

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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

promoting quality public transport.....

CONFERENCE REPORT

Tuesday 7th June 2016 – The Council Chamber, Blackpool Town Hall

Conference kindly supported by Blackpool Transport Services, Ltd. and Blackpool Council

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Blackpool and thanked Blackpool Transport Services and Blackpool Council for their support of the Conference.

He referred to the new rail franchises now in operation in the North of England by Arriva Trains North and First TransPennine Express. Dialogue and liaison had been established with both companies and high level meetings had taken place. TWNW had requested input to the interior design of new trains for the franchises and its expertise of passenger needs had been acknowledged. He drew attention to ongoing rail disruption, mainly at weekends, caused by engineering works and, in particular, variations in quality of replacement buses.

The Operating Concession for Manchester Metrolink is due for renewal soon and the West Coast Mainline franchise renewal process has commenced with a number of consultation programmes and TWNW will be responding to both.

The bus service cuts in various Counties are now beginning to be felt, particularly in Lancashire, and TWNW is continuing to monitor the situation and inform accordingly, always emphasising that Demand Responsive Transport services cannot be deemed as an adequate replacement.

Chris then listed the various meetings he and colleagues had attended during recent months on behalf of TWNW. He had also carried out his ongoing governance work as Chairman as well as keeping the TWNW Facebook and “Linked-In” pages up to date publishing almost daily articles on issues affecting passengers.

2. Welcome to Blackpool

***Cllr. Fred Jackson, Cabinet Member for Streets and Transport,
Blackpool Council***

Cllr. Jackson welcomed delegates to Blackpool and expressed his delight that TWNW continued to represent passengers needs at the highest levels and acknowledged the importance of its work.

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He referred to the challenges Blackpool encountered in running a reliable and economic transport service in the Borough, but felt that it was of great benefit to the area that the local transport company was owned by the Council. He also mentioned the proposals to extend the tram system to Blackpool North station, and the importance of this new link to the network for the benefit of visitors and residents.

3. Public Transport Provision in Blackpool

Jane Cole, Managing Director, Blackpool Transport Services Ltd.

Jane has spent 35 years in the rail industry, latterly with Virgin Trains based in the North West. When she was appointed to her position with Blackpool Transport she had immediately recognised the need to be inspirational whilst creating good dialogue with stakeholders.

One of the pillars of the regeneration of Blackpool is the public transport system including trams, trains and buses and a robust Business Plan has been put into place to cover the period until 2021. The Blackpool Transport company has a strong board of directors, exhibiting good leadership and clear vision.

The company employs 650 people, a high percentage of whom have over 20 years' service and experience. The majority are recruited locally and there is a history of great company loyalty. Employees are fully engaged with management and regular employee surveys have a 61% response rate. The feedback informs the business plan and improvement measures. A Training Academy has been established to aid culture change and to develop future employees and it makes full use of the expertise and experience of existing employees. Of particular note is the driver training scheme which encompasses an eco-friendly approach to vehicle operation and how to react responsibly to anti-social behaviour. An example of a positive output is the Heritage Product that has emerged through staff engagement and now operates in profit. The Heritage sector runs with 52 volunteers as a "stand alone" body with a separate business plan and is responsible for the operation of the heritage and historic vehicles on the main network.

Customer experience is deemed paramount and satisfaction scores are on the increase. 10 million passenger journeys per annum are undertaken in the various modes and customer experience lies at the centre of operations. A specialist team is in constant engagement with both passengers and stakeholders. Improved information at transport stops has been installed and every staff member has completed the local Welcome Host training. 75,000 website visits are recorded each month. A campaign under the title, "Love Your Bus" has been launched to local people to encourage more use of buses. Transport Focus survey results have exhibited excellent outcomes in punctuality, value for money and customer care. Revenue growth has been achieved from a stagnated set of systems and monitoring procedures are being modernised to inform management of trends.

An £18 million investment programme is in place to replace the total bus fleet by 2020, as 70% will be life expired by 2018. A new fleet of 29 buses, introduced this year, is already showing 14% growth on their routes and a number of routes have been re-mapped to meet with community need and best yield. Another 10 routes will

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be given similar treatment next year. New buses will have next stop information on board.

In subsequent discussion the refreshed branding “Palladium” was mentioned. This exhibits a new branding with dedicated livery and on board “rolling” journey information. Smart card technology is being explored for possible future introduction.

4. Proposed Tramway Extension from North Pier to North Station ***Jeremy Walker, Transport Policy Manager, Blackpool Council***

The proposal to extend the Blackpool Tramway from North Pier to Blackpool North railway station is part of the Blackpool regeneration programme. 1.8 million passengers per year use North Station and, currently, their onward transport needs are not deemed to be provided for adequately. Consequently it is proposed to extend the current tramway network from the Promenade, up Talbot Road to a terminus adjacent to North Station. Works are planned to take place from 2018 with completion and tram operations commencing in early 2019. It will be achieved avoiding closures and disruption to frequency intervals.

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 will operate at 10 minute intervals with northbound and southbound services alternating. 2 additional trams will be required in order to deliver a robust service and these are in the process of procurement.

The scheme requires the approval of the Secretary of State and it may be subject to a Public Inquiry, dependant upon stakeholder consultation processes currently taking place. It is hoped that a decision will be forthcoming in 2017.

The cost is estimated to be £22 million and will see the total regeneration of Talbot Road and Talbot Square with a more resilient traffic flow resulting.

A brochure detailing the proposals can be viewed at:

www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Parking-roads.../New-tramway-extension.pdf

5. Network Rail – NW Electrification & Investment ***Hannah Lomas, Senior Sponsor, North West Electrification, Network Rail***

The North West Electrification Programme is designed to provide more trains with faster journey times and a number of additional services and frequencies throughout the region.

A phased introduction of electrification schemes is being followed in collaboration with Northern Rail and TransPennine Express to minimize disruption. As part of the schemes the Manchester Hub will be completed with the new Ordsall Chord line linking both sides of the city and Liverpool Lime Street station will be completely remodelled.

The re-modelling of the Kirkham to Blackpool North and Blackpool South lines is scheduled to take place in Phase 3 with a target of completion in 2018. Phase 4 will then see the completion of the Preston to Manchester section via a remodelled Chorley station and the building of an extra platform at Bolton station. Phase 5 will include Manchester to Stalybridge, Lostock to Wigan and Oxenholme to Windermere. A new depot will also be commissioned at Wigan.

In discussion the following issues were raised:

- platform canopies at Blackpool North – currently not planned
- retention of Fleetwood junction at Poulton – subject to approach from Wyre Council.
- line speed for Preston – Blackpool – no planned increase
- Morecambe/Heysham spur – will consider repositioning priority level in new Electrification Strategy
- Platform 15/16 at Man Picc. and Oxford Road extension – subject of authorisation order processes.

6. “Just a Minute”

Items raised during the “Just a Minute” session included:

- Bus Services Bill published 19th May – implications for liaison between operators and passengers
- Leigh Guided Busway loadings – patronage increasing
- Train Driver Door operation – subject of trade union negotiations
- High percentage of recent cancellations of Northern Train services – acknowledged as unacceptable, under high level ATN investigation and review
- Rail replacement buses – lack of consistency in quality and restrictions
- Limited Seat pitch on trains – inconsistent but new trains will provide improvement

7. Next Conference

Wednesday 12th October 2016, at County Hall, Preston

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Alan Mayor	Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line
Ben Brisbane	Transport for Greater Manchester
Bob Mason	Blackpool Transport Services Ltd
Chris Bates	TravelWatch SouthCentral
Chris Coleman	Manchester Metrolink
Chris Dale	TravelWatch NorthWest
Chris Jarvis	Institute of Transport Administration
Cllr Fred Jackson	Blackpool Council

Clyde Raine	Friends of Heaton Chapel Station
David Burton	South East Lancs Rail Action Partnership
David Butterworth	TravelWatch NorthWest
David Culshaw	Friends of Hindley station
David Evans	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Assoc.
David Simper	Blackpool Council
David Wood	TravelWatch Midlands West
Dawn McGough	Community Rail Cumbria
Dwayne Wells	First Manchester
Ed Boothroyd	
Fred Consterdine	
Geoff Kerr	
Graham Meiklejohn	First Transpennine Express
Hannah Lomas	Network Rail
Harry Boardman	Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association
Howard Piltz	
Ian Watson	
James Harkins	All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group
Jane Cole	Blackpool Transport Services Ltd
Jeremy Walker	Blackpool Council
John Aaron	
John Berry	Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Assoc.
John Culshaw	Mattersons Cranes
John Hart	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Moorhouse	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Owen	TravelWatch NorthWest
Judie Collins	Friends of Altrincham Interchange
Karen Hornby	Network Rail
Kathy Jones	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Keith Pennyfather	
Ken Harper	Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line
Kenneth McKelvie	Ramblers Association
Malcolm Conway	TravelWatch NorthWest
Malcolm Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Margaret Mitchell	
Mark Barker	
Matthew Cranwell	Stagecoach Cumbria & N.Lancs
Matthew Worman	Northern Rail
Michael Tarbuck	
Mike Laycock	Wirral Transport Users Association
Mike Machin	Lancaster & Morecambe RUG

Norman Adams	
Paul Grant	Lancaster & Morecambe RUG
Peter Lamkin	Wrexham Birkenhead Rail Users Association
Peter Nelson	Ravensthorpe Shelter Accommodation
Phil Pearson	Network Warrington
Phil Rowbotham	Friends of Heaton Chapel Station
Phil Smith	ROSSO
Richard Rollins	TravelWatch NorthWest
Robert Mason	Blackpool Transport Services
Robert Talbot	TravelWatch NorthWest
Ron Herbert	
Sean Croshaw	Transport for Greater Manchester
Stephen Forde	Manchester Community Rail Partnerships
Stephen Jones	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Steve Doole	
Sue Mullen	Confederation of Passenger Transport
Tim Young	Campaign for Better Transport Lancs
Tony Potts	Copeland Rail Users Group
Tony Young	TravelWatch NorthWest
Vernon Smith	Blackpool & Fylde RUA