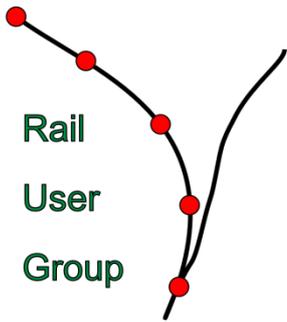


Lakes Line



Lakes Line Bulletin

Summer 2017



News from the Oxenholme – Windermere Line

A good weekend in Staveley
First report on the Summer Survey
News and Updates from the Group

The Lakes Line Rail User Group is the User Group for Oxenholme Station and the Oxenholme - Windermere Line

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Windermere Town Council

Individual Membership costs £5 per year, Family membership £7, and Corporate membership £13. Payment by standing order is available. The Group welcomes members from outside the line's area as well as local members.

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The cover photos

Our cover photographs for this edition illustrate both the good and the bad of the Lakes Line's current situation. On the front, David Dockray's photo may seem pretty standard stuff. A class 156 unit approaching Oxenholme? We've seen them around for about 30 years. But this one is using what used to be the 'down' goods loop, now the 'up and down Windermere', the upgraded loop line with direct access to platform 3, which was one of the improvements made by the extensive work at Oxenholme last year. Then, count the carriages. Just two, a reminder of the shortage of rolling stock which is affecting our services along with many others in the North of England.



'New' cab end: squeeze!



Original cab end: straight in and out.

The pictures on the back cover continue this theme. The class 153 units first ran on British Rail's tracks in 1987, when they were 2-car class 155 units. In the nineties, BR decided to convert them into single coach trains, building a new cab in the second end of each coach. Try to board one of these trains at the 'new' cab end, and you'll find that though the door is standard width, there's an awkward narrowing inside where the cab intrudes. On the other hand, without the class 153 trains, Northern would not be able to provide the Lakes Line with three-car trains during the day, when the hired-in class 185 units are not available.

And full marks to Kevin for noticing the chance appearance of unit 330 almost exactly 20 years after the Lakes Line 150 celebrations.

Staveley Weekend (and our photo display)



Phil Wearing makes sure a customer has just the right amount of extra milk in her coffee.

We had a good weekend in Staveley on 17th/18th June. First we had the coffee morning in the village hall. We took over £200-00 and after expenses made about £140-00. We are most grateful for the donation of cakes etc. and raffle prizes. We

had a photo display which a number of people were interested in and I would like to thank all our members for helping. Thanks also to Dyan Jones, SLDC's representative on LLRUG, who came along and staffed the cake stall. On the Sunday we had a stall at the Staveley carnival where we had sales of just under £110-00. It was a good event and sales kept Malcolm Conway and Phil Wearing going all day.

Now the village has had its bridge rebuilt after the floods of 2015 it is coming back to as it was so why not come and see the new bridge? Come by train and have a look around. There is a pub, a brewery, tea rooms and a chip shop, and a number of small businesses selling all sorts. Then you might want to go on one of the many walks from the village (details of some are on our walks leaflet no 5) or walk up to Windermere and catch the train back, the choice is yours.

We have also replaced our photo display boards at Windermere station for everyone to see as they will be there for the rest of the summer. It has photos on showing the old station and also some things LLRUG has done. It all helps to publicise the Group and its work, and hopefully attract some new members. We are grateful to Northern for permission to have this display up in the station building.

While we were at Windermere station a lady came and wanted a cheap day return to Manchester Airport.

However, there is no such ticket, only to Piccadilly. Andy at the booking office talked to her and by checking her times got her a good priced ticket. The lady thanked Andy very much for sorting it out so another satisfied customer and well done Andy. IC



Right: Ian Conway discussing the photo display when it was at Staveley for the coffee morning.

Below: Malcolm had time to snap Phil Wearing in necessary protective headgear on Staveley Carnival day.



An unfortunate first for the Lakes Line

Since the last Bulletin appeared we have had three bank holidays, and on each one LLRUG mounted its peak time 'Welcome' campaign. Sadly, it wasn't a totally happy experience.

Network Rail says it has to carry out major work over bank holiday periods because fewer people want to travel then, so the line closures cause less disruption. We have said it before, and will probably have to say it again. This may be true for large urban areas but is definitely *not* so in a holiday area such as this. Why does it come as a surprise to Network Rail that at holiday time people want to go on holiday?



As the photo shows – this was on Good Friday – platform 3 at Oxenholme was frequently crowded with people waiting for the Windermere train to arrive. Here, as the train draws in from Preston, there were around 150 passengers waiting. Added to those already on, it was a very full train.

It isn't just that the Lakes Line trains are crowded. Because of disruption further south, the main line operators often run a reduced service. Result? Trains reported as 'full and standing' leaving London Euston. We noted this year that the Virgin Trains (VT) services which don't call at Oxenholme were usually not reported as 'full and standing'. Is there a lesson here for VT?

Of course, the operators have little freedom in this. It is a condition of their licence that they accept reasonable closures for engineering work, but they do have some freedom in arranging alternative services.

We also found that the advance information available to passengers was inconsistent, and sometimes plain wrong. For example, in its 'Spanner in the works' leaflet about the late spring Bank Holiday, VT maps in both the Spanners leaflet and online incorrectly show bus replacement between Oxenholme and Windermere, which was correct for the May Bank Holiday at the beginning of the month.

Bank Holiday Saturday, 27th May, saw probably the worst of the problems. Some main line trains were terminating at Oxenholme that day, then returning south, as there was engineering work north of Oxenholme. Early morning connections were missed – some passengers who caught the 10:04 to Windermere, a through train from Manchester, had in fact arrived at Oxenholme an hour earlier, but their train from Manchester missed the connection.

The one ‘first’ was that platform 3 saw its first use by a passenger-carrying electric train, as seen here in Ron Radley’s photograph. Why unfortunate? Because it only happened as there was such disruption to services, but at least we know the wires work! LLRUG had suggested the platform could be used this way, and finally it happened.



Later that day there was more disruption outside the train operators’ control, when someone looked likely to try jumping off a bridge near Lancaster. However, the LLRUG members were disappointed to find that passengers waiting at Kendal, at least, had no information about what was happening, and indeed LLRUG members waiting there to take their turn on the welcome trips spent their time advising passengers what they could do in the circumstances. Nobody can blame a train company for the cause of the disruption in this case, but there should be better plans in place for how to look after passengers.

Inevitably, when services did resume the trains were over-full, and the welcome party could not pass through the train and talk to passengers.

Overall it has been another disappointing bank holiday season. It is very difficult to persuade local hoteliers or proprietors of large visitor attractions to be enthusiastic about advertising the benefits of coming to Windermere by train when, again and again, their times of peak demand see peak disruption on the railway.

Timetable update

May 2017 timetable

There are a small number of changes to report, as we expect there will be during the next couple of years or so. This time TransPennine Express (TPE) has plugged the gap in between the 18:00 and 20:00 departures from Manchester Airport. This is the odd hour slot to Glasgow calling at Oxenholme at 20:28 and operates Sundays to Friday. There is a connection out of the 19:58 (Sunday 19:48) from Windermere which doesn't connect into the previous departure from Oxenholme at 20:08. A corresponding southbound working from Glasgow at 18:47 (19:06 on Sundays) calls at Oxenholme at 21:09 (21:06 on Sunday). There is a connection to, but not from, Windermere on weekdays.

The future

From December TPE hopes to be able to operate its Manchester to Scotland service mainly via Bolton. From May next year we anticipate further changes, in particular in Northern schedules. Over the following 18 months, both TPE and Northern expect to have delivery of their new rolling stock, with Northern introducing its Northern Connect network (including through services with Manchester via Wigan), while TPE will deploy some of its additional rolling stock to operate a three times daily service between Liverpool and Glasgow. There are no notified changes to Virgin Trains schedules for the foreseeable future. RT

Northern Walks

Northern launched its own series of walkers' guides –which complement the CRP leaflet - on 1st June, entitled *We Are Northern Train Trails*. Windermere is one of the twelve. The descriptions of the walks are available on Northern's website as well as on paper. Northern's website explains: "Northern is linking up with the experts at popular TV series Walks Around Britain, to develop a series of walks specially chosen to be easily accessible from stations across the north of England.

Each of the 12 walks has been designed by Walks Around Britain's writer and presenter Andrew White to showcase the fabulous variety of walking on offer to Northern's customers.

Taking in locations such as Alderley Edge, Liverpool city centre and Windermere, the collection of 12 *We Are Northern Train Trails* includes many that can be navigated with a push-chair, linear walks, circular walks and some more challenging routes for those who want a full day's walking."

Our Chairman welcomed this as 'a most welcome addition to attracting passengers to the Lakes Line.'

News from the Group

The June committee meeting was enlivened by viewing a video ‘ticket to ride’ made by the SENS group in Staveley. Sue Walley introduced the film which takes a success at Staveley’s ‘Wearable Art’ show to highlight both the access problems at the station and the value of rail travel. Rachel Toyn decided her entry on the theme ‘our changing climate’ would highlight rail travel, which is both environmentally friendly and, in Staveley, only available to those able to climb 41 steps. She asked travellers to post used rail tickets through her door, and then set about making a dress for herself. In the end, there were enough tickets to make a waistcoat for her husband Mike, and cover an attaché case. It makes a good film, and highlights the access problems at Staveley in a gentle and humorous way.

(Photo by Dave Plumb)



Talking of tickets, on one of the ‘welcome’ days, Malcolm Conway noticed a family of four get on the train at Kendal, and buy day returns to Staveley. The new ticket machine the conductors use prints on paper roll. This makes a ticket for 4 very long.



Long enough to go right across the carriage!

As Malcolm said, ‘I do not think they will lose it.’

Perhaps Rachel and Mike are already planning an updated costume?

Northern’s Station manager for our line, Jane Murray, has found contact with LLRUG so useful she and Dawn McGough from Community Rail Cumbria have set up a regular meeting with the Group. It means users can report problems or suggest improvements direct to the person who oversees the action. It’s so successful that

Jane and Dawn intend to copy the idea with the other two Cumbrian Rail User Groups.

Among recent discussions the meeting agreed to replace the now very bushy conifers at Kendal station with something more suitable and aesthetic. Ian Conway is leading the search for what to plant next. We are still concerned about the weeds behind the white fence at Kendal, it appears the contractors think they are the responsibility of Station House. LLRUG is also concerned that the help lines at both Kendal and Burneside are inoperative whenever our station adopter tests them. On the other hand, Network Rail has replaced the small 'close the gates after use' notice on the Burneside station crossing, with a much bigger and clearer one.

In April, Robert and Dick were invited to talk to Kendal Town Council's Highways and Environment Committee about the railway. The Council was worried by news that electrification is still not certain, and also that rolling stock on the line includes many older, less comfortable trains. This was a good discussion, and the Councillors thanked the Group for its work, and promised to keep in touch.

New staff for two operators

In mid-June Arriva announced the appointment of David Brown as Northern's new Managing Director. The press notice says: "David, who is currently Chief Executive at Transport for the North, will take up his role at Arriva during September and will succeed Alan Chaplin who has been Acting Managing Director since February.

David is a prominent leader in Northern transport, with more than 25 years' experience in both the public and private sectors across all modes of public transport. Prior to his role as Chief Executive at Transport for the North, David was Chief Executive at Merseytravel and before that, headed up South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive and led the establishment of Rail North. David also spent more than 10 years at North West Trains."

David certainly has quite a job on his hands, as Northern's ambitious plans for huge improvements will take some delivering in the face of further strikes called by the RMT, and delays to promised infrastructure upgrades by Network Rail. His cv is impressive, and such wide experience should be a real asset in overseeing the introduction of new trains and services. The Group wishes him and his senior team well, and we invite him to come and meet us on the Lakes Line.

Meanwhile, at Virgin Trains, Anna Doran has moved on from the post of General Manager, Anglo-Scottish services. Her successor is Michael Stewart, who has been with VT for three years, and has impressed people who have met him.

Two reports from a busy meetings month

TravelWatch NorthWest Conference 8th June

Merseytravel hosted the conference at its Mann Island HQ near Liverpool's Pier Head. To start, Rob Monnier of Merseyrail told us about the long-overdue new rolling stock, which will be owned by the operator, unlike most models whereby trains are owned by one of the three privatised rolling stock companies. The backdrop to provision of the new fleet is an average 2.5% growth in passenger traffic which is projected to continue. As usual with new trains, they are expected to work hard; 52 new trains will do the work of the current 59.

Michael Stewart is the 'new kid on the block' as Virgin Trains' General Manager Anglo Scot Route. He has moved from a 3-year position in VT's finance sector but already has a complete grasp of the operational side of the railway.

His presentation highlighted VT's involvement with outside bodies such as Visit England, Cumbria and the Lake District and The Princes Trust. Naturally he was also pleased to talk about VT's increase in passenger numbers from 115m to 237m per year. He also fielded questions about HS2 and Euston, luggage space, the total lack of facilities on Preston platforms 5 + 6 as well as ticket sales and prices.

West Coast Rail 250 15th June in Lichfield

VT's presentation here included hot topics such as security at stations and on trains in the light of recent terrorist activity and the August Bank Holiday closure of Euston for HS2 work. The speaker also touched on the partnership with SNCF, the state-owned French national railway, to bid for the West Coast Partnership which will run both the main line from 2019 and later the first HS2 services.

TPE's presentation by David Langton was predictably very competent and interesting. The main points:

- Already incorporated from this May, evening infill services between Manchester with Glasgow (see the timetable article)
- December 17 – electrification of the Bolton corridor, opening of the Ordsall Chord, some re-routing
- by May 18 this will allow 8-10 minutes faster journey times between Manchester and Preston
- Dec 18 – introduction of 3 trains per day (each way) between Liverpool and Glasgow initially using class 185 units, and from May 19, new electric trains. The 185 units are likely to become available thanks to new loco-hauled trains being built for TPE.

(WCR 250 monitors services all along the West Coast Main Line, and LLRUG is welcomed there as the only line organisation formed by rail users.) RT

Twenty years of progress?



Top: Kevin Brookes places the special 'Lakes Line 150' headboard on the celebration train to Windermere on 20th April, 1997.
Below: almost 20 years to the day later, the same train turns up at Oxenholme on a Windermere service.