



Open Access to Blackpool

Providing choice for passengers
and communities on the
West Coast Main Line

Presentation By Chris Hanks to TravelWatch NorthWest Conference
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Grand Central

History, service and achievements

About Grand Central

- Open access operator
- Started running trains in 2007
- First route London King's Cross to Sunderland
- Added London to Bradford Interchange route in 2010
- Bought by Arriva in 2011
- Now 18 services per day on weekdays
- Fleet of 10 Class 180 'Adelante' trains
- Competes with LNER and Hull Trains
- Consistently high customer satisfaction
- New North West service group (London to Blackpool) starts in 2020



National Rail Passenger Survey – Autumn 2019

Grand Central voted **best long distance** train operator for the ninth time in the Autumn 2019 NRPS

- 94% satisfaction

Grand Central also voted **best overall value for money.**

- 75% satisfaction compared with a national average of 47% and long distance average of 56%



What is Open Access?

- Not a franchise: open access operators write their own specifications
- If a franchise fails it gets replaced or nationalised. If an open access operator fails, it goes out of business (eg. Wrexham & Shropshire).
- No contract with DfT or other government funder, only with Network Rail and station/depot operators
- Access regulated by office of Rail and Road, limited by capacity and economic tests
- May be required by ORR to invest in trains or stations to justify contract
- Must bring new passengers to the railway not just abstract or compete with other operators
- Pay for access to the tracks and stations as well as funding our own trains
- Pay an infrastructure cost charge if they compete between large cities
- Other examples of open access are Hull Trains, Heathrow Express, Eurostar and First Edinburgh (from 2021)
- Others planning new open access services to/from London include Virgin (Liverpool), Grand Union (Cardiff, Stirling)



What do stakeholders say about Open Access?

- Appreciated most by towns off the main line e.g. Hartlepool, Eaglescliffe, Halifax
- Puts location on the map
- Brings tourism and business to the area
- Provides locals with direct service to London

“There is no doubt that Open Access makes a difference. I do not think for a moment that those who, for example, live in Sunderland... or Bradford and have services from Grand Central, would say anything other than that open access has been a good thing.”

- Top 3 train operators for customer satisfaction (NRPS Autumn 2019) are all open access operators



OUR BRAND

BRAND DRIVERS

Our guiding principles.

These brand drivers shape everything we do (and don't do!).

BRILLIANT BASICS

We get the important things right, every person, every day, every train. Building and delivering foundations that allow us to deliver what matters most to customers and colleagues. It might be about the basics... but we do it brilliantly.

HUMAN TOUCH

We champion our people to make the best decisions for our customers, communities and our company. On board, online, between ourselves and our partners we act with warmth, empathy and natural charm.

STRAIGHT-FORWARD VALUE

We champion simplicity and straightforwardness over complexity and fancy frills. We seek to provide great value services and experiences that match (and at times exceed!) customer expectations.

BELIEF IN BETTER

We believe that things can always be better. We champion people and ideas that make a positive difference. We work to deliver better value, better customer experiences, better communities and a better place to work.

MAKE IT MEMORABLE

We challenge ourselves to surprise our customers, competitors and ourselves! Once the basics are delivered we delight in doing things that are unexpected, appreciated, innovative and 'above and beyond'. We want to stand out in the minds of customers and the rail industry.



Why Grand Central?

- High customer satisfaction (NRPS)
- Trains serve local stations off the WCML
- Competitive pricing and good value for money
- Loyalty discount available
- Light and spacious coaches with comfortable seats and space for luggage
- Friendly service
- Yorkshire & North Eastern customers like that we're a Northern company: same for Lancashire?
- Gives customers a choice
- Community engagement



Rolling Stock – North East & West Riding

- Fleet of 10 5 coach Class 180, 125 mph diesel multiple units
- £10m refurbishment of Class 180s completed in 2019
- Sufficient rolling stock to support growth of existing and potential new markets



Our role within communities we serve

- Informed by a strong sense of social responsibility – to our customers, our employees, suppliers and stakeholders.
- We work hard to engage with all sections of the community at the stations we serve.
- Underpins all aspects of our business
- One priority for community engagement is around social exclusion and disadvantage.



Station Ambassadors

- Grand Central currently has ambassadors at:
 - Brighouse
 - Mirfield
 - Wakefield
 - Eaglescliffe
 - Hartlepool
 - Northallerton
 - Thirsk
- Over 80 volunteers at stations
- Award winning scheme – Community Rail Awards and Yorkshire in Bloom



Ambassador Role – what they do

- Provide consistent presence when stations are unstaffed (e.g. Sundays)
- Meet and greet
- Support the operation during service disruption/engineering work/special events
- Assist customers to/from the train
- Act as a ambassador for their local area
- Tend to the station gardens and general housekeeping
- Alert operational control to any customer problems e.g. missed trains



Station investment in North East & West Riding

- **Sunderland** – Cosmetic refresh and new staff accommodation providing greater GC presence
- **Hartlepool** – New customer lounge with wireless charging points, improved seating and workstations
- **Eaglescliffe** – New first class lounge and standard class waiting room
- **Thirsk** – Car park expansion to 73 spaces plus 5 disabled, improved lighting and electric vehicle charging points
- **Bradford Interchange** – Improved facilities for train cleaning and servicing to provide better customer experience
- **Brighouse** – Replacement of old waiting shelters
- **Mirfield** – Working with Kirklees Council to provide improved LED lighting in existing public underpass.
- **Wakefield Kirkgate** – New Standard C waiting room with toilets to complement existing first class lounge.

- Total spend: £2.6m



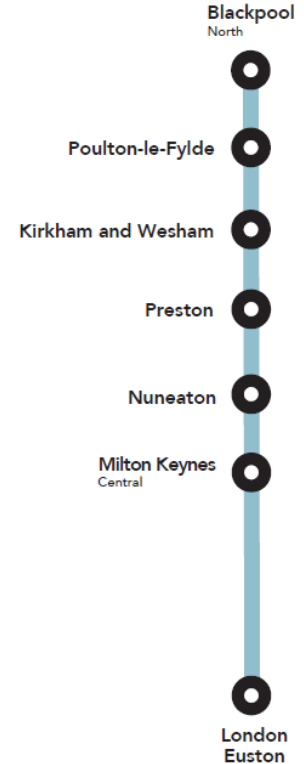


Blackpool to London services

From May 2020

Blackpool North to London Euston

- New Blackpool North to London Euston services from May 2020
- Phased introduction between May and late Summer
- Station calls: Poulton-le-Fylde, Kirkham & Wesham, Preston, Nuneaton and Milton Keynes Central (most trains)
- Connections at Nuneaton and Milton Keynes
- Five return services per day (Monday to Saturday); four return services on Sundays - new
- Good spread of services throughout the day
- Linking local communities with London and London/Midlands with Fylde for business and tourism boost
- New jobs created: most in Blackpool, some in York and London



Blackpool to London timetable

Southbound		Monday to Friday					Saturday					Sunday			
Blackpool North	dep	06 58	08 34	11 51	15 50	17 35	07 32	09 25	12 24	15 13	19 00	09 13	12 55	16 23	17 54
Poulton-le-Fylde	dep	07 04	08 40	11 57	15 56	17 41	07 38	09 31	12 30	15 19	19 06	09 19	13 01	16 29	18 00
Kirkham & Wesham	dep	07 13	08 50	12 07	16 06	17 51	07 47	09 40	12 39	15 28	19 15	09 29	13 11	16 38	18 10
Preston	arr	07 24	09 00	12 17	16 16	18 01	07 58	09 51	12 50	15 39	19 25	09 39	13 21	16 49	18 20
	dep	07 29	09 07	12 21	16 23	18 04	08 01	09 54	12 53	15 43	19 28	09 46	13 28	16 51	18 23
Nuneaton	dep	08 52	10 31	13 54	17 52	19 30	09 29	11 30	14 30	17 31	20 57	11 03	14 52	18 23	19 52
Milton Keynes Ctl	arr	09 25	11 08	14 24	.	20 03	10 08	12 10	15 09	18 08	21 30	11 51	.	18 56	20 24
	dep	09 28	11 12	14 24	20 04	10 12	12 10	15 10	18 11	21 36	11 54	18 57	20 33
London Euston	arr	10 05	11 49	15 01	19 00	20 40	10 48	12 46	15 46	18 47	22 26	12 40	15 59	19 36	21 16
Northbound		Monday to Friday					Saturday					Sunday			
London Euston	dep	07 36	11 33	12 33	15 33	19 33	07 36	11 33	14 33	17 33	19 16	11 41	13 29	17 29	20 28
Milton Keynes Ctl	arr	08 08	12 05	13 05	16 05	20 05	08 08	12 05	15 05	18 07	19 51	12 25	14 05	18 05	21 05
	dep	08 09	12 10	13 10	16 11	20 10	08 09	12 10	15 10	18 08	19 59	12 39	14 10	18 10	21 06
Nuneaton	arr	08 43	12 44	13 41	16 43	20 42	08 40	12 41	15 42	18 41	20 32	13 10	14 41	18 41	21 46
Preston	arr	10 15	14 10	15 05	18 15	22 09	10 10	14 08	17 03	19 58	21 53	14 30	16 01	19 59	23 07
	dep	10 17	14 13	15 08	18 17	22 11	10 14	14 11	17 06	20 01	21 56	14 33	16 03	20 01	23 10
Kirkham & Wesham	arr	10 26	14 22	15 17	18 26	22 20	10 23	14 20	17 15	20 10	22 05	14 42	16 12	20 10	23 19
Poulton-le-Fylde	arr	10 35	14 31	15 26	18 35	22 29	10 32	14 29	17 24	20 19	22 14	14 52	16 21	20 19	23 28
Blackpool North	arr	10 43	14 38	15 33	18 43	22 37	10 39	14 36	17 32	20 26	22 21	14 59	16 29	20 27	23 36



Timetable readiness

- Track access rights granted in June 2018
- Preparation delayed by issue over access charges and late delivery of LNER Azumas
- Recruitment started August 2019: Depot Manager in place
- Track access contract signed October 2019
- Rolling stock contracts signed January 2020
- All sets delivered by end of March
- Driver training under way
- New traincrew depot / admin office close to Blackpool North
- Gauge clearance almost complete for south end of route



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Rolling Stock – North West

- Fleet of 4 loco-hauled 5 coach trains
- Mark 4 coaches and DVT cascaded from LNER
- Electric-hauled by Class 90 locomotive
- Grand Central livery and refurbishment before entry into service
- Top speed 110mph – but limited on WCML anyway as not ‘EPS’
- Maintenance at Wembley
- Servicing at Blackpool LMD



Freshly painted
Class 90



Grand Central Mark 4
set at Wembley



Station investment in North West

- Contractual commitment to spend at least £1.2m on stations and depots
- Money to be spent by 2024
- Opportunities sought for investment especially at Blackpool North, Poulton-le-Fylde and Kirkham & Wesham
- Input to Preston redevelopment later this decade?





Open Access to Blackpool

We look forward to welcoming
you on board our trains!

Any questions?