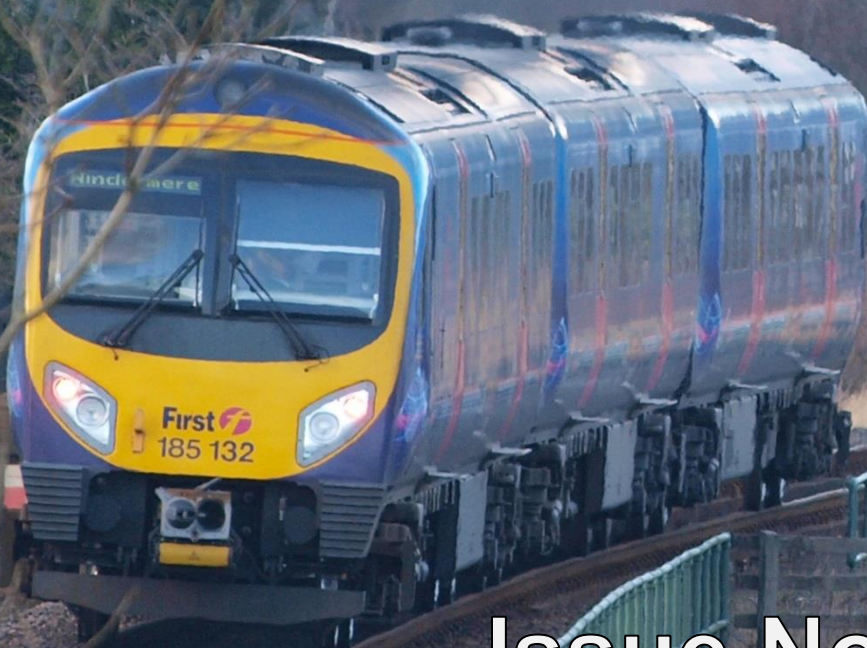


Lakes Line Bulletin

News from
the
Oxenholme
to
Windermere
Line



Issue No 129

£1

Winter 2017-18

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

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South Lakeland District Council
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Windermere Lake Cruises
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.

Information provided is published in good faith but the Group can accept no responsibility for any loss or damage arising therefrom.



***This Bulletin is sent with the Lakes
Line Rail User Group's Best Wishes for
Christmas and the New Year***



Editorial

We have two very different experiences of working with Northern/Arriva Rail North to support the Lakes Line.

On the one hand we have the locally based staff, who clearly know and care about the Lakes Line and its services. Windermere station staff continue to draw praise from travellers, and Jane Murray, Stations Manager, has got to know her patch and us very well. Jane, and ARN's West Region Stakeholder manager, Martin Keating were instrumental in setting up the liaison group with Community Rail Cumbria, which gives LLRUG regular and direct communication with our train operator. this group also has the blessing of Sharon Keith, West Region Director, and Craig Harrop, the Stakeholder Manager. On our trains the staff, still largely ex-TPE, continue to look after our passengers, and retain their good humour in often trying circumstances.

On the other hand, we still wonder if the central management actually knows where we are. Our Chairman's piece on the new timetable highlights the latest example of ignorance within the central office, as well as the lack of co-ordination between planning and printing departments. These leave passengers ill-informed, and ARN looking silly. These errors come after too many other examples of problems: bus substitution at times of disruption, inconsistent information at these times, and other examples of poor customer care.

Somebody needs to get a grip on the way Northern functions. Too often what we see is conscientious staff whose efforts are undermined by a dysfunctional organisation.

Bulletin

The front cover shows the 'school train' leaving Kendal on 10th February 2016, in TransPennine Express days. The exhausts from the three powerful engines in the class 185 units seem to be trying to imitate a steam train!

There's so much to report in this issue that we have used the back cover for a graphic illustrating an article, as well as a record of an event on the weekend of finishing the Bulletin. Up to date!

The 2017 AGM

Thirty people were present in Kendal Town Hall's Council Chamber for the AGM on 2nd November, including our MP, local councillors, and our speaker Simon Shrouder. In addition, several people who had hoped to attend were unable to do so at the last minute.

The formal business passed smoothly; the Annual Report had been circulated in advance, and was accepted with little debate. Our Treasurer did his usual effective job of explaining the special items on the balance sheet. On the outgoings side, these were buying our own display boards, and contributing £500 to the Community Rail Partnership's Lakes Line Capacity Report. On the income side, Ian was pleased to report that for the first time the Sales Stand's takings had topped £1000 in the year, and also that the Return to Keswick shares left to the Group by Ron Wooliscroft would now be paying a dividend. Ian thanked those who keep Bulletin distribution costs down by hand delivering, and the Burnside Hotel in Bowness for hosting the three meetings a year we hold at that end of the line. As the income from subscriptions continues to cover the Group's operating costs, the Treasurer recommended keeping subs for 2018 at their present level. Nobody objected!

Phil Wearing, who has been an office holder since the Group was formed, has stood down as Vice Chairman, and Alan Noble was elected in his place. Peter Colley has resigned from the committee owing to ill health, but all other officers and committee members were re-elected. The Chairman explained why we wanted to change the Group's legal title to "Lakes Line Rail User Group, *incorporating Friends of the Lakes Line*"; this will allow the Group to apply for funding for the Station Adopters work, and also clarifies the insurance position of volunteers doing these jobs. Again, passed unanimously.

Sergeant David Grant from BTP rounded off the AGM by bringing us up to date about the Transport Police force's work in the area. He was pleased *not* to have serious crimes to report, but again urged rail passengers to be aware of the text number 61016 which could be used to report crime or bad behaviour, without attracting the perpetrator's attention.



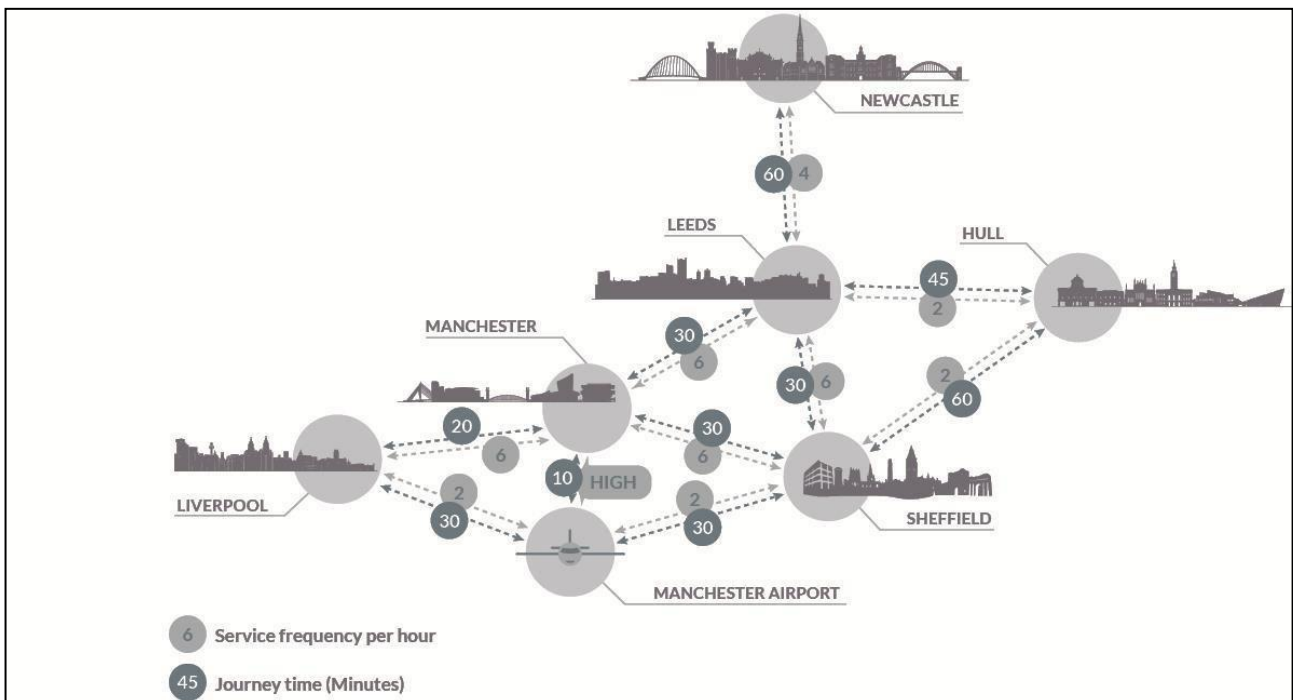
After thanking, Sgt Grant, the chairman declared the AGM closed, and we moved on to the public part of the evening.

Transport for the North

We have often wondered what Transport for the North (TfN) was to do, so we were delighted that Rail Stakeholder Manager Simon Shrouder was able to come and explain it all to us. His obvious enthusiasm for what TfN is about made for a very insightful presentation.

He summed up its job as ‘joining the dots’; there are areas of success in manufacturing and other industries in the North, the challenge is to make it easier and more efficient to move between them. Not just because that’s nice, but because poor transport links are one factor holding the North back economically. This isn’t just about railways, as TfN also has a mandate for improving road links, as the list of its development partners shows: the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail (NR), Highways England and HS2 and it will use local knowledge to make the best use of investment in transport infrastructure.

When TfN was announced some of us hoped it would itself be directing and commissioning services, like Transport for London. This won’t happen, because the most densely populated parts of the North - Merseyside, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear - already have transport bodies which do this. TfN will pull their priorities together and enable the North to speak to Central Government with one voice on transport matters, which should benefit everyone in the region. The starting point is that rail in the North has been performing well for years, despite the low level of investment.



This slide of the proposed service frequencies between our major centres, shows

how one priority is to increase the number of people able to reach them by rail.. However, it led to questions after the presentation; where does tourism, our area's major employer, figure in TfN's plans? Cumbria doesn't figure in this slide at all. By the end of the discussion Simon was well aware of the importance to us and our area of good rail links, and also that tourism's needs are different from the big cities. As an example, at holiday times *more* people want to use our trains, but their journeys are often made more difficult by engineering work – and with all the engineering work likely to be needed for Northern Powerhouse Rail, disruption could go on for years. On the other hand, there was a clear welcome for TfN's intention to simplify the fare structure.

Simon named 'Smart ticketing' as an early project, and on 16th November the DfT announced '£150 million is available to TfN for smart ticketing', as this is seen as one of the best ways to make using public transport easier, and so encourage more people to use it. Given the success of London's Oyster card, this seems a good bet.

Simon also cleared up one question: will TfN and Rail North get in each other's way? No, as Rail North is to become part of TfN.

The Group would like to thank Simon for coming along and explaining so much, and we shall certainly remember his advice to keep TfN aware of our plans and wishes for the Lakes Line.

LLRUG at briefings, conferences and events, Autumn 2017

Within the 12-week period between our September and November committee meetings, members of LLRUG have attended 20 sessions of a wide range of ten

railway
industry
gatherings. That's
a striking
rate of
roughly
two per
week. As
I said at
our AGM
for a



relatively small group this is no mean achievement. Unlike LLRUG, no other group has been omnipresent.

I can only give a very small flavour of the content here, but if any member would like sight of my notes made at these gatherings, please get in touch. Already I am onto page 10 of closely typed summaries. The Cumbria CC ‘Visioning’ group and Transport for the North’s (TfN) Windermere Branch group are both responses to the DfT’s and the Transport Minister’s decision to cancel Lakes Line electrification, as we attempt to answer the question ‘so what do we do now?’

On the campaign trail we have supported (in no order of importance or date): Arriva Rail North (4 meetings); Cumbria CRP liaison group; Cumbria CC Lakes line ‘Visioning’ group (x 2); Lake District National Park’s Windermere Station group; Network Rail; RailFuture (lately RDS); Trans Pennine Express; Transport Focus; Transport for the North (Windermere Branch group) x 2; TravelWatch NorthWest. And that doesn’t include our TfN guest speaker at our AGM, ACoRP and Rail North in York, or TfN’s sessions after our November meeting, plus a new one to add to the list – Cumbria Better Connected (previously Furness Better Connected). We have also been in regular contact by email with: the DfT; The Northern Powerhouse Minister; our MP Tim Farron; Arriva Rail North, our train operating company.

You may wonder why we put so much effort and time into being represented at these meetings. It’s because we know someone needs to keep the existence of the Lakes Line, and how it could and should be improved, on the agenda.

In today’s railway that means on the agenda of lots of organisations responsible for different parts of the railway and regional development. As you will read in the report of our AGM, Lake District tourism didn’t feature in any of Transport for the North’s broad-brush maps of Northern industry, yet if the tourist industry is to thrive without destroying the landscape the visitors come for, public transport access must be improved. The Lakes Line could play a much larger part if developed properly.

We’d rather be out on the Line making passengers welcome, or looking after the stations, but the behind-the-scenes round of meetings, an unglamorous side of the Group’s work is, we believe, vital.

News from the Line and the Group

The final part of the AGM was a Q & A session with Martin Keating and Jane Murray from Northern. They outlined what is planned for the Lakes Line soon.

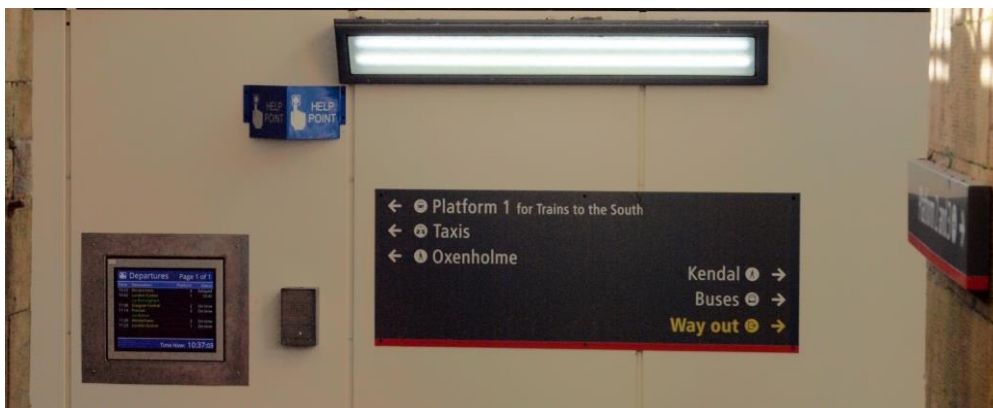
We should see ticket vending machines (TVMs) at all four of the Lakes Line stations before Easter. The one already at Windermere will be replaced by an updated model. The new machines will be sheltered from the worst of the weather, and, unlike the original Windermere one pictured overleaf, accessible at all times. As well as tickets for immediate travel, passengers will be able to pick up tickets bought on line. The



machines will be card-only, no cash. The Group has pointed out that Northern needs to be sure the schoolchildren can still get a ticket, if they do not have the scholar's season ticket. To make life easier for those of us not used to the machines, Northern staff will be on hand for a transition period when the TVMs go in. We have urged Northern to advertise the change to TVMs widely in our area, to encourage passengers to turn up and try the machines while help is on hand. Conductors will still be able to sell tickets, but in theory anyone boarding a train without a ticket is able to buy only a standard, full- priced ticket.

Martin and Jane confirmed that we should see the class 769 units on our trains from the May timetable. To recap, these are class 319 electric trains displaced from the London area, fitted with auxiliary diesel engines so they can operate away from the wires. Testing the first converted train is due about now.

John Parker has retired from his job at Windermere station, and his replacement is due in post from 27th December. This should mean the booking office there is open for its normal hours again. Among volunteer 'staff' Peter Colley has resigned as the Group's station inspector for Staveley due to ill health, and we are looking for someone to replace him there. Ron Radley is taking a break from his regular inspections at Kendal and Burneside, again due to ill health. John McCurdie has offered to help at Burneside, and as several LLRUG members are also active in the Model Railway Club which meets in the Bryce Institute, Burneside will have regular daytime and evening checks.



At Oxenholme, Virgin Trains has installed an extra information screen in the subway where it can easily be seen by passengers coming down the

ramp from platform 2/3.

Ian Conway continues preparations for the next gardening season, when the Group's second identity as 'Friends of the Lakes Line' (FoLL) will 'go live'. He has been sourced plants for Kendal station, and we are delighted Kendal Town Council has agreed to add the station plants to its summer watering rota. Ian has also discussed with local charity Horticare how they can get involved. All this activity at Kendal doesn't mean we shall neglect Burneside and Staveley, but with limited resources it's better to tackle one project at a time. Ian would like to hear from Burneside or Staveley members who would like to be involved in improving their stations.

At the October committee meeting we agreed to affiliate to ACoRP, as this will give FoLL access to grant funding and advice for station adoption projects, at an annual rate of £25. Malcolm Conway reported that, as the existing public liability insurance will in future only cover one venue, he proposed to change insurers so we are covered at any outing with the Sales Stand. Though the cost will go up, it would have gone up more to cover all the venues with the previous insurer, so we agreed to change.

Ian reported that the Sales Stand had a very successful outing at the Ambleside lights switch-on in November. Better weather helped, but even so it's a significant effort to set up and staff the stall outdoors in November.



Northern's refurbishment of class 156 units, our normal trains during the day, continues. It's not just a new livery outside, inside the units have a new toilet compartment, which is wheelchair accessible, and the interior generally has been spruced up. The refurb doesn't always include the information system. In a refurbished unit in November, the driver - unable to find any Lakes Line stations for the display - opted for Lincoln Central as the destination, on the assumption it was so unlikely nobody would take it seriously. The conductor made correct PA announcements for

our line.

On Saturdays Northern's shortage of rolling stock has meant many Furness line trains running with just a single coach class 153 unit, which quickly gets full at this time of year with people going Christmas shopping. The solution has been to 'borrow' the class 153 unit which otherwise would run on the Lakes Line; and run a 2-car train on both lines. In an encouraging sign of co-operation, they asked Tim Owen, chairman of both Furness and Lakes Line CRPs, about this, and he agreed.

The new timetables, 10th December 2017 to 19th May 2018

We received copies of the new Virgin Trains timetables well in advance of their commencement. Opening the West Coast Main Line (WCML) one hour earlier on Sunday mornings means that the Virgin Trains (VT) 11:17 from Preston to Birmingham is accessible by an additional TPE service departing Oxenholme at 10:27, though there is no connection from Windermere. However Trans Pennine Express (TPE) takes this year's prize for an enhanced timetable, also received in good time.

This time there is another additional service to Glasgow at 21:00 from MIA (Oxenholme 22:30) but without a connection down to Windermere. This means a 30-minute later departure for us from central Manchester at quarter past nine, but still too early to attend evening football fixtures or concerts. The additional southbound train departs Edinburgh at 22:15, but is too late to call at Penrith, Oxenholme or Lancaster as they are all closed by the time it gets there. Carlisle and Preston do benefit as their stations are open for the Caledonian Sleeper trains' stops during the wee small hours.

On October 6th, 2016, the 08:12 from Edinburgh approaches Oxenholme.



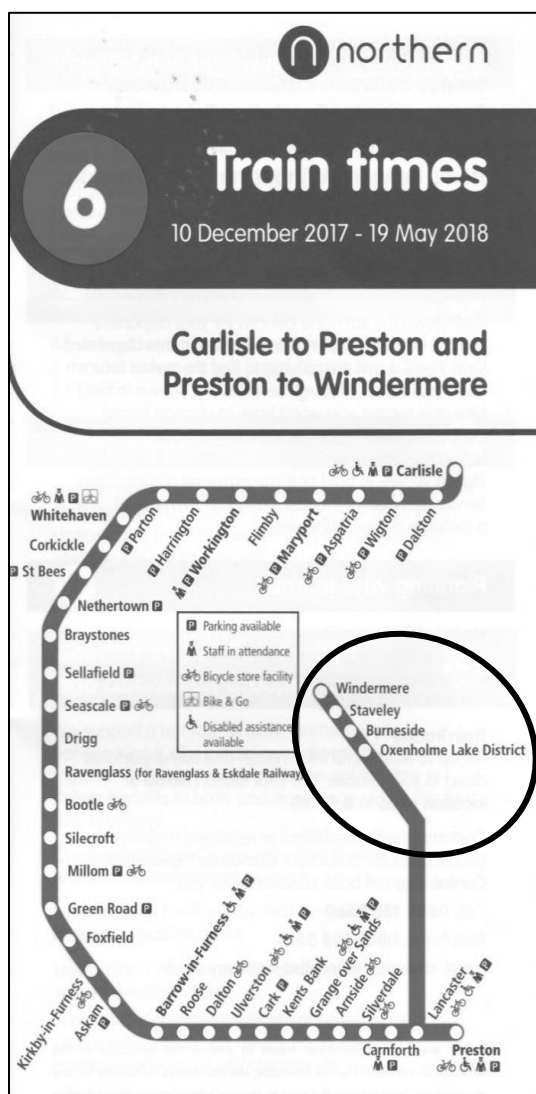
On Saturdays, insomniac specials are the order of the day, both north and southbound. The current weekday 04:57 from Piccadilly (Oxenholme 06:11) continues. During the late spring, keen walkers can start out for the fells from Windermere at around twenty to seven! The 07:00 from MIA will no longer call at Oxenholme, so we lose the 08:29 departure to Penrith, Carlisle and Glasgow. The first reasonable TPE service for Glasgow doesn't arrive there until half past twelve – far too late. There is an 04:21 from Glasgow, Oxenholme 07:08, which makes for arrival in central Manchester before 8:30. At the other end

of the day an 18:58 from MIA to Edinburgh is added, calling at Oxenholme at 20:28, almost an hour later than at present. An additional southbound train leaves Glasgow at 18:47, just seven minutes after a VT service, and calls at Oxenholme at 20:55. The bonus for us is a later possible arrival at Manchester Airport at 22:26.

On Sundays, TPE shows it is edging towards a truly 7-day timetable. As the table on page 12 shows, on some Sundays we have two TPE trains to the south before the first VT service. And there's still more to come next year with the Liverpool to Glasgow services. As it stands, there could be 8 extra trains at Oxenholme.

New TPE Sunday services from 10th December 2017

Dates	From Oxenholme north:	From Oxenholme south:
To 31 st December & 18 th Feb to 25 th Mar	09:55 to Edinburgh 10:29 to Glasgow	10:27 to Manchester Victoria 11:15 to Manchester Oxford Rd
7 th Jan to 11 th Feb and from 1 st April	10:56 to Glasgow	11:23 to Manchester Oxford Rd
10 th December to 13 th May	21:29 to Edinburgh	



Now the tale begins - **Northern's** offering!

Oh dear! I can't pull any punches. I have to say there is a certain lack of efficiency in this business organisation. At the regular liaison meetings with Northern, we had suggested producing a Cumbria timetable, or at least the coastal route plus the Lakes Line, and to be fair they were receptive. However, the devil is in the detail, and Northern, it has to be said, is not brilliant at dotting i's and crossing t's.

We and other groups in Cumbria received a request to look at a draft timetable, and in good faith instantly set about doing this. However, we soon heard that the Copeland Rail Users Group had received their printed copies, two days before the deadline for proof reading and comments! There has been no attempt to integrate our line with the Coast and Furness timings, just the same format stuck on at the end of the timetables which already existed. Nor is

there any improvement in information about through train/off-branch workings as we had requested. Northern has agreed to print a tiny edition for our line, but that doesn't correct the fact that Kendal is missing from the map on the main timetable.

Northern is also very keen to encourage passengers to use their smartphones, partly because, as they say on their flyer, online timetables are more accurate. So they know they make mistakes on the timetables. Wouldn't it be better to get them right *before* publishing them? Anyway, we don't all possess or want the technology.

Northern is missing a golden opportunity to advertise the product through its timetables. Not just the train times, but also the attractive deals with Ranger and Rover tickets, and why not information about places to visit from the train? Note my point below.

Though Network Rail in theory has opened WCML for services an hour earlier on Sunday mornings, this isn't for every Sunday. Thus Northern's first service north from Preston is 10 minutes later than hoped for, at 10:20, and so the first train from Windermere cannot connect with the first train to London. We agree with Northern's decision to have set time for the first train. However, could Northern possibly hire a bus from Windermere to connect at Oxenholme with the 11:28 to Euston? Even this train doesn't arrive in London until 14:15. So I'm afraid that until late May, the earliest arrival in the capital from Windermere is a pathetic 15:18.

All in all, First TransPennine Express gets the brownie points, our other two TOCs continue to tread water. RT

2016 – 2017 Station Usage statistics

The latest annual data from the *Office of Rail and Road* was published just in time to include some content in this Bulletin.

Lakes Line: Total entries and exits

	2016/17	2015/16	change passengers	change %
Burneside	14,260	16,066	-1,706	-10.7%
Kendal	204,026	215,398	-11,372	-5.3%
Oxenholme (+ interchanges)	571,180 (+292,288)	521,768 (+277,031)	+49,412 (+15,257)	+8.6% (+5.5%)
Staveley	42,378	44,660	-2,282	-5.1%
Windermere	415,448	419,710	-4,262	-1%

Clearly the unprecedented number of train cancellations has contributed to the

decline. Cancellations used to be so rare as to be irrelevant, but now many days see some disruption, mainly due to ‘crewing problems’. Even taking into consideration the weekend closures, so that the Windermere line platform could be electrified, wouldn’t account for the significant decline in passenger numbers. The service is now quite unreliable.

All the Branch stations recorded a loss, equating to **2.8%**, whereas Oxenholme achieved an increase a little below **10%**. Under TPE (which really did look after its passengers) usage increased over many years. The significant increase in Oxenholme numbers comes as no surprise; Virgin Trains’ own statistics show that Oxenholme generates more traffic with London than Carlisle and Penrith combined. On our stretch of West Coast Main Line (WCML) Carlisle saw 1.17% growth, Lancaster 5.5%, Penrith 9.75%, and Preston 5.75%. Readers will note the two skip/stop stations (Oxenholme and Penrith) saw most growth, so clearly there is scope for improving their service frequency.

For almost 34 years the Lakes Line Rail User Group has supported the train operators in looking after passengers on our line. LLRUG, our CRP and all other local players strove to retain our line within the TPE portfolio, but against advice, the DfT decided it would be ‘a better fit’ the Northern Franchise. The line is basically 20 miles from the nearest Northern service. No ‘fit’ whatsoever.

We sent a letter based on this article to the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP and Rail Minister Paul Maynard MP, and local interested parties, including Tim Farron.

For comparison, our summer head counts showed:

2015 - 2016	decrease 2%	2016 – 2017	increase 13%
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This dramatic increase in 2017 highlights the effect of cancellations. In 2016 we lost almost half the peak time Saturday trains, in 2017, none.

The winter equivalents are:

2015 – 2016	decrease 4%	2016 – 2017	decrease 13%
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I am going to allow myself a touch of crystal ball gazing for the next two years. I would expect the current 12-month period (up to the end of March) to show a decline in usage of the Windermere Branch. This is based on the deteriorating performance of trains actually run on the Lakes Line. However, from next May there will be the restoration of four of our through services with Manchester Airport, and at some time after that new trains, so I predict that the year from April 2018 to March 2019 will show growth

RT

Community Rail Partnership News

Cumbria is a winner! Community Rail Cumbria won the 2017 award for outstanding Contribution to Community Rail at the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) ceremony in October. This recognises the excellent work done by Dawn McGough and her team in Carlisle, as well as the two line officers, Jim Trotman for Lakes and Furness, and Laurence Hilland for the Cumbrian Coast. It is only the second time the award has been won by a Community Rail team, rather than a train operator.

Tim Owen, chairman of both Lakes and Furness CRPs, was awarded second place in the category 'Outstanding Volunteer of the Year', the second year in a row a local volunteer has been short listed (Last year our chairman made the list). Congratulations to Tim.

Presented by
Kendal Model Railway Club

MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION



27-28 Jan 2018
10am-5pm Sat & 10am-4.30pm Sun
Kendal Leisure Centre LA9 7HX
www.kendalmrc.org

Adult £6.00	Concession £5.00
Children (age 6-16) £3.00 <small>(Children age 5 and under - Free)</small>	Family £16.00 <small>(2 adult + 2 child)</small>

Our Sales Stand will be at the Kendal Model Railway Club show as usual this year. You can pay your 2018 subscription at the Stand, or just call by for a chat.

Passengers' priorities

Transport Focus, the government funded body for rail and road users, has published research into rail passengers' priorities. The research used a methodology known as Maximum Difference Scaling (max-diff) which asks passengers to trade off one priority for improvement against others. "By using this technique we can present the results in rank order of priority (with one being the highest priority for improvement and 31 the lowest) and also in terms of the relative order of priority (by how much more, or less, important one factor is compared to another)".

The results table is on the back cover, with the permission of Transport Focus. Do our members have the same priorities? Do write or email with your thoughts and comments on these results. We can do our own Lakes Line version.

Services over the Christmas period and during strikes

The West Coast Main Line is closed between Lancaster and Preston on 24th December so revised services are operating and it's buses from Preston to Lancaster all day. There's the usual early shutdown on Christmas Eve.

Trains start later on the Wednesday 27th, but some buses will run southbound before the line is open again. Basically Virgin Trains (VT) isn't using the direct London route, and Trans Pennine Express (TPE) is operating its normal stopping pattern, but with buses between Lancaster and Preston. Northern's service will still run off the Branch as far as Lancaster. Northbound the TPE trains at 11:15 and 14:15 from Lancaster do not call at Oxenholme even in normal times, although VT trains will call hourly. Confused? Do check online, at a staffed station, or with NRES on 03457 48 49 50.

VT will also shut down earlier than usual on New Year's Eve, and restart later than normal on New Year's Day. Engineering work in central Manchester will affect TPE services over this holiday too.

Virgin Trains' staff, both the on-train staff and those at stations, have called a series of strikes. The relevant parts of their notice to Stakeholders on 7th December are:

'The RMT and TSSA have called strike action on the West Coast which will affect our services on the 15th and 22nd December, and 5th, 8th, 26th and 29th January.

During this period we will be running the majority of our services. Customers may find that trains are busier on strike days and we are encouraging people to reserve a seat, and to allow for extra time for their journeys. If customers find that the train they are booked to travel on is cancelled, their tickets will be accepted on the service immediately before or after their booked train. Customers who are booked on a train on a route that we are not serving can apply for a refund, travel the day before or after, or travel via another operator.

We expect to run six trains per hour from Euston, as follows:

- One service per hour from London to Liverpool.
- Two services per hour from London to the West Midlands (one service continuing to Preston).
- One fast service per hour from London to Glasgow.
- Trains will not serve Edinburgh which can be reached via other operators' services.

More information can be found at <https://www.virgintrains.co.uk/strike>.

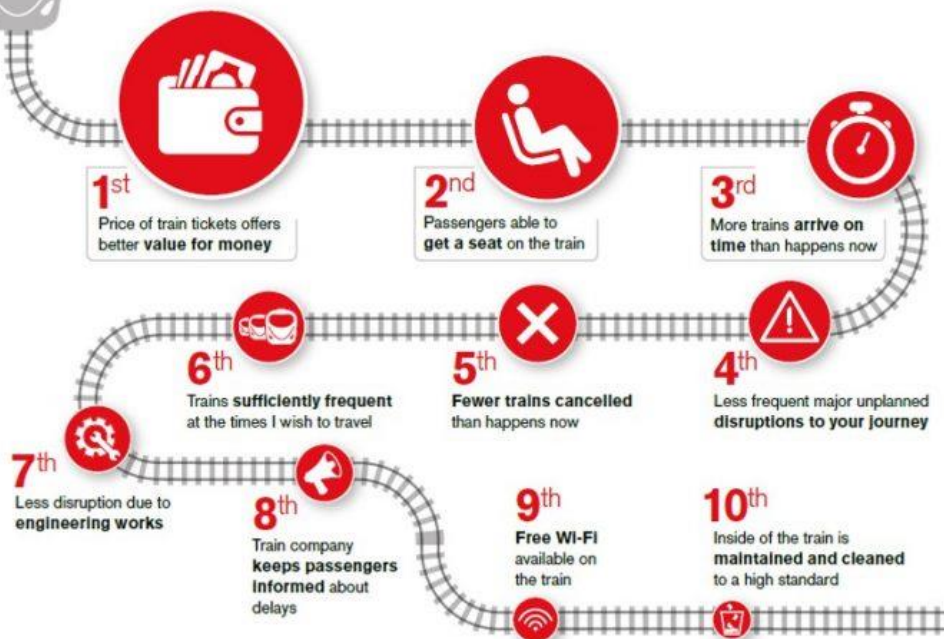
We remain open to continuing discussions with the RMT and TSSA and hope to find a solution as soon as possible.'

It's far too complicated to list all the changes due to Christmas and New Year bank holidays, and strike action, so train operators' websites and the National Rail Enquiry Service are the order of the day.

Rail passengers' priorities for improvement 2017



Red icon size relates to rail passengers' priorities for improvement. The larger the icon, the more important the priority.



Sample size **12,804**

How customers prioritise further areas for improvement

- Journey time is reduced
- Accurate and timely information available at stations
- Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train
- Accurate and timely information provided on trains
- Improved personal security on the train
- Connections with other train services are always good
- Good connections with other public transport at stations
- Easier to buy the right ticket
- Improved personal security at the station
- Seating area on train is more comfortable
- Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard
- More room to stand comfortably on busy trains
- Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude
- Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude
- Free Wi-Fi available at the station
- Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage
- More staff available at stations to help passengers
- More staff available on trains to help passengers
- Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free
- Easier to claim compensation when delayed
- Better mobile phone signal on trains



Malcolm Conway (in role as an elf), CRP Officer Kerstin Esbjornsson and Phil Wearing at Windermere station on 9th December, with the Sales Stand, as part of Northern's contribution to the Christmas Celebration there.