

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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

promoting quality public transport.....

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Thursday 8th February 2018
 The Storey, Meeting House Lane, Lancaster**

Conference kindly supported by First TransPennine Express & Northern Rail

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Lancaster and thanked First TransPennine Express and Northern Rail for their generous support to the Conference.

He commenced proceedings by expressing concern at the continual decline in bus usage and the cuts being felt, particularly in rural areas, as local authorities seek budget savings and the consequent effect on communities. TOWNW will be undertaking further work in this area to look at barriers that potential passengers have to overcome in order to make effective use of bus networks.

In respect of rail it has been disappointing to learn of delays in engineering work on the network which has set back timetable improvements and the introduction of new rolling stock. He was also disappointed in the scant reference to the needs of the North in the government's Vision for Rail document published in December and it is still remarkable that levels of investment fall well short of those in the South. Equally TOWNW has severe reservations at the idea of bi-mode trains being promoted by the Secretary of State and DfT instead of electric units and a paper is currently being compiled on the many issues for the attention of the Minister.

Replacement bus services during engineering work have been monitored and the current operation to link Blackpool with Preston has been seen to be excellent and exemplary. However long journeys are still experienced by passengers between Preston and Carlisle during blockades and TOWNW, in partnership with Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line, is campaigning for use of the SCL as a diversionary route.

Concern has been expressed at Lancs. County Council's decision to close information centres throughout the County including ticket offices at Carnforth and Clitheroe and it is hoped that a solution can be found to retain them.

A number of consultations have been responded to including Community Transport, where TOWNW pointed out its limitations in filling voids in bus networks, and Congestion in Greater Manchester where improved public transport can mitigate car use. In addition he has attended 18 events representing TOWNW since November.

2. Welcome to the City of Lancaster

Cllr Roger Mace, Mayor of Lancaster

The Mayor welcomed delegates to Lancaster and thanked TWNW for choosing the City for its conference. He commended the work of TWNW and referred to its vital role in holding the public transport networks to account for services to the public. He said that the City and its towns and villages, such as Morecambe and Carnforth is often under estimated and currently has a population of 140,000 which is continuing to grow. Traffic flows between communities and through the City have been challenging over the years but recent investment has seen much improvement. The Bay Gateway link road from the M6 to Heysham Harbour has relieved much congestion and has also allowed long needed repairs and upgrades to be made to the river crossings. Additionally a re-initiated bus network has brought much relief. He emphasised the importance of the West Coast Mainline passing through the City and its contribution to prosperity and commended the work of the Community Rail Partnerships in the area. He referred to the challenges Lancs. County Council faced in continuing support to transport but hoped that solutions could be found to continue rural bus services and Carnforth booking office, both of which are vital to maintain social inclusion.

3. Transformation in the North & Scotland – First TransPennine Express

Chris Nutton, Major Projects Director, FTPE

First TransPennine Express has witnessed growth of 8% per year and, compared with the national average of 0.5%, this has led to consequential overcrowding on many of its services. It has also had to face the challenges brought about by delays in Network Rail's electrification programmes which have put the industry under enormous pressure. However all parties continue to work together to find the best solutions.

The mainstay of the train fleet has been the 185 diesel units that are now 10 years old. They are undergoing a refurbishment programme, 50% of which has been completed, and new features are redesigned interiors and new information display screens. 220 new vehicles are currently under construction and due for completion in 2019. These will be a mix of electric units and loco hauled sets and 50 have been completed and are commencing tests. It is hoped that new trains will begin to phase into the services later this year. New 397 class units will operate the Manchester Airport to Scotland routes, replacing the current 350 units, and will contain significantly more seats. New bi-mode trains will operate from 2019 on cross Pennine routes between Manchester and Yorkshire and all trains will offer greater comfort, capacity and leg room. New depots will be built at strategic locations to service trains and an improved catering service will be introduced to offer hot and cold food.

The Stations investment programme is scheduled for completion by the end of this year and the Manchester Airport interchange is being rejuvenated.

Due to the delays in engineering works the proposals for the May 2018 timetable may be compromised but work is ongoing to secure as much improvement as possible with full implementation within 18 months. Direct services between Liverpool and Glasgow will be introduced in December 2018.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Lack of through services from Liverpool to Hull - capacity on Man – Leeds section necessitated difficult decisions on service patterns reflecting business flows but it is hoped that new signalling will speed up connections.
- Quiet coaches – not practical on units of 5 or less coaches.
- Recycling of catering packaging – stringent sustainability policies.
- On train environment, lighting and seating – under constant examination to meet regulations and customer comfort.
- Stopping patterns on WCML – hopefully will serve all major stations but route operation may cause some restriction.
- Local services Man – Huddersfield - TPE absorbing some former Northern services and will provide optimised stopping pattern in line with limitations of route capacity.
- Cycle provision – currently 2 per train but new trains will provide for 4.
- Use of Settle – Carlisle diversion route – not possible due to electric units on Scotland services but will use ECML.

4. Bus Services in Cumbria and North Lancashire

Matthew Cranwell, Managing Director, Stagecoach Cumbria and North Lancs.

Stagecoach in Cumbria and N.Lancs. absorbed most of the former individual bus companies in the area in 1991 and currently operates 276 vehicles and employs 760 staff. It operates from 5 depots located at strategic points in the area and undertakes 24 million journeys per annum covering 12 million miles.

Recent challenges have been the reduction in subsidies from local authorities to support non-profitable routes and presently nothing is provided in Cumbria whilst Lancashire has reduced from £7million to £2 million. This has caused some tough decisions to have to be made and has impacted on many services, particularly in evenings. Partnership working with local authorities continues, however, and the best solutions are always sought to provide services recognising social inclusion needs and making provision where new housing developments occur.

Changes to retail patterns, such as internet shopping growth and out of town developments aimed at car users, coupled with static fuel costs, have also brought challenges as has the 1.4% increase in car ownership in the area. Concessionary travel also continues to be challenging as Councils do not always pass on the full ENTCS grant to operators.

The adverse weather causing major flooding in 2006, 2009 and 2015 brought many difficulties and the company responded by supporting emergency operations in affected areas. Interim services were provided in areas where routes had been severed and carried over 44,000 passengers over 12 weeks in affected areas even though some depots and bus stations were severely affected by flooding.

Staff engagement is a major company policy and surveys result in 65% participation. The company is communication focussed and regular feedback meetings, suggestion boxes and meet the manager events all feature. An intensive

training programme is operated with refresher sessions, eco-driving, safety, and idling exercises all covered.

Since 2013 £14.2 million has been spent on new vehicles and they feature green technology and WiFi, whilst the remaining fleets are undergoing refurbishment.

A new interactive website was launched in 2015 followed by an App in 2016. Together these feature availability in full mobility, journey planners, ticket sales ability and actual running times. Printed timetables and guides are continuing as are travel shops at strategic points. Contactless, smartcard and mobile payments have all been introduced whilst a successful under 19's initiative in Lancaster resulted in 83% growth in this sector. Joint initiatives with other bus operators for enabled journey continuity have also been introduced.

Future opportunities that need to be addressed are:

- increased tourism levels following Lake District World Heritage status.
- Development of Carlisle Airport.
- HS2 potential for Cumbria stops.
- Solutions to Lancaster congestion.
- Bailrigg University Village.
- Bus rapid transport investment.
- University development.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Sunday service cuts – commercial decision in light of subsidy cuts but open to review.
- Lancaster Bus Station confusion – challenging due to traffic issues but improving.
- Commemoration of anniversary of previous bus companies – will consider any approach.
- Connectivity with trains – very important and in dialogue with train operators.

5. Modernisation update – The Journey to 2020

Craig Harrop, Community & Sustainability Manager, Arriva Rail North (Northern)

Northern is the 2nd largest train operating company and is currently in a 9 year franchise that commenced in April 2016. It operates 2630 services each day, manages 476 stations and employs 5,800 staff (recently recruited 600 new staff).

A modernisation programme is being pursued and it had been hoped that this would begin to phase in during 2018 but progress has been compromised due to delays in Network Rail's delivery of electrification of the Preston – Manchester corridor via Bolton. Consequently planners are working furiously to re-write timetables for May 2018 and these will become available in early March. In addition delays have been experienced in the development of the refurbished 769 fleet which has meant that other unit cascades to other areas have not been possible and additionally, the Secretary of State's decision to cancel electrification schemes has brought

challenges. Work is progressing on the Blackpool - Preston route and services have resumed to/from Blackpool South and the bus shuttles from Blackpool North have been working extremely well,

The industrial dispute with RMT is continuing and has resulted in 14 strike days so far but discussions continue. The liquidation of Carillion has carried challenges as the company was engaged in station maintenance. An arrangement has been made to pay the liquidator in advance to maintain services.

The modernisation programme will result in faster, more reliable and comfortable journeys, with 98 new trains (2, 3 and 4 car units) with 100 mph capability being introduced. In addition 243 current trains are being upgraded. New features include seat back tables, 2 x 2 seating, air conditioning, lap-top/power sockets, seat reservation system, new display screens, and advance loading information systems. The new trains are currently in production and will commence UK testing between June and October this year. It is expected that they will be introduced in the December 2018 timetable, primarily on Cumbria – Manchester Airport routes.

Stations will receive a £60 million investment which will bring new shelters, ticket gates, ticket vending machines, car park upgrades, new seating, better information screens, a new interchange at Newton le Willows and a new station at Warrington West.

Staff have been issued with new uniforms making them more visible and are providing improved customer services with greater presence on stations and safety and security provision is being improved as is stakeholder liaison.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Door Closures whilst waiting in stations to prevent draughts – Briefing issue to train crews.
- Sunday services in West Cumbria - Subject of the May 2018 timetable feasibility.
- Class 68 loco hauled services, Cumbria – discussions ongoing with DRS despite DfT ruling.
- Incompatibility of new train unit connectors – distribution of units should cater for demand.
- Intensified Blackpool South services – Passing loop being considered and stations adapted for 4 car units.

6. Points of View

An opportunity for delegates to raise relevant issues.

The Points of View session provides an opportunity for delegates to raise any matter they wish to on public transport issues in the region. The following matters were raised and debated:

Integrated Transport – Train operators and bus companies maintain ongoing dialogue to provide best available options for connectivity but difficult to cater for all needs.

Merseytravel – proposed discontinuation of printed timetables – Out for consultation and will consider all options.

Lancaster Park & Ride scheme – getting better usage but requires more frequent shuttle bus service (currently 30 minute intervals) to be attractive particularly during bridge closure period. (Feb – Aug. 2018).

Rail fare complexity – Should be set competitively and be less complex. However a view that current system offers bargain travel opposes the argument.

Closure of Lancs County Council information and ticket offices – An effort to save money (£198,000) in current budget planning round. Initiatives set up in Carnforth & Clitheroe to argue the case and potentially seek alternatives.

Stepping distance between new trains and platforms – Stations are inconsistent in platform heights so best solution to cater for most locations operated.

Halton Curve – Train unit availability – some doubt over services and train types. Suspected that Welsh Govt. may be implicated as services will be Arriva Trains Wales.

Seat Reservations on Northern Connect 158 units – hoped these will eventually be replaced by new units to cover the problem.

Re-opening Skipton – Colne line – Sec. Of State visit to launch feasibility study and create business case.

7. Lancaster’s Bus Users – a view from the queue

Jim Davies, Lancaster & District Bus Users Group

The Lancaster & District Bus user’s group was set up following feedback revealing problems with bus services in the area. Its first meeting took place in 2014 and now it has 40 bus using members drawn from students, teenagers, residents of the City, towns and rural areas and ENCTS pass holders.

Rather than being a constant critic, the group seeks to work constructively with bus companies and Councils using the skills of its membership which includes transport professionals, City and County Councillors.

A number of campaigns and projects have been conducted since its launch including:

- Courtesy campaign to encourage young people to vacate seats for elderly and less-abled.
- New bus shelter provision.
- Information provision at bus stops and bus stations.
- Dedicated website.

The Group campaigned to minimise County Council subsidy cuts. Whilst accepting that there was no alternative to some service reduction it didn’t support the proposals and succeeded in staging a consultation exercise. This revealed the depth of the proposed cuts to the media which eventually persuaded LCC to modify its proposals and listen to communities affected. The result was to save some important services in Morecambe, Silverdale, the Lune Valley and marsh villages towards Knott End. Proposed cuts to Service 18 were challenged under the Section 106 planning policy

as it served new housing development on its route. The result was a contribution of £500,000 from the developers to support transport. However Lancs. CC failed to release funds, having allocated them to road schemes elsewhere. This news was released to media and high level meetings then took place when £100,000 was immediately released to support the bus service. The Group undertook to promote the service and ridership has risen from 1200 to 2800 per month.

Future campaigns will look at improvements to the network and propose a review, a companion scheme for ENCTS pass holders, and to monitor the future Lancaster - Skipton bus link via Kirkby Lonsdale.

In discussion it was emphasised that Marketing was a vital exercise and it needed to assess all aspects of current and future patronage and new route developments in the light of community changes before promotions, media liaison and campaigns with stakeholders take place.

8. The X112

Friends of the X112 (Anne Hall, Janet Willis, Barbara Harris)

The X112 service is operated by Blueworks between Ulverston and Coniston in Cumbria linking all the villages in the Crake Valley.

The original bus service was a casualty of Cumbria County Council's withdrawal of bus subsidies in 2014 and this followed a period of reasonable service operation by Blueworks throughout the previous 10 years until the County Council re-allocated the contract despite having entered into an arrangement with local communities to fund the service. The service under the new operator consequently failed almost immediately prior to the subsidy withdrawal.

Following this set of events the various communities served by the bus route came together and raised £67,000 to support the service by staging promotions, fund raising activities, persuading town and parish councils, as well as tourism businesses to help, holding raffles, coffee mornings, and even producing a recipe book based on locally sourced food. A Steering Group was set up involving local and County Councillors, the bus operator and volunteers and, despite being discouraged by Cumbria County Council officers, it managed to support successful operation of the X112. Also, having discovered that the County Council was proposing to return over £200,000 of its transport grant to government the group managed to persuade it to retrieve 50% of it to support community initiatives for innovative transport plans and was able to secure some financial support itself.

A series of attractive leaflets and posters are produced and distributed at minimal cost with help from local business to promote the service and the service has carried 75,000 passengers over the last 3 years plus 20,000 school contract users. In addition the service has heavily contributed to social inclusion, instigated travelling friendships, and helped combat loneliness.

Overall the initial sum raised from the local community was £49,000 and with a £17,000 set up grant the service was saved. It now requires £30,000 per annum to keep running but the community is confident of raising this.

In discussion the Group was highly commended for its inspiring presentation and as a great example to community action to save a vital service.

9. Next Conference Thursday 14th June 2018, Solaris Centre, Blackpool

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

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Adrian Swift	
Alan Goater	Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group
Alan Mayor	Lancaster & Morecambe Rail Users Group
Alex Bray	CrossCountry Trains
Anne Hall	Friends of the X112
Barbara Harris	Friends of the X112
Cedric Green	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Chris Dale	TravelWatch NorthWest
Chris Nutton	TransPennine Express
Colin Barnett	
Martin Keating	Northern Rail
Colin Kennington	TravelWatch NorthWest
Cllr Roger Mace	The Mayor of Lancaster
Craig Harrop	Northern Rail
Dave Koring	Severn-Dee Travel Ltd
David Armstrong	
David Burton	SE Lancs Rail Action Partnership
David Butterworth	TravelWatch NorthWest
David Culshaw	Friends of Hindley station
David Evans	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association
Dawn McGough	Community Rail Cumbria
Dennis Harrison	Wirral Transport Users Association
Derek Faulds	Furness Line Action Group
Doug Macadam	Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Assoc.
Eileen Maguire	Burnley Seniors Forum
Emma Moody	Lake District National Park Authority
Frederick Consterdine	
Fred Kennington	
Ian Conway	Lakes Line RUG
Ian Stuart	
Ian Watson	
Janet Willis	Friends of the X112
Jim Davies	Lancaster Bus Users Group
John Aaron	
John Berry	Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Assoc.,.

John Hart	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Lobb	
Joyce Mace	The Mayoress of Lancaster
John Moorhouse	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Owen	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Ryan	Wirral Transport Users Association
Keith Pennyfather	
Ken Swallow	Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (NW)
Kenneth McKelvie	Ramblers Association
Kerstin Esbjornsson	Community Rail Cumbria
Leonard Green	TravelWatch NorthWest
Louise Collins	Transport Focus
Lucja Majewski	TransPennine Express
Malcolm Conway	TravelWatch NorthWest
Malcolm Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Margaret Mitchell	
Marjorie Ward	Brindle over 55s
Mark Barker	Cheshire Best Kept Stations
Mark Hodgkiss	Cumbria County Council
Matthew Cranwell	Stagecoach Cumbria & North Lancs.
Matthew Sutton	Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire
Mike Laycock	Wirral Transport Users Association
Mike Machin	Lancaster & Morecambe RUG
Miriam Walton	Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group
Norman Adams	
Paul Grant	Lancaster, Morecambe & District RUG
Peter Brown	Lancaster, Morecambe & District RUG
Peter Lamkin	Wrexham- Bidston Rail Users Association
Peter Sullivan	Preston & District Older Peoples Forum
Phil Pearson	
Philip Briggs	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Richard Blaikie	Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire
Philip Harrison	
Richard Lysons	Friends of Littleborough station
Richard Rollins	TravelWatch NorthWest
Robert Florence	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Robert Parker	Furness Line Action Group
Robin Bence	

Roger Harris	Friends of the X112
Sandra Dutson	RoadPeace North West
Sean Croshaw	Transport for Greater Manchester
Stephen Forde	South East Manchester CRP
Tim Young	Campaign for Better Transport Lancs
Tony Potts	Copeland Rail Users Group