kind support of Merseytravel and Virgin West Coast. We received presentations from –

- Shane Fitzpatrick, Head of Operations, Merseytravel.
- Rob Monnier, New Trains Programme, Merseytravel.
- Alex Crane, Operations Director, Stagecoach Merseyside, S.Lancs, Chester & Wirral.
- Michael Stewart, General Manager Anglo Scot, Virgin West Coast

56 delegates attended. (We were competing with the General Election!)

(Conference report available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

4.1.2 Planned to be in Salford on 12th October 2017 with kind support of Salford City Council. To feature –

- The Mayor of Salford
- David Hoggarth, Director, Rail North
- Martin Shier, Bus Partnerships Delivery Manager, TfGM,
- Brandon Jones, Head of External Relations, First UK Bus (Yorkshire & Greater Manchester).

4.1.3 Planned to be in Lancaster on 8th February 2018. To include, provisionally, HS2, TPE and supported bus services.

4.2 Rail Matters

Franchising & Investment

4.2.1 We still look forward to new trains, refurbished trains, the end of Pacers and extra capacity on both Northern and TPE. However as we said last year 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 2,3 and 4 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.

4.2.2 We had commended the North of England Electrification Task Force's report "Northern Sparks" in March 2015, recognising 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

4.2.3 It is therefore very worrying that in July this year the DfT has cancelled the Windermere line electrification and questioned the Trans Pennine electrification. It appears that the North is again being shortchanged compared with the South. We wrote to the Secretary of State in August and widely publicised our views.

4.2.4 In the letter we pointed out that spending on transport per head of population is only about one third than is the case in London and this ratio is set to get worse. Many passengers are discouraged from travelling because of severe overcrowding. Ironically, the news coincided with a government announcement that, in the interest of carbon emissions, diesel (and petrol) road vehicles were to be phased out by 2050. Also the government had just announced the CrossRail 2 development, yet the North would, once again, see investment curtailed.

4.2.5 A quick response from Chris Grayling did not impress. He failed to address the issue of environmental pollution in the face of government policy and also the incompatibility of transport spending per head. We do not see bi-mode trains as a viable option for the Windermere line, being more expensive to operate and maintain than electric trains and with poorer performance, especially on steeply graded alignments.

4.2.6 We strongly support the Northern Powerhouse rail network and Transport for the North, which we know is committed to the TransPennine route upgrade and the Northern Hub, including increased capacity and journey time improvements. We will continue to campaign for proper rail investment in the North West.

Rail disruption

4.2.7 Work on the West Coast Main Line proceeds. In July we met with representatives of Virgin Trains West Coast and Network Rail in respect of the closure of Euston over August Bank Holiday 2017 for HS2 work. Unfortunately Watford cannot be used to terminate trains and Milton Keynes would be used instead. It was hoped that most passengers would have been rerouted by then (e.g. from Manchester travel via Leeds and ECML!). We expressed concern about arrangements for those turning up at Euston to travel to the North West and the need to present the travel options in reverse as well. We also stressed the following requirements -

- good and understandable information
- personnel to be on hand at all points to provide assistance.
- tolerance of all TOC's if passengers find themselves "off advertised route".

4.2.8 For over two years we have campaigned, along with the Friends of the Settle – Carlisle line (FOSCL), for the Settle – Carlisle line (S&C) to be used for diversions from the West Coast Main Line when engineering work takes place. A meeting with Virgin West Coast in April 2017 revealed that in summary it was not Virgin's policy to divert via S&C, because train crews no longer had the knowledge to support this route and it would be very expensive to reinstate this knowledge. Also paths on the S&C were limited (though freight has declined considerably). However our view is that 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.

4.2.9 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*). There is thus 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.

4.2.10 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. Accordingly we wrote to the Rail Delivery Group in August setting out our views that a lead should be taken by the industry on this whole vexed issue. We are also putting the arguments to the West Coast franchise preferred bidders.

High Speed Rail

4.2.10 In February 17 Royal Assent was granted for Phase One – London to the West Midlands. We have always felt the use of Euston as a terminus to be problematical, especially in respect of onward travel and the ability to change at the new Old Oak Common hub for Crossrail services is welcome. We remain concerned at the abandonment of the link between HS2 and HS1 especially as we aspire to through services between the North West and Europe which such a link would enable. 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. As far as possible HS2 stations should adjoin conventional stations for ease of transition to local/regional rail services. We are pleased that, currently, it appears all HS2 trains will also be able to run on the classic network. This will give maximum flexibility.

4.2.11 In August DfT launched a consultation about the provision of a hub at Crewe to build on existing connectivity and to give better access to high speed services. Crewe is an important junction and requires good HS2 links with connections to a range of other destinations. We are in the process of responding to the consultation.

4.3 Current bus matters

4.3.1 In June we wrote to the two new elected Mayors of Greater Manchester and Merseyside emphasising the opportunity now to introduce a properly integrated bus network, building on any improvements already in place. The following areas would benefit passengers -

- Integrated and multi operator ticketing
- Bus priority measure to improve journey times

- Ability to cross subsidise to maintain less used but socially essential routes
- A sea change in information provision – real time visual and audible information on buses, real time information at bus stations and stops.
- Improved procedures for passenger input including a properly publicised complaints procedure on buses and elsewhere.
- Better more easily available advance information about bus fares
- Impartial information offices at bus stations covering all operators.

4.3.2 On Merseyside we were particularly dismayed by the removal of the bus lanes in Liverpool and we expressed our sincere hope that the new City Region Mayor would look carefully at all means to promote bus priority. Modal shift away from cars will not be achieved by removing priority from public transport.

4.3.3 In July we responded to Cheshire East Council on threats to remove subsidy from a range of bus services especially the complete withdrawal of evening and Sunday (including Bank Holiday) services which would not be in the interests of any current or potential bus passengers. Sunday is the busiest day for shopping, leisure and sport and public transport is vital for these activities, for visitors and workers in these industries alike. Many of these are in low paid jobs and are unable to afford alternative transport if buses are not available. The early end to services would mean that many workers would be unable to return home by bus. If unemployment followed there would be a burden on other local authority services.

4.4 Consultations

4.4.1 We have responded to a number of consultations including TPE and Northern timetable changes from May 2018, the Wales & Borders franchise and Liverpool John Lennon Airport Master Plan 2050.

5. Plans for 2018/20

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 work streams. 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 2018/2020 -

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.
- An examination of coach service provision and quality.
- Monitoring of the effectiveness of Community Transport.
- 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, engineering disruption (including the quality of replacement road services) and connections at interchanges.
- Continued liaison with all rail franchises and Network Rail. Specific monitoring of changes/improvements to services on Northern and TransPennine Express from May 2018 onwards.

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. 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***

Appendix B Principal Personae 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 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.

Directors who served on the Board during 2016/17 -

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:-

*John Moorhouse
TravelWatch NorthWest
11 Harvelin Park
Todmorden OL14 6HX*

*telephone: 07807 768124
email: admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk
website: www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk*

Appendix C Accounts 2016/17

DETAILED PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017

	2017		2016	
	£	£	£	£
TURNOVER		9895		10350
COST OF SALES				
Project fees	208			
Administration fees	3000		3170	
Totals		<u>3208</u>		<u>3170</u>
GROSS PROFIT/(LOSS)		6687		7180
OVERHEADS				
Travel and subsistence	777		1075	
Conferences & Meetings	1358		2521	
Office costs	1029		1168	
Accommodation	2325		2340	
Insurance	217		186	
Subscriptions	157		164	
Publicity	72		204	
Totals		<u>5935</u>		<u>7658</u>
		752		(478)
OTHER OPERATING INCOME				
Members income	335		355	
Sundry donations	667		629	
Totals		1002		984
OPERATING PROFIT/(LOSS)		1754		506
Interest receivable		13		10
PROFIT/(LOSS) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES		1767		516

Directors Expenses (there were no fees paid to Directors for specific assignments in 2016/17)

Name	Expenses (£)
Chris Dale	566.50
John Owen	66.00

Appendix D Membership (at September 2017)

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
Friends of Eccles Station
Friends of Hindley Station
Friends of Reddish South Station
Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line
Goyt Valley RUA
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