

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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

promoting quality public transport.....

Annual Review 2018-2019



The old and the new for Northern Rail

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

TravelWatch NorthWest Annual Review 2018-2019

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
• Chair's Foreword	3
1. Introduction & Background	4
2. Annual Review 2018/19	5
3. Current Workstreams (2018/19)	13
4. Plans for 2020/22	18
• Appendices –	
<i>Appendix A</i> – Administration	20
<i>Appendix B</i> – Accounts 2018/19	21
<i>Appendix C</i> – Membership	22

(Cover Photo; Chris Dale)

Chair's Foreword

When I wrote the foreword to last year's report, I hoped that organisations like Transport for the North would take a decisive role in sorting out the major problems caused by the timetable fiasco in May of that year. Unfortunately, that leadership was lacking and the problems are to some extent still around.

Because of a catalogue of failures throughout the rail industry, we are still waiting for the introduction of the full fleet of new trains and the refurbishment of cascaded stock has fallen behind the promised schedule. Also behind schedule and in some areas lost completely are the myriad of new services due to be introduced across the network.

The West Coast Partnership franchise has now been awarded to First/Trenitalia but there is a lot of uncertainty about its future plans in the light of the government announcement to undertake a wholesale review of the costly HS2 plans. The new East Midlands franchise has been awarded to Abellio but there has been no further movement on CrossCountry.

Bus passengers are also going through uncertain times with the possible introduction of franchising in the major cities, but no relief for the beleaguered rural area users. Whatever system is decided upon, the passenger, rather than dogma must at the centre of the schemes and we will certainly lobby for that.

Even trams are having problems at the moment. Manchester is pressing ahead with the extension to The Trafford Centre and purchasing more trams to strengthen the fleet, which is good news. Unfortunately, Blackpool is having problems with the proposed service from the Promenade to Blackpool North station due to planning problems delaying the building of the station terminus.

I can only hope that by this time next year I will be able to report on mainly good news for the passengers of the North West instead of a catalogue of more problems. At least you can be assured that we will continue to represent your views in any future plans across all modes.

Thanks are due to all our members for their input over the last year, not least from the board and John Moorhouse, our tireless Company Secretary.



Chris Dale, Chairman, September 2019

1. Introduction & Background

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) originated as the North West Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF). The NWPTUF was formed in October 2003 and its public name became 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. TravelWatch groups 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 good 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 A and C***).

2. Annual Review 2018/19

2.1 Conferences

2.1.1 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 our conferences it is our normal practice to give an opportunity to delegates to make a short statement on or ask a question about any public transport issue of concern.

2.1.2 The conferences were held in Blackpool on 14th June 2018, Liverpool on 18th October 2018 and Manchester on 7th February 2019.

2.1.3 At the conference in Blackpool, kindly sponsored by Blackpool Council and Blackpool Transport Services Ltd., speakers were –

- Jane Cole, Managing Director, Blackpool Transport Services Ltd.
- Patrick Cawley, Director of Route Sponsorship, LNW Route, Network Rail
- Elaine Williams, Deputy Service Delivery Director, National Express Ltd

50 delegates attended (a rail strike did not help) some of whom enjoyed a heritage tram ride after lunch, courtesy of Blackpool Transport Services.

2.1.4 In Liverpool, kindly sponsored by Merseytravel and Stagecoach Merseyside, the following speakers participated –

- Cllr Liam Robinson, Transport Portfolio Holder, Merseytravel.
- Andy Heath, Managing Director, Merseyrail
- Raj Chandarana, Stakeholder Manager, Central Region, Northern Rail
- Howard Farrall, MD, Arriva NW; Rob Jones, MD Stagecoach Matt Goggins, Head of Bus, Merseytravel – a joint presentation on the Merseyside Bus Alliance.

70 delegates attended.

2.1.5 The conference in Manchester was sponsored by First TransPennine Express and Stagecoach Manchester. We invited the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham but he was unable to attend. In the event the conference was opened by Councillor Mark Aldred, Transport for Greater Manchester Committee and subsequent speakers were -

- Chris Barnes, Interim Head of Projects, TfGM
- Chris Nutton, Major Projects Director, First TransPennine Express
- David Sidebottom, Transport User Director, Transport Focus
- Chris Leech, Engagement Manager Contract & Suppliers, RSSB

In a new venture we featured a workshop session on “How to increase bus patronage”. After lunch the conference split into 3 facilitated groups to discuss this topic, followed by a report back plenary session. (See paragraphs 3.2.1 – 3.2.7 below)

80 delegates attended.

2.2 Merseytravel

2.2.1 We are grateful for the support we have received from Merseytravel in every year since 2006. The Authority has now decided to cease direct financial support. We will continue to explore new sources of funding.

2.3 Bus Services

2.3.1 In June 2018 we launched a report on a mystery shop of bus services across the North West which had been carried out in the Spring.

2.3.2 A total of 218 bus journeys were made by our members across the North West region on a wide range of operators and improvements noted included more modern accessible vehicles, brighter on-board ambience and generally more consistent driving standards.

2.3.3 However we found there was still a long way to go particularly with regard to real time bus running information at bus stations and bus stops (in stark contrast to London and other points of the country) and the availability of on board next stop information (especially vital for the many unfamiliar bus users). In the latter case this was found on only 4% (spoken) and 5% (visual) of the journeys made, again in stark contrast to London and other areas.

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

2.3.4. The national concessionary fare scheme has been important in reducing loneliness and isolation - a key government target. A concern is whether there is a correlation between the large-scale withdrawal of marginal bus services and a low reimbursement rate to operators.

2.3.5 The Bus Services Act 2017 committed to a “step change in the information available to bus passengers”. We had previously made our views known on the Bill and it was pleasing to see undertakings in the Act to provide better information on bus services and at bus stops. In July 2018 the Department for Transport launched two related consultations related to the provisions of the Act -

- On ways to improve information for bus passengers
- On the development of comprehensive Open Data

We have responded to these emphasising the need for better next stop information and buses, real time information at bus stops and greater transparency of fares information.

2.3.6 In September 2018 we responded to the House of Commons Transport Committee's consultation on the Health of the Bus Market. We said that buses should play a key role in providing an alternative to private transport and hence creating a more environmentally sustainable transport mix. However, the decline in bus services over the past twenty or thirty years or more has left large areas with no bus services at all and many more with only a basic residual service.

2.3.7 In our response we enlarged on a number of unsatisfactory areas –

- The need for improved information, especially accurate real time information at bus stops and next stop information on buses. Also, very poor information when buses are diverted due to road works, etc.
- The problem of traffic congestion, undoubtedly a major disincentive to use buses and a factor in increased costs for operators.
- In rural areas local community bus services cannot adequately replace scheduled services available to all passengers and such areas are badly hit with the attendant decline of post offices, shops, etc.
- The difficulty of finding out about bus fares before travelling.

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

2.3.8 In October 2018 we were pleased to hear about Transport Focus' work with young people, involving research into their views of bus travel. Some enlightened operators have picked up on this. For example, ticket purchase information should be geared to smartphones. Another initiative was cheaper fares for young people on Merseyside.

2.3.9 We remained concerned at past withdrawals of local bus services especially in rural areas and the challenge of getting the passenger voice effectively heard. 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.

2.4 Rail Matters

Timetable changes

2.4.1 In June/ July 2017 we had responded to consultation from both Northern and TransPennine Express on proposed timetable changes from May 2018. We made a number of specific comments on some of the less favourable changes but generally welcomed service increases though with the proviso that these would depend on the availability of extra rolling stock, especially for Northern.

2.4.2 One particular concern we highlighted was the ability of Manchester Victoria to cope with the many TPE extra services. We pointed out that, in our experience, signal delays awaiting a platform were commonplace from both east and west. From experience since the start of the May 2018 timetable this seemed to have been borne out.

2.4.3 A few weeks before the start of the May timetable we wrote to David Hoggarth, Transport for the North (TfN), on the subject of the poor performance of Arriva Rail North since the commencement of its franchise. We said that the number of train cancellations experienced in recent months was unprecedented in the history of the railway and cited the glaring example of Cumbria where, in our view, the ill-considered handover from TransPennine to Northern has been a complete failure for passengers, especially on the Windermere line. We were told that this line was regularly suffering 90% of the day's trains being cancelled with not all services being replaced by buses.

2.4.4 We were particularly alarmed that the reasons being given for the cancellations were not exclusively infrastructure, engineering or train problems, but also shortage of drivers and conductors. We received a response from Barry White, Chief Executive of TfN, which shared our concerns. TfN had formally written to Northern and asked the train operating company to produce a performance improvement plan clearly setting out what the Franchise was doing to address our concerns.

2.4.5 The above circumstances were then overtaken by events in the shape of the new timetable that commenced on 20th May. Due to a number of factors - again mainly a shortage of drivers and conductors, partly arising from delays to the Bolton & Blackpool lines electrification - the outcome was disastrous for several lines. Once more, the Windermere line suffered badly with the service actually being totally replaced by buses for a while and then a private train charter company stepping in to offer a free rail service. We responded to the House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry into the problems of the May timetable from our Region's perspective.

2.4.6 Unfortunately, in spite of action by Northern, cancellations continued during the year. The Furness line saw 112 cancellations during the 1st half of July with few bus replacement services and the Lakes Line seeing many in August - the prime holiday month - along with short formed trains and standby road coaches not being deployed. The whole sorry state of affairs was exacerbated by the prolonged industrial action over Northern's attempts to introduce driver-controlled door operation in compliance with the franchise agreement. This was not resolved until suspension of the strike action in February 2019.

2.4.7 One victim of the cancellations during the summer of 2018 was Lancashire DalesRail, affecting well over half of the planned services and seriously exasperating passengers. We supported the call of the Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company and the Friends of the S&C line for Northern to look at using a charter operator to run the service to ensure dependability but to no avail. We did play a part in elevating the discussion to the Director of the Rail North partnership and trusted that a more reliable service would be operated in 2019.

2.4.8 The new timetable also appeared ambitious for TransPennine Express with more trains serving Manchester Victoria adding to the congestion there. Punctuality and reliability took a nosedive and trains were turned around short of their destinations e.g. some which should have gone to Manchester Airport,

very inconvenient for those passengers with flights to catch. As far as Network Rail is concerned in general there appears to have been a lack of attention to the practicability of operational factors and a lack of contingency to allow for perturbations in services, both TPE and Northern. Witness the Manchester Victoria example above. We also received reports that Network Rail was short of experienced timetablers at its Milton Keynes office.

2.4.9 In September 2018 TPE announced some changes to the timetable from December to address the performance issues and provide greater resilience for services on the North TransPennine route. Also that month a report from the ORR on the May timetable changes concluded that Network Rail, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), Northern, the Department for Transport (DfT), and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) all made mistakes, which contributed to the collapse of services, particularly on the GTR and Northern routes. The Inquiry found problems caused by delays to completing the North West Electrification Programme were worsened by Network Rail, which wrongly believed it could make up the time. We trust that these lessons will be learned for the future.

Fares

2.4.10 Consistent fares increases over the years have led to accusations of Britain's railways being too expensive. There are of course bargains to be had by booking in advance.

2.4.11 In Sep 18 we responded to the Railway Delivery Group's consultation on "Easier Fares". We warned that in any simplification of fares care is needed and we would not wish to see cheaper tickets phased out. Advance fares are popular and have made train travel affordable to many, whilst allowing operators to selectively fill seats at less busy times. This may appear to portray the fares structure as complex, but the key is to ensure all passengers are offered the appropriate value for money fare to meet their particular needs. This means a greater emphasis on clear and accurate information whatever the mode of purchase. There are many examples now where this does not happen due to a lack of knowledge or expertise on the part of sales staff or systems.

2.4.12 We also pointed to the scope for part time season and "Carnet" tickets, offering greater flexibility for undertaking a number of "same route" journeys. Such innovation would help to address the needs of the increasing numbers who work part time, say 2 - 4 days a week. Carnet tickets are popular in some European countries and make travel more affordable than having to purchase full season tickets. They can also cover travel by more than one person on one ticket (e.g. a 10 journey ticket can be used for 2 or more travelling together).

2.4.13 A specific fares benefit to passengers came about in November 2018 when Virgin Trains permanently scrapped evening peak ticket restrictions from Euston station on Fridays. We have long campaigned for this having witnessed horrendous scenes at Euston after 19.00 when the restriction ended. We did also comment that if this action could be taken on busy Friday evenings then surely Mondays to Thursdays should receive similar treatment, thus saving passengers money and in Virgin's own words "provide customers with more

flexibility to travel when they want". Thus far this does not appear to have been taken up.

West Coast Main Line Disruption

2.4.14 Since 2015 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 the 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.

2.4.15 In correspondence with Jo Johnson, then Minister of State for Transport, we laboured the point about comparative journey times between Preston and Carlisle pointing out that even taking into account changing to a shuttle S&C routed rail service at Preston or Carlisle gives no time penalty compared with a road coach service. Add to this the annoyance caused by forcing passengers with their luggage into an irritating queue, followed by a cramped coach journey lacking all the facilities of a train and another disruption at the next change point, then a Voyager type train taking many more passengers than a coach should be the indisputable solution.

2.4.16 Research by Transport Focus confirmed earlier studies showing that passengers prefer to stay on trains even where there are time penalties. There is thus a compelling argument for train services to be diverted over the S&C. Where coach times are similar to or greater than rail diversions passengers will certainly prefer to travel on a train after they have bought a 'train' ticket and avoid the enormous inconvenience of transferring to road services.

2.4.17 It is apparent 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. Following a blatant rebuff from Jo Johnson we contacted John Stevenson MP and met with him in September 2018, but regrettably no headway has been made. We have put the arguments to the West Coast Partnership franchise preferred bidders and await developments with the new franchise.

2.4.18 We commented on the arrangements and quality of information regarding the closure of Euston station over 3 weekends in August/September 2018. We pointed out that the VT website lacked comprehensive information regarding alternative ways of travelling to and from London at those weekends. In response Virgin acknowledged the need to improve in this area and to look at ways of improving the information provided to passengers. .

Rail Ombudsman

2.4.19 On 25th November 2018, following a pledge by government a Rail Ombudsman was appointed to provide consumers (passengers) with a free and expert service to investigate unresolved complaints about train companies and rail service providers who participate in the Rail Ombudsman service. This initiative provides a binding settlement on individual journey claims.

2.4.20 This move obviously affects Transport Focus' role in dealing with complaints. They have estimated that their appeal complaints would diminish by about 70% but they would still deal with more general complaints. It was felt that the presence of an Ombudsman should give TOCs an incentive to settle claims more promptly. However, there seems to be a potential area of confusion for passengers here and questions regarding how complaints procedures are publicised.

2.4.21 As an example of potential confusion, an extract from Northern's Customer Promise (Passengers Charter) includes the following –
"There are some complaints that the Rail Ombudsman won't be able to look into, for example if it's about the way one of our services has been designed, industry policy, or if your complaint relates to an event which took place before the Rail Ombudsman service was established. If that's the case, then they'll contact you to let you know. If possible, they will transfer your complaint to another organisation that may be able to help you further, such as Transport Focus – the independent consumer watchdog for the rail industry. They will independently review your complaint and where appropriate, follow things up on your behalf".

2.4.22 With regard to publicising complaints procedures, a survey contained in research conducted by the DfT in 2014 had found that 72% of passengers had little or no awareness of their rights to compensation in the case of delays. It is regrettable therefore that there is now no requirement for notices on trains setting out how to complain.

2.5 Integration

2.5.1 TOWNW recognises the Importance of multi modal integration - essential to encourage shift from cars. We had emphasised this in our submissions to the new elected Mayors - Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham – in June 2017.

2.5.2 In April 2018 we responded to consultation by Lancashire County Council on proposals to close Transport Information Centres at Carnforth, Clitheroe, Nelson and Preston. In view of the commitment to bus support as mentioned above we said that it seemed perverse to remove these important information outlets which help to promote the supported services. Visitors to an area often found it difficult to find out about bus services and the savings would be paltry. In the case of Clitheroe rail ticket sales made a valuable contribution. Here and at Carnforth, we suggested that an alternative operational model could be considered, possibly involving other agencies, to save costs and extend the scope of those activities.

2.5.3 At Carnforth where rail ticket sales were also buoyant, we preferred retention of the current service as the operating deficit was comparatively minimal when measured against the value of the service and the Council's overall transport budget. It is regrettable that LCC recommended closure rather than investigate an operational partnership solution and only local intervention has managed to bring the proposals to light and to look at future scenarios.

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

2.5.4 At the time of writing we are unaware of developments with this issue.

2.6 Light Rail

2.6.1 The Manchester Metrolink system continues to expand and is widely appreciated by its users. The second city crossing which opened early in 2017 offers a useful additional link between Victoria and St Peters Square.

2.6.2 In January 2019 a zonal fares system was launched on Metrolink. This received a positive reaction although the city centre fare (zone 1) increased from £1.20 to £1.40.

2.6.3 In 2018 work started on the building of the tram link to Blackpool North station from Talbot Square. Completion was set for the summer of 2019, but this has been delayed. Extension of the tram line to Kirkham or even Preston replacing the current rail line from Blackpool South has been mooted but we recognise there are mixed views on this. Notwithstanding, the Blackpool South line is in serious need of upgrading.

2.7 Transport for the North's Strategic Plan

2.7.1 This document was launched in February 2019. We had responded to consultation on the draft plan in April 2018. Whilst we broadly welcomed the thrust of the plan, we said that there was a long way to go to make public transport sufficiently appealing to attract more of the vast number of car users. Much more must be done to improve rail capacity and services on top of the new franchise commitments to new trains which will, we fear, fall substantially short in dealing with current suppressed demand and the growth in demand. More track capacity and more electrification are urgently needed.

2.7.2 The Plan pays as much attention to roads as rail. The latter is mainly concerned with Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Long-Term Rail Strategy. There is much about the need for more investment, route upgrades and links with HS2, but little specific reference to rail electrification. In our original submission we emphasised our scepticism about the use of bi-mode (diesel & electric) trains instead of full electric trains as their performance will be inferior and slower as diesel engines add weight that has to be carried around all the time. Moreover, operating and maintenance costs of bi-mode would likely be higher than electric trains over their life. We firmly believe that the Windermere line, TransPennine and other major routes including the Calder Valley should be fully electrified. Capacity improvements are also vital with, for example, a

pressing need for more capacity on the Oxford Road corridor and grade separation at the crucial Piccadilly junction.

2.7.3 One concern about the plan is the very little reference to buses and light rail. The Long-Term Rail Strategy also fails to recognise the strategic potential of the Settle Carlisle line as a convenient Anglo Scottish link.

2.8 Consultations

2.8.1 TWNW responded to various consultations throughout the year, including:

- *Draft Strategic Transport Plan (Transport for the North 17.4.18)* – see paragraphs 2.7.1 to 2.7.3 above.
- *Transport Information Centres (Lancashire County Council)* – see paragraphs 2.5.2 to 2.5.4 above.
- *May 18 Rail Timetable (House of Commons Transport Committee 31.8.18)* – we set out our concerns as shown in paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.9 above.
- *Bus Services Act Accessible Information (DfT 12.09.18)* – see paragraph 2.3.5 above.
- *Health of the Bus Market (House of Commons Transport Committee 19.9.18)* – see 2.3.6 - 2.3.7 above.
- *Improving Assisted Rail Travel (ORR 16.01.19)* – a generally welcome move towards easing the barriers to travel and making stations and trains more accessible to all.

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

3. Current Workstreams (2019/2020)

3.1 Conferences

3.1.1 County Hall, Preston on 13th June 2019, kindly supported by Lancashire County Council and Preston Bus. Speakers were –

- ✓ County Councillor Andrew Snowden, Lead Member for Highways & Transport, Lancs CC.
- ✓ Gary Bogan, Director Rail North Partnership
- ✓ Jim Bamford, Head of Investment Planning, Transport for the North
- ✓ John Asquith, Commercial Director, Preston Bus
- ✓ A Light Rail session featuring Lewis Lesley and Lincoln Shields, Preston Trampower Ltd and Tony Young, TWNW.

66 delegates attended.

3.1.2 The North West Bus Debate – in The Mechanics Centre Manchester on 17th October 2019. This conference, held at the request of the bus industry, is to concentrate solely on bus services in our region at a time when the structure of bus service provision is being debated. A range of speakers is planned,

representing operators, procurers and, importantly, passengers, disadvantaged and otherwise, to help ensure their voice is heard in the debate.

3.1.3 Planned to be in Lancaster on 6th February 2020. A rail-oriented conference including Northern, TPE, CrossCountry, the future West Coast partnership and Grand Central.

3.2 Current Bus Matters

3.2.1 The North West Bus debate as referred to above follows on, at the request of a major bus operator, from our bus workshop in February 2019. Findings from the three groups of 20-25 people that took part in the workshop can be summarised as follows –

Information provision

3.2.2 Concerns were -

- *Availability of Printed leaflet distribution & paper timetables*
- *Real time information at home*
- *Lack of fares information*
- *How to reach non users*
- *Desirability of maps in shelters (q.v.London)*
- *Inadequacies of Traveline*
- *Internet/Google maps useful*
- *Need for Modern technology*
- *Need for accuracy and consistency*

Fares

3.2.3 Concerns were –

- *Lack of transferability of tickets & different operator fares*
- *Young people incentives*
- *Affordability – city v. country*
- *Exact fare only/ contactless.*
- *Pay before you ride – smart cards*
- *Issue of bus stages*

Bus station/stop environment and information

3.2.4 Concerns were -

- *Lack of Ticket offices/ Information centres*
- *Poor toilet provision*
- *Real time screens not working properly*
- *Inconsistent standards*
- *Inconvenient locations*
- *Accurate timetables in frames*
- *Accessibility – step free access.*

On the bus

3.2.5 Concerns were –

- *Safety perception*
- *Cleanliness*
- *Comfortable & adequate seating provision with luggage space*
- *Lack of Wi-fi*
- *Lack of visual and audio real time info*
- *Bus driver attitude – customer care, route knowledge, careful driving, training.*
- *Air conditioning provision*
- *Destination blinds/ display*
- *Unacceptable passenger behaviour*

Reliability

3.2.6 Concerns were –

- *Lack of clock face timetables*
- *Traffic congestion & the need for bus priority measures using new technology*
- *Investment in new vehicles patchy*
- *Quality of vehicle maintenance*
- *Need for Bespoke vehicle designs e.g. rural areas.*

Funding and Integration

3.2.7 The withdrawal of subsidies especially in rural areas and the question of adequate funding for the English National Concessionary Travel Pass scheme were major concerns. As far as integration with other modes is concerned the conclusion was that this is essentially lacking.

3.3 Current Rail Matters

Williams Rail Review

3.3.1 In September 2018 the Government announced a “sweeping” review to transform the structure of the whole rail industry. This was to be led by independent chair Keith Williams, the former British Airways chief executive and deputy chairman of John Lewis Partnership.

3.3.2 In May 2019 we responded to the Review. We emphasised that the railways are not a true commercial organisation because of the enormous costs of operation, particularly for maintaining and renewing the unique infrastructure. Railways are an environmentally propitious and economically essential public service that should be encouraged to attract passengers (and goods) from more damaging – less sustainable - modes of transport.

3.3.3 Our key view was, and is, that the rail industry needs to be restructured into a more co-ordinated entity, in particular bringing infrastructure control and

operations much closer together. The rail industry is very fragmented and it can be argued that this model has brought with it an artificially high cost base. We welcome the view of the Rail Delivery Group that there is a need for a new strategic body in charge of the whole industry.

3.3.4 Championing the interests of passengers should always be a priority. As for the “burden” on taxpayers, although many do not travel by rail it should be recognised that their contribution to rail services is helping the experience of road users by helping to reduce congestion. One of the problems with the current model is that investment in rail is not seen in a broad context of overall benefit to transport and the environment on a national scale.

3.3.5 We were concerned that, despite the review purporting to put passengers interests first, there appeared to be no mention of independent passenger representation in the consultation document. Yet this is crucial for passengers. We reminded Mr Williams that some years ago the regional statutory bodies representing passengers were abolished to the detriment, we believe, of local rail users. We advocate their restoration which would be in line with a greater emphasis on an increasing role for local stakeholders as outlined above and also, in this part of the world, would fit well with the devolved authority of Transport for the North. Such bodies must of course be totally independent and we argued that TWNW would be well placed to fill this role.

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

Rail Survey 2019

3.3.6 In June 2019 we launched a report – Rail Survey Report Spring 2019. This was a summary of our experiences travelling on 180 rail services in April and May in our region. Generally speaking, the survey showed an overall improvement in standards of reliability and on train standards following the problems in 2018. Most services travelled on were those of Northern (135 journeys). The major cause of concern on Northern, in particular, was the relatively poor level of on train ticket inspection. We believe there is also room for improvement in ticket inspection on Virgin services.

3.3.7 Peak services were under-represented in the survey and thus we believe the results did not reflect some of the capacity problems experienced at those times. We look to the new Northern and TPE trains, as well as infrastructure improvements, to address the capacity issues that exist.

3.3.8 Aside from noting their location and status the survey made no detailed analysis of ticket vending machines (TVMs) at stations. There was a reference to potential problems at smaller stations such as Arnside where the one machine is inconveniently located. We have recently become aware of passenger facing problems with the latest TVM design, especially at stations with just one ticket machine. At Clitheroe for example the passenger has been faced with a time-consuming process to purchase a ticket for a simple local journey, having to go through up to 13 steps before the ticket is issued from the machine with a consequent queue build up. Admittedly the machines do offer a much wider range of ticket options than earlier models but it would appear at the expense of

speedy processing for simple and more popular tickets. TOWNW Directors have been asked to report on any similar experiences with their local TVMs.

New trains – Northern and TPE.

3.3.9 At long last (for Northern at any rate) new trains, both diesel and electric, are now starting to operate. Our general impression is so far generally favourable, though we trust that the one toilet policy for all Northern's new trains, whether 2, 3 or 4 cars, doesn't cause problems. We did raise this issue last year.

3.3.10 Another issue is the lack of flexibility that comes with the new trains for Northern where the self-contained 2, 3 and 4 car sets have no end corridor connections. This is less flexible and convenient for passengers compared with many of the current trains running on Northern which do have end gangway connections. The lack of gangway connections has implications for ticket inspection and any on train catering provision. Ideally more than one train conductor and catering unit will have to be provided on trains without gangways in order to maintain a proper level of passenger service.

3.3.11 We have always maintained that the new trains planned will in fact not totally solve capacity issues, taking into account current suppressed demand - suppressed because of perceived, and to some extent, actual poor peak performance and totally inadequate car parking space at many stations. It was welcome therefore to hear in July 2019 that Northern is discussing the possibility of ordering more new trains now rather than waiting for the next franchise. The operator was forecasting that even with the new trains there could be overcrowding within 2 years. It could well be sooner than that, we think.

High Speed Rail

3.3.12 We have always supported the concept of HS2 though with reservations about its positive effects on our region and integration with conventional services.

3.3.13 Currently HS2 appears to be under threat partly because of projected overspending. At the end of August 2019 the government announced a review of the entire project against a background of escalating spending. Much preparatory work has already been done though. Notwithstanding the outcome there is a pressing need for a sea change in connectivity in the North including enhancement of journeys into the urban centres and in the more rural areas.

3.3.14 Also in August 2019 the DfT announced that First/Trenitalia was the successful bidder to run the West Coast Partnership from December 2019 to 2031. The links with HS2 envisaged in this franchise will no doubt be determined by the outcome of this review. Notwithstanding this we look forward to working with the group on future West Coast and, if forthcoming, HS2 service patterns and passenger facilities.

Light Rail

3.3.15 In May 2019 we compiled a comprehensive response to a consultation by the Department for Transport on Light Rail. We said that this consultation

indicated a welcome and long overdue change of attitude from the Government, given that over the past thirty years successive governments had blocked well developed light rail schemes promoted by PTEs and local authorities. We commented that the potential scale of opportunity for light rail in England was enormous. Most towns and cities over 300,000 population need better public transport and light rail could fulfil that role.

3.3.16 We commented on the success of Manchester Metrolink and the need for Light Rail to be planned as part an overall transport strategy, including cycling and walking. We drew attention to current inadequacies in integration in Manchester and the continuing lack of progress on this e.g. -

- 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.
- Integration with buses is if anything worse than the above because of competition considerations.

3.3.17 Drawing comparisons with Europe we said that in other European countries, light rail was part of an integrated public transport network. However, in the UK it has to compete with deregulated bus services, except in London.

3.3.18 It was very pleasing to receive an acknowledgement from Steve Berry at the DfT in which he gave a “huge thanks for such a detailed and balanced response”. He added that our submission was “very easily understood and very helpful.”

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

3.3.19 In July 2019 we welcomed the introduction of contactless payments on Metrolink, with debit cards able to be read at the yellow smart readers on platforms. A price cap would apply.

4. Plans for 2020/22

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 The following areas of work are being considered for 2020/2022 -

- Bus services - information and quality, accessibility including bus stops.
- Monitoring of the effectiveness of Community Transport.
- Monitoring of the rail passenger experience including new trains, ticketless travel, station facilities including the adequacy of car parking provision and modal integration, engineering disruption (including the quality of replacement road services) and connections at interchanges.
- Continued liaison with all rail franchises and Network Rail, including specific monitoring of changes/improvements to rail services.
- The passenger experience at airports including public transport connectivity and the delays caused by check in and security.
- 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.

4.6 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.

4.7 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 consider.

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 30 years and is a dedicated user of public transport. A former Director of the Campaign for Better Transport, Chris chairs the Crewe to Manchester Community Rail Partnership.

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.

Roy Chapman acts as Advisory Assistant. Having spent some 35 years in the railway and tramway industries, including 14 years with Transport for Greater Manchester, he has considerable experience with transport management, customer service, community rail initiatives and consultancy.

Directors who served on the Board during 2018/19 –

Chris Dale (Chair)	Chris Holmes
David Butterworth	Colin Kennington
Lillian Burns (until Oct 2018)	John Owen
Malcolm Conway	Richard Rollins
David Culshaw (from Oct 2018)	Robert Talbot
Leonard Green (until Oct 2018)	Tim Young (from Oct 2018)
John Hart	Tony Young

A National Liaison Group comprising TravelWatch Chairs co-ordinates 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-

- Arriva NW, Arriva Rail North, Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council, Blackpool Transport Services Ltd., First TransPennine Express, First UK Bus, Lancashire County Council, Merseytravel, Preston Bus, Stagecoach NW, Manchester & Merseyside, TransDev Blazefield Ltd., Transport Focus, Transport for Greater Manchester.

Website – www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk

Email - admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk

Or - johnamoorhouse@gmail.com

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

Appendix B Accounts 2018/19

DETAILED PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

	2019		2018
	£	£	£
TURNOVER		7375	10017
<i>COST OF SALES</i>			
Project fees	0		690
Administration fees	1500		2360
Totals		<u>1500</u>	<u>3050</u>
GROSS PROFIT/(LOSS)		5875	6967
<i>OVERHEADS</i>			
Travel and subsistence	530		808
Conferences & Meetings	2380		1615
Office costs	875		1335
Accommodation	2494		2304
Insurance	231		231
Web hosting/ subscriptions	0		92
Publicity	86		87
Totals		<u>6596</u>	<u>6472</u>
		-721	495
<i>OTHER OPERATING INCOME</i>			
Members income	375		475
Sundry donations	985		775
Totals		<u>1360</u>	<u>1250</u>
OPERATING PROFIT/(LOSS)		639	1745
Interest receivable		13	12
PROFIT/(LOSS) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES		653	1757

Appendix C Membership (at September 2019)

Organisation/Name

Blackburn & District CTC
Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association (RUA)
Bus Users UK
Campaign for Better Transport Cheshire
Campaign for Better Transport Lancashire
Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group
Copeland 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
Lakes Line RUG
Lancaster & District Bus Users Group
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 Bidston RUA
Mr JF Aaron
David Butterworth
Frederick Consterdine
Malcolm Conway
Adrian Dunning
Leonard Green
Philip Harrison
John Hart
Christopher Holmes
Alan Hurst
Colin Kennington
Geoff Kerr
Andrew MacFarlane
Brendan O'Friel
John Owen
Malcolm Richardson
Ian Stuart
Ian Watson
Keith Whitmore
Tim Young
Tony Young