

Lakes Line

Rail

User

Group

Lakes Line Bulletin

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News from the
Oxenholme – Windermere
Line

£1

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

Officers

- Chairman** Robert Talbot, 10 Sunnyside, KENDAL LA9 7DJ
(01539 729817) e-mail: chairman@llrug.co.uk
- Vice-Chairman** Phil Wearing, 9 Thornleigh Road, KENDAL LA9 5HQ
(01539 724767)
- Secretary** Malcolm Conway, 58 Greengate Lane, KENDAL LA9 5LL
and Railfuture rep (01539 725995) e-mail: secretary@llrug.co.uk
- Assistant Sec.** Dick Smith, 191 Windermere Road, KENDAL LA9 5EY
(01539 730590) e-mail: info@llrug.co.uk
- Treasurer** Ian Conway, 30 Chambers Close, KENDAL LA9 5JE
(01539 733844) e-mail: ianconway90@yahoo.com)
- Passenger Numbers Survey** Malcolm Thompson, 7 Landsdown Close, KENDAL LA9 7SB
(01539 727896)

Windermere Contact

Jenny Borer, Wynbeck, Rayrigg Rd., WINDERMERE
LA23 1EY (015394 44995)

Bulletin Editorial Team:

Dick Smith, Robert Talbot

Membership Secretary

Phil Bell, 9 Vicars Hill, KENDAL, LA9 5DA.

Corporate Members and Partners:

Bowness and Windermere Chamber of Trade
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Cumbria Association of Voluntary Organisations
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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 passengers based locally.

The **Lakes Line Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Lakes Line Rail User Group, but views expressed in it are those of contributors and not necessarily representative of the Group as a whole.

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Electrification

July 20th 2017 was a very bad day for supporters of the Lakes Line. Follow this timeline:

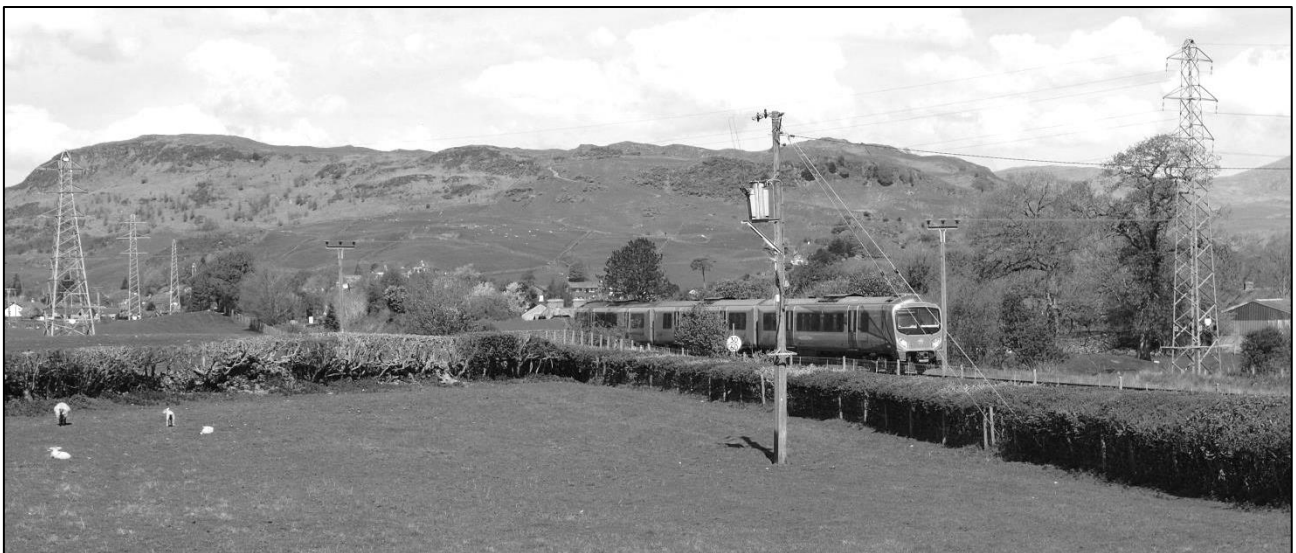
August 2013	The Rt. Hon Patrick McLoughlin, MP, the Secretary of State for Transport, visits Windermere station and after praising the Government programme of rail electrification, announces: “It would make complete sense not to leave this small stretch unelectrified, so I think we’ll see a very positive response to the study [sponsored by TPE into electrification of the Lakes Line].” ...”My briefing tells me we hope to see the electrification by 2016. It will be one of the earlier parts of electrification, of the whole scheme.”
November 2014	Baroness Kramer, Rail Minister at the DfT, visits Windermere station to announce electrification of the Lakes Line has been approved, and £16 million set aside for the project. The target date is now December 2017.
April 2016	Arriva Rail North takes over the Lakes Line franchise, trading as Northern Railway. Among its commitments are four daily return services between Windermere and Manchester Airport, a new, inter-urban ‘Northern Connect’ service, including to Windermere, and brand new electric trains for use on the Lakes Line and elsewhere.
April 2016	Kendal Engineering Society hosts a presentation on electrifying the Lakes Line. Sam Morris and Marianne Webb from Network Rail (NR) go into some detail about the work needed for electrification (e.g. having to raise Parkside Road footbridge, but not the bridge connecting Low Mead and Briarigg, which will just need higher parapets) showing NR has done a good deal of planning already.
May-June 2016	Weekend complete closures at Oxenholme for Network Rail to improve access to the Lakes Line and wire through and beyond the Windermere end of platform 3, the first stage of whole line electrification.
February 2017	Consultants working for the Community Rail Partnership on ways to increase the Lakes Line capacity are assured by Network Rail that electrification will not get in the way of building a passing loop.
Spring 2017	News that owing to delays in NR’s electrification work, the planned timetable changes for December 2017 will now happen in May 2018.
July 20th 2017	Secretary of State Chris Grayling announces the abandoning of several rail electrification schemes, including the Lakes Line.

The Non-electrification Press Releases

In true PR department style, the press releases from both the Department for Transport (DfT) and Northern contained only good news, and all of it true. But not necessarily the whole truth.

The DfT began with the familiar ploy of re-announcing something that sounds good, even though in this case it was nothing to do with electrification. Yes, we are to see four weekday return services between Windermere and Manchester Airport, but this was a franchise commitment which did not depend on electrification.

Their offering continued: “The government has announced plans to ensure passengers enjoy brand new trains from December 2019.” True – but these were to be electric trains. And Northern’s order for its new trains was for just enough units to cover the duties planned. It’s not easy to whistle up extra trains, as we know all too well in Cumbria, where we have seen newer trains replaced by older ones. Of course, an electrified line elsewhere may find an unexpected bonus of extra units.



Later we learnt: “It also means there is no need to construct intrusive wires and masts in this National Park.” Look at this picture of a class 185 unit approaching Staveley Crossing - in the National Park - on its way to Burneside. Count the masts! Railway overhead wiring uses much smaller masts than the pylons, which continue towards Windermere.

In its introduction, the DfT states: “Passengers in Wales, the midlands and the north will get faster and more comfortable journeys quicker under new plans announced by the government today”. This may be true on some lines, but is unlikely in our case. In fact early information about the through services from and to the Airport suggest the trains will take longer than recently, as they will stop on their way from the Airport to Piccadilly.

In the DfT's general introduction, we read the intriguing news that "the train operator in the Lake District [is] beginning work to trial an alternative-fuelled train in this World Heritage Site." This clearly does not refer to the new bi-mode class 769 units, unless diesel fuel has suddenly become 'alternative'. The class 769, being developed by rolling stock company Porterbrook, will have diesel power added to class 319 electric units displaced from the South East by genuinely new trains. They are due to come into service in time for the May 2018 timetable.

'Alternative' presumably means fuel cell or hydrogen power, and while a number of manufacturers are trialling these ideas, they are some way from large scale production and use. Alstom (maker of the class 175 trains we used to have) has its 'Coradia iLint', which it promotes as "an advanced full emission-free train solution for passenger rail transportation. It is based on Alstom's successful Coradia Lint regional platform. The traction system of Coradia iLint is using fuel cells which produce electricity by combining hydrogen and oxygen to water."



The website *Rail Technology.com* has reported recently that 'the Coradia iLint will be in service in Germany in 2018, according to Alstom's Ulrich Gahl'. While this is promising, it does suggest that fleet service of fuel cell powered trains is not imminent. There are, of course, other 'alternative fuels'; if you google 'alternative fuelled trains in Europe' you get references to *electric* trains powered from sustainable sources, such as wind power, or even solar panels laid at trackside.

It is hard not to feel sorry for Northern's management in general, and the PR department in particular. Just eighteen months ago Northern could legitimately point to its franchise commitments as promising a brighter future. Now, due to circumstances entirely outside their control, these plans have been delayed or dashed.

Here is their press release of 20th July in full:

‘Northern is to explore new solutions to provide enhanced services for customers on the Lakes Line.

‘The largest train operator outside of London is working on proposals to develop innovative solutions following the news that the line is not to be electrified.

From May 2018 the route between Oxenholme and Windermere will see the introduction of ‘Flex trains’. These innovative units will be able to operate on both electrified and non-electrified lines meaning customers will be able to travel seamlessly between the Lake District and Manchester Airport without changing trains.



Sharon Keith (above), Regional Director, at Northern said: “The ‘Flex trains’, which will be redesignated as class 769s, are currently being converted from existing class 319s and are planned to be introduced to the network from May 2018. These will ensure our customers in the Lake District are able to benefit from the electrified route south of the national park and travel direct to Windermere – all on a fully refurbished dual fuel train.

“From December 2019 we will look to introduce our brand new trains, currently being constructed by CAF, and the Lakes Line will reap the benefit of this

programme with the introduction of new diesel powered trains which will feature, as standard, air conditioning, free wifi, and plug sockets throughout.

“The proposed introduction of the Flex 769s, together with the brand new trains, will provide the Lakes Line with an excellent service up to 2019 and beyond. Our customers are at the heart of everything we do and we are committed to providing them with the best services, on the best trains possible.”

Northern has also been set the challenge of developing proposals for further new trains which run on alternative fuel sources. The aim is to produce new trains which could use environmentally friendly fuel sources to operate between Oxenholme and Windermere, but which would also be able to run on the electrified routes south of the national park.

Sharon added: “We welcome the opportunity to bring more innovation and modern technology to our customers in the Lake District.

“Through our current programme of modernisation we are already introducing 98 new diesel and electric trains, as well as refurbishing the remainder of our fleet and upgrading many of the facilities at our stations.

“We are also investing in digital technology to keep our customers informed and to open up new ways of purchasing tickets and paying for travel.

“This ongoing partnership with Department for Transport and Rail North will allow us to innovate further and help develop technologies which may not only enhance the environment in Cumbria, but could also be used as a blueprint for routes further afield.”

Readers will note that Northern has been forced to give up on its plan to provide Lakes Line services by electric train from 2019. Of course, changing the traction from electric to diesel may seem straightforward to someone in an office, but there is the question of finding the diesel trains. Northern’s order to CAF in Spain for new trains was for just enough units (43 electric and 55 diesel) to cover the services planned. Will someone have to go without new diesels if some units are diverted to run between Manchester Airport and Windermere? Will Northern be allowed to buy a few extra trains? At the time of writing, we understand that the business case for this has not been approved by the DfT.

In our franchise system, the train operators do not own the trains. Hence, unlike British Rail or its predecessors, they do not have design or research departments, and Northern is already doing more than it contracted to by helping Porterbrook develop the class 769. However it is not the franchisee’s job to undertake basic research into new technologies. Who will fund this?

User Group News

Our Treasurer and gardening co-ordinator Ian Conway has been busy getting quotations for the redesigned garden at Kendal station. Northern's contractors are to take out the shrub conifers planted before privatisation, and the plan is to replace them with four separate flower beds in the grass. If you would like to be involved in the garden developments, please contact Ian.

Sadly, one item on the regular agenda is very repetitive: the problems at the unstaffed stations. The help points have not worked for months, and the public phone at Burneside is for 999 calls only. The information screens aren't always to be trusted, and at Burneside at least the electronic 'poster board' had, at the time of Ron's last report, not been updated for some weeks. On the other hand we welcomed the decision to put the Kendal timetable poster for the latest strike days on the ramp, where potential passengers could read it before going to the platform.

Sales Stand outings

The sale stand was out on Carnforth railway station at a railway exhibition in mid-August and had sales of over £85-00, and a number of people were sad to hear we were not getting our electric trains. For the first time we have taken over £1,000 in a financial year on the sales stand. We then went to the Blackburn railway exhibition where we had sales of over £150. I handed out a few membership forms hoping to get more people to join the group and come to the Lakes by train instead of their cars. We found more people not happy with the cancellation of the electrification on the Windermere line.

So a big thanks to all that have helped with the stalls, coffee morning and also the welcome hosts and passenger counts. If anybody wants to help with the stands or knows somewhere it might be helpful to have one please contact me or any of the officers.

Ian Conway

Annual General Meeting



This year's AGM will be held on Thursday 2nd November in Kendal Town Hall's Georgian Room, starting at 7.15 pm. Our principal guest speaker will be Simon Shrouder, Rail

– Stakeholder Manager at Transport for the North. We are looking forward to hearing from Simon about the role, plans and powers of Transport for the North. In his own words: "I will be happy to explain how we fit in – and exactly what it is we are striving to do between now and 2050!"

CAN YOU HELP THE GROUP?

Most of the officers and committee have been in their posts for the last 20 - 30 years and are getting older and things have changed over the years.

i.e. social media, Facebook

We are looking for extra committee members to join us who are more up to date with new technology. Are you a commuter either coming to the Lakes Line or going from the area to work on a regular basis?

If you think you can help us please contact the Secretary on 01539 725995 or e-mail him at secretary@llrug.co.uk, contact any committee member or see us out and about on the line or at our fund raising stall.

Liaison Group

One undoubted success of 2017 has been the quarterly liaison meetings involving the Group, Community Rail Cumbria (CRC) and Northern. This compact group discusses day-to-day issues concerning the Lakes Line. Often it is the Group's concerns or questions raised at meetings, but Northern, or CRC, can bring items along too. Its great advantage is that Jane Murray, Stations Manager, is there so can direct any work needed to the right department of Northern. The improvement in posters at Kendal is one quick result, as is the steady progress towards remodelling the garden there. LLRUG members have also urged Northern to produce a better timetable leaflet for the Line. The current one is so small and flimsy that it looks insignificant. We've pointed out that a $\frac{1}{3}$ A4 format, like the one for the Furness Line, would be much better. It would fit standard leaflet racks, and the extra space should be used for more information, such as times at Manchester for through trains, or even connections from Oxenholme. A combined Cumbrian community rail lines timetable is another possibility.

The Liaison Group has also discussed larger scale topics, including the outlines of future timetables. We welcome this chance to make early comments on what is proposed.

The strikes affecting Northern have also been discussed. Our comments are aimed to improve Northern's arrangements and information for passengers. For example, we suggest that rather than have separate train and replacement bus timetables, there should be one combined document, with different colours for trains and buses. We'd also like to see the times altered to make better connections at Oxenholme.

Local rail-related events

Three local groups have let us know about talks and events which might be of interest to LLRUG members. All will make you welcome as a regular or occasional visitor.

The Stephenson Locomotive Society, South Lakeland Centre – Kendal

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| 5th October | Simon Holroyd: FLYING SCOTSMAN:
Re-assembling of 'Flying Scotsman'. |
| 2nd November | Ian Clark: RAIL TOURS
The evolution of rail tours from an SLS perspective. |
| 7th December | Christmas Social Evening |
| 4th January 2018 | John Bateson: Oxenholme Station and its surroundings. |

Meetings are held on Thursday evenings (unless otherwise shown) at 7.15 for 7.30 pm at the St. John Ambulance Centre (just off Sandes Avenue, Kendal, LA9 4LL). Further details from the Centre Organiser, Philip Heyes, [Telephone 01539 725658 or email to Jphilipheyas@aol.com]

Kendal and District Engineering Society runs a fortnightly programme, covering all aspects of engineering, from undersea optical cables (October 18th) to maxillofacial prosthetics and technology (February 21st 2018). Unfortunately the session on 'Light Rail' clashes with our AGM, but there is another talk of direct railway interest coming up in 2018 on Thursday 26th April: *Britain's Most Powerful Steam Locomotive 'The Prince of Wales'* by David Elliott, Director of Engineering, (P2 Steam Locomotive Co). KDES meets in the Castle Green Hotel (note: new venue for 2017/18) at 7.15 pm. For the full programme go to www.kendalengineering society.org



Furness, Lakes and Lune Branch, Carnforth

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| 6 th October | Steve Fort: The Green Diesel Era |
| 3 rd November | Noel Machell: Preston to Windermere in the last years of Steam. |
| 1 st December | Members' Photo Presentation, and AGM |
| 5 th January 2018 | Ian Pilkington: Steam and Diesel in the Northern Fells. |

Meetings are held in the Station Hotel, Carnforth (just across the road from the railway station) at 7.30 pm. For further information telephone 01524 34840 or visit website www.rcts.org.uk

The summer survey

Timed for the last weekend in June, this year's survey saw the now usual flurry of activity to count and interview passengers on the Lakes Line. This would be impossible without the help of so many volunteers, and the Group (responsible for the count) and CRP (the interviews) are both very grateful for the time the volunteers put in. Over the two days it came to about 84 hours spent on the trains, a considerable input. We were pleased to have newcomers in the teams, some from organisations involved in the CRP, including Northern staff.

Both days had excellent passenger numbers, Friday very much in line with the last 3 years at over 2200 (33% up from our self-declared datum level of 2009), and Saturday, untroubled by cancellations, was well up on 2016 at over 2300 (45% up since 2009). Neither was quite a record, but this is due to the fact that in 2011 our survey coincided with the Great North Swim, when lots of extra swimmers came just for a day. Our interviewers talked to 40% of non-school 'up' passengers (from Windermere), and 34% of 'down', which means our findings are statistically good. We could have interviewed more 'down' passengers if some of the morning trains on Saturday 24th had not been so crowded it was not possible to move far. As usual, we did not interview pupils in school uniform, as we know where and why they are travelling.



Northern's Kyle Murray interviewing passengers.

On both up and down trains 'holidays' was the biggest category in the 'purpose of journey' section, with 39% (up trains) and 40% (down trains), not very different from 2016. 'A day out' came second on the up trains (16%), ahead of 'Visiting friends or relatives (13%) and commuting (12%). On down trains commuting was second (16%), with 'a day out' third with 14.5%. 'Visiting friends or family' came next at 12%.

This year we asked overseas visitors which country they came from; china was the most common, with Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia showing the importance of the Far East tourism market to the southern Lake District.

Summer welcomes

One of the Group's contributions-in-kind to the CRP is to organise and staff the welcome parties on high season Saturdays.

Many of the volunteers who worked on the survey turned out again over the summer, and put in around 60 hours welcoming visitors to the Lake District. On Saturday 22nd July the crowds going to Staveley Beer Festival led to over 400 passengers boarding the 11:20 from Oxenholme, and about 350 got off at Staveley. On the same day the 13:21 left Oxenholme with 230 aboard, a further 40 got on at Kendal, and though 75 got off at Staveley, that still meant nearly 200 arriving at Windermere. Other Saturdays saw good but less spectacular numbers, with many trains recording around or over 200 passengers. As ever, the numbers depend on main line trains making connections at Oxenholme, and on 12th August two trains from Euston missed their connection, so the next Windermere services were busier than expected. Even on bank holiday Saturday, 26th, when Network Rail had recommended not travelling due to engineering work disruption, the welcomers still had up to 135 passengers to greet. Thank you Northern for allowing us to travel on your trains. As always, our members enjoyed the experience, and your passengers were very appreciative of what we were able to offer. The Group is grateful to the organisations, especially Stagecoach, whose leaflets we carry to hand out to passengers.

Thank you Northern also for finding us a class 156 unit for Bank Holiday Monday. We understand that at one point in the morning a single class 153 was thought to be all that was available for the Lakes Line! This was due to the regular breakdown of a class 37 diesel engine on the Cumbrian Coast.

Green plug

On Saturday 9th September a joint group from LLRUG and South Lakes Action on Climate Change arranged an event to show support for electrifying the Lakes Line, which coincided with an event on the Midland Main Line, where electrification supporters



carried a giant green 3-pin plug from London to Sheffield, meeting Rail User Groups on the way. 'Our' green plug started at Kendal station, then went on to Staveley, appropriate because, as the dress made out of tickets featured in last Bulletin shows, Staveley residents have a strong interest in combatting climate change.

CRP update

Our long-serving Community Rail Officer, Jim Trotman, has been talking about retiring for some time, and has set a date. Luckily funding will allow him to work in tandem with his successor for some months, so ensuring a smooth handover and, importantly, continuity of knowledge about the Lakes and Furness Lines. His successor is Kerstin Esbjornsson, who started work on 1st September and is quickly getting to know the people she will be working with. Kerstin attended the September meeting of the Liaison Group. We look forward to working with her, and will give her the chance to introduce herself in the next Bulletin.

One of the main tasks facing the CRP and its officers is making progress with the results of the Railway Consultancy report into the capacity of the Lakes Line. It's clear that there will be no money to spare from Network Rail for anything other than regular maintenance, so the CRP will look for external funders to continue the work.

At the last committee meeting members again nominated Dick Smith as the LLRUG representative on the CRP.

Ticket vending machines

Through his membership of the North West committee of Railfuture (formerly known as the Railway Development Society) Malcolm Conway is keeping an eye on Northern's plans for ticket vending machines (TVM) for unstaffed stations. LLRUG has asked for TVMs for a long time, and is sure they would increase ticket sales on the Line, and so also increase the official passenger numbers. However, we want to be sure they will cope on those occasions when a number of passengers arrive just before a train is due.

Extra services

TransPennine Express plans to add a few extra trains in the December timetable. The surprise news is that there should be two southbound trains to Manchester Airport on a Sunday earlier than the first London service. One at least of the TPE trains should have a London connection from Preston. LLRUG has asked for earlier Sunday services for a long time; the first Euston train from Oxenholme on a Sunday is often very full. Other additions will see a train from Edinburgh at 22:30 which is expected to call (after midnight) at Oxenholme, and an improvement in early morning northbound services. The final picture depends on the Bolton – Preston

electrification being finished, and as we go to press we hear that the completion date has been put back to May 2018. If you are intending to use the TPE Manchester – Scotland services after the new timetable starts on 10th December, do check your journey times, especially for the early and late services.

Bulletin photographs

Front cover: watched over by a cctv camera, a Windermere-bound train leaves Kendal in late November 2014, with early snow on the fells.

Back cover: above, a word cloud of postcodes of passengers in the June survey. Below: in October 2015 a train for Oxenholme heads off Staveley level crossing towards Plantation Bridge.

School pupil numbers

Malcolm Thompson has done his annual mid-September check of the number of school pupils and older people boarding the afternoon ‘school train’, the 16:38 from Kendal to Windermere. This year he noted 135 in school uniform, and together with some VIth formers, college students and adults a total of 151 boarded. This continues the downward trend of the last couple of years; the change isn’t drastic – from a total of 165 in 2015, 160 last year – and could be due to a number of factors.

Website

We have added a contact list for the LLRUG officers to the ‘Welcome’ page of the website. If you use MS Outlook, you will be able to email them direct from the site, or you can cut and paste the address into your usual email service.

There is a downloadable membership form on the website, so you can point anyone interested in joining to the site if they are computer users. It’s not at present possible to join or pay subscriptions on line. If there is enough demand for this, we could look into it, but would need to know the extra cost would be worthwhile.

If Ian’s notice ‘Can you help the Group?’ on page 9 has stirred your interest, and you are comfortable with working on and updating websites, we would like to hear from you. We know people use the site as a point of contact, for example it is how we heard first about the ‘green plug relay’. It would be nice to extend its reach.

and finally ...

It isn’t just in Britain trains are late. This announcement, in a train normally late, was reported by a traveller from Germany, to the magazine ‘der Spiegel’. “We will shortly arrive at our destination, Aachen. I would like to point out that we are arriving exactly on time. You may feel this deserves a round of applause”.

Northern Contact Directory

You can contact Lakes Line operator Northern via one of the methods listed below:

- through forms on their website: <https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/corporate/contact-directory>
- by emailing enquiries@northernrailway.co.uk
- by phoning the Customer Experience Centre on 0800 200 6060
- on Twitter or Facebook: @northernassist
- through any member of staff at stations or on the train
- by writing to Freepost NORTHERN RAILWAY
from the Northern app on your smartphone.

Other operators:

TPE Customer Relations Customer Relations, First TransPennine EXPRESS
Admail 3878 FREEPOST, Manchester M1 9YB
0345 600 1671 (06:00 TO 23:00)
email: tpecustomer.relations@firstgroup.com

Virgin Trains Customer Relations

PO Box 713, BIRMINGHAM, B5 4HH
03331 031 031
e-mail: customer.relations@virgintrains.co.uk

All three train operators are in the 'Delay Repay' scheme for compensating passengers for late trains. There are leaflets at staffed stations, and information on their websites.

They also have Facebook and Twitter accounts which can be useful if you need up to date information. The best way of finding out what each offers is to go through a smartphone app or internet site.

National Rail Enquiries

Telephone enquiries: 03457 48 49 50, or on line at: nationalrail.co.uk
Train Tracker: 0871 200 4950

British Transport Police 0800 40 50 40, or first_contact@btp.pnn.police.uk
Twitter: @BTPLancs
Report crimes or incidents discretely by text on **61016**

In an emergency telephone 999.

Postcode.



The word cloud above shows the relative frequency of postcodes of passengers interviewed in the June survey. The bigger the writing, the more passengers were from that area. The local codes of LA8, 9, 22 & 23 are very prominent. Many of the LA1's were students at Lancaster University.

It's a reminder that, though we often think of the Lakes Line as a tourist line, local residents make up a good proportion of the passengers.

