

promoting quality public transport.....

CONFERENCE REPORT

Tuesday 11th June 2013 County Hall, Preston
Conference kindly supported by Lancashire County Council

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Preston and thanked Lancashire County Council for its generous support for the event. He drew attention to the recent work of TWNW, in particular the report published entitled Bus Passengers Experience in North West England which examined the quality of the bus industry's offer to passengers in the North West following a number of surveys undertaken throughout the region at the end of last year. The report is available on the website.

A response had been sent to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee in answer to its request for ideas for future Inquiries. The following subjects were suggested:

- Coordination between train operators
- Rolling stock quality and overcrowding
- Support for local bus services
- Quality and availability of bus passenger information
- Inter- modal public transport integration and coordination

Correspondence was also continuing with ORR following a report published in December 2012 on the subject of the Quality of Passenger Information at railway stations. TWNW felt it was rather complacent and pointed to a number of examples in the North West where there were serious shortcomings.

In addition a response was sent to DfT about Changes to Rail vehicle accessibility regulations. Whilst TWNW had no objections in principle, it was emphasised that such changes should not be used to extend the life of train units that are overdue for replacement, such as Pacer units.

TWNW had participated in a number of conferences and meetings as follows:

- West Coast Rail 250
- Passenger Focus Publicity Workshop
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- British Transport Police
- Age Lancashire re. Community Transport
- Passenger Focus HS2 debate
- ITC meeting on HS2
- Passenger Focus Rail Franchising conference
- Merseytravel Seminar on HS2

2. Welcome to Preston & Lancashire

Mike Kirby, Director of Transport & Environment, Lancashire County Council

Mike Kirby welcomed delegates to County Hall and Lancashire and explained that whilst the County Council is currently enduring a period of austerity, it is committed to maintaining a strong focus on Public Transport and sustainable transport issues. Despite a 28% cut in resources, the Council held a clear development programme as part of LCC's masterplan agenda and this included a strong capital investment programme which had seen investment at Accrington railway station, Buckshaw Parkway railway station and planned new bus stations in Accrington and Rawtenstall.

3. The Pennine Reach Initiative

Chris Anslow, Group Manager, Public Transport Development, Lancs. CC

Pennine Reach is a major bus scheme investment for Pennine Lancashire. In partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Council, the scheme features rapid bus transport in the Blackburn, Darwen and Accrington corridors. Its £40 million investment will feature new bus stations at Accrington and Blackburn, a series of bus priority measures, contributions to modernising town environments, and new passenger information and ticketing systems.

The initiative has been put in place in as a package of improvement measures to the region. It will help regeneration in town centres such as Accrington and Blackburn, by providing transport facilities at the heart of business and retail areas and by responding to social needs of areas by serving new housing sites, providing for students and scholars travel and travel to work corridors. It will also address the needs of the area's successful manufacturing base and improve connectivity.

Pennine Reach forms part of a major investment programme in Lancashire which has also featured capacity improvements on the Clitheroe - Blackburn rail service and the Todmorden curve restoration to allow direct train access between Burnley and Manchester.

It is hoped that the DfT will give final approval in late summer 2013, and if this is forthcoming, completion would be expected by early 2016. Unfortunately the project had suffered some negative local press reaction fuelled by inaccurate rumours of changes to road priorities and parking. This was being addressed.

In answer to points raised in discussion Chris outlined the need to determine the life span of new bus stations as part of their design, the introduction of a new zonal and travelcard based ticketing system, provision of real time information displays at bus stops and stations (Accrington's display board will be restored), and integration with rail stations where possible, although location difficulties meant that sometimes the best compromise had to be accepted.

4. Community Rail in Lancashire

James Syson, Transport Strategy Team Leader, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Community Rail Partnerships were launched in 2004 as part of a strategy to offer new life for local lines. The initiative's aims were to:

- increase revenue
- reduce costs
- increase community involvement with the lines, and
- stimulate social regeneration

Five Community Rail Partnerships exist in Lancashire:

- Clitheroe - Blackburn line
- Morecambe – Leeds line
- East.Lancashire Colne – Preston line
- South Fylde line
- West of Lancashire line

A number of promotional activities and events are organised by the individual partnership committees in liaison with local attractions, the local authorities and other agencies, and these are supported by their own websites and a Community Rail in Lancashire website www.communityrailancashire.com.uk hosted by Lancs. County Council.

Issues addressed by the partnerships include train frequency, quality of rolling stock, journey times and low usage of stations.

Promotional activities have included:

- Line branding on notice boards and displays
- Day ranger tickets
- Events on and off train
- Enhanced station environments
- School involvement
- Promotional media
- Art projects at stations and in communities
- Tourist trains such as Dales Rail

The Clitheroe line CRP was designated in 2007 and had seen an increase of 22% in passengers with some stations experiencing as much as 90% increase in usage. The East Lancs. line had seen a 57% increase since its designation in 2007 and stations featured as much as 77% increase in usage.

5. “Just a Minute”

Public Transport Issues from delegates

The “Just a Minute” session allows delegates to make points about public transport issues in a short 1 minute statement. Issues raised in the session were:

- Bus substitution during rail engineering train service disruption – why are diversionary routes no longer used?
- Competition on long distance train services.
- Implications for public transport in the rationalising of service centres such as hospitals.
- Threat of removal of Senior’s bus concession pass.

6. GoLakes Travel

Alistair Kirkbride, Sustainable Transport Advisor

Claire Maclaine, Programme Manager, Lake District National Park

For a number of years there had been concern about traffic patterns and levels in the Lake District about which there was little knowledge or information. Equally there was little knowledge about how visitors travelled to and around the region. Transport was known to be the largest carbon emitter in the Lake District and so it was felt that a package of measures to understand travel movements and at the same time address carbon emissions could be a worthy project.

In order to address the many issues surrounding transport into and within the Lake District, the GoLakes Travel initiative had been launched in 2011 as a 4 year partnership between The Lake District National Park Authority, Cumbria Tourism and Cumbria County Council. The initiative's objective was to Deliver Sustainable Travel Improvements for Visitors and had attracted support from government which enabled a partnership budget of £1.55 million per annum.

In assembling a programme 9 project areas have been identified:

- Improvements to Public Transport
- Traffic management
- Car hire
- Ticketing
- Cycling
- Cycle hire
- Information provision
- Internal Marketing
- External Marketing

Research has been carried out to identify visitor origins and how they travel and a number of opportunities have been introduced to encourage visitors to consider alternative forms of transport: Provision to encourage cycling is being addressed by the development of a number of cycle hire centres as well as promotions to encourage visitors to bring their own bikes. The "bike bus" initiative has been introduced to facilitate faster transfers within the region for cyclists. Greater usage of the available water transport facilities and services is being considered as are additional bus services, some designed to meet trains and deliver visitors to attractions and other connecting points, some with low incentive fares. New bus services and routes, primarily for the purpose of tourists, are also being considered.

A small grant "pump priming" scheme has been made available for transport projects to encourage more inter-activity between attractions, activities, accommodation and public transport.

Ticketing is still a challenge as a smart-card system is not considered practical or economical but progress is being made with multi-operator ticketing. A "fair fares" project is also being addressed as local bus fares can be quite high and, consequently, a disincentive.

Information is being provided by a variety of printed and promotional media including a mobile app and a website www.golakes.co.uk/travel, however poor communication signals in the area have a limiting factor for electronic information access.

Concern remains about the continual rail engineering works on the West Coast Main Line at peak holiday times and the potential extension of electrification to the Lakes Line from Oxenholme to Windermere. Liaison with action groups and political lobbying is ongoing.

In discussion it was noted that the scheme is due to end in 2015 and would need to prove how it made a difference. Whilst it is hoped it may be extended, much work will go into research on the scheme's effectiveness over the remaining period, although there is no remit to provide such evidence.

7. Delighting Customers – the key to success

Alex Warner, Flash Forward Consulting

Alex Warner presented a personal view of the current quality of customer service in the public transport industry, which he claimed, was on the whole, poor. He called for better interaction with customers from front line staff on buses and trains and improved motivation for staff from parent companies. Attention to detail was important and understanding customer needs was vital.

He proposed “health assessments” of the customer service proposition for all transport operators and better recruitment to find more customer focussed people to work in the transport industry, in order to improve the quality experience of transport users with nationwide measurement schemes to monitor progress and improvements.

In discussion it was stated that whilst there was always room for improvements, much progress has been made in the North of England through organisations like TravelWatch North West and the various passenger representation groups such as RUG's and good and effective liaison and dialogue had been achieved, notably with rail operators. Relationships were on the whole, good, but it was recognised that on occasions improvements were required and working together was usually a better solution for all concerned.

8. Next Conference

Thursday 10th October 2013 at the offices of Merseytravel, Liverpool

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Adrian Dunning	North West Transport Activists Roundtable
Alan Wilson	Kendal & District Bus Users
Alex Warner	Flash Forward Consulting Ltd
Alistair Kirkbride	Lake District National Park
Barry Dobson	Arriva Merseyside
Bob Barlow	Agito Transport Planning
Cedric Green	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Chris Anslow	Lancashire County Council
Chris Dale	TravelWatch NorthWest
Chris Jarvis	Institute of Transport Administration
Claire Maclaine	Lake District National Park
Colin Barnett	Bus Users UK
Craig Wright	Transport for Greater Manchester
Dave Koring	Severn-Dee Travel
David Butterworth	TravelWatch NorthWest
David Culshaw	Friends of Hindley Station
David Evans	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association

Gabriel Drew	
Geoff Kerr	
Ian McDermott	
James Syson	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Jeremy Walker	Blackpool Council
Jim Davies	Lancaster & Morecambe Rail Users Group
Jim Trotman	Furness & Lakes Line Community Rail Partnerships
Joe Hannett	Lancashire Community Transport Forum
John Aaron	
John Culshaw	Mattersons Cranes
John Hart	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Moorhouse	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Owen	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Warner	Kendal & District Bus Users
Jordan Sargeant	Passenger Focus
Kathryn O'Brien	First TransPennine Express
Keith Pennyfather	
Ken McKelvie	Ramblers Association
Leonard Green	TravelWatch NorthWest
Lillian Burns	TravelWatch NorthWest
Malcolm Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association
Matthew Andrews	Passenger Focus
Matthew Cranwell	Stagecoach Cumbria & North Lancs
Maurice Duckworth	First Rail Support Ltd
Maxine Myers	First TransPennine Express
Michael Laycock	Wirral Transport Users Association
Mike Kirby	Lancashire County Council
Neil Caldwell	Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport
Paul Fawcett	TravelWatch NorthWest
Paul Rowen	Passenger Focus
Peter Lamkin	Wrexham Birkenhead Rail Users Association
Peter Robinson	TravelWatch NorthWest
Phil Halewood	Merseytravel
Philip Harrison	
Preva Crossley	Friends of Hindley Station
Raymond Brookfield	West Lancashire Pensioners Forum
Richard Rollins	TravelWatch NorthWest
Richard Watts	Lancashire County Council
RM Florence	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Robert Kenyon	Hyndburn Council
Robert Talbot	TravelWatch NorthWest
Roger Tripp	
Sheila Owen	West Lancashire Pensioners Forum
Steve Magner	Transport for Greater Manchester
Tim Gornall	Lancashire County Council
Tim Nicholson	Peak District National Park Authority
Tony Potts	Copeland Rail Users Group