

AVRUG Annual General Meeting

Saltaire Methodist Church

Saturday 25th April 2015 at 14.00

Our AGM is coming up soon. It's the usual venue, Saltaire Methodist Church on Saturday April 25th at 14.00. The agenda is included as part of this newsletter. Please do come along to support us and, as ever, any offers of help will be welcomed. We will have a speaker from Northern Rail (Pete Myers) who may be able to tell us a little about current developments on the Airedale line, especially about the new stations at Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge.

Above all, we would like to hear from you. Please tell us what you need from the railway in Airedale – and what you would like us to do on your behalf.

Northern Rail—The Invitation To Tender

The invitation to tender has now been issued. It is for broadly the current Northern network (there are a few detail changes). The franchise start date has been put back two months to 1st April 2016 and the franchise will run for nine years, with an optional additional year at the end. Bids are to be submitted by 26th June 2015 and the new franchisee should be decided by December this year.

PACERS TO BE WITHDRAWN

Notable in the invitation is the clear requirement to eliminate Pacers. Automatic elimination is promised for any bid where “rolling stock plans include the use of vehicles without bogies after 31st December 2019”. This means that bidders have to develop plans to secure the use of substantial quantities of additional rolling stock by this date – both to transport existing passenger numbers and to cater for expected growth in traffic.

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NEW TRAINS

Part of the requirement will be met by the 120 new vehicles which the franchisee is required to procure. The requirement is that these will be self-propelled. That probably means diesel engines though battery powered vehicles could be a possibility (as recently trialled in a class '379' unit). There are however currently 214 Pacer vehicles in service with Northern. This leaves a substantial gap to be filled either with new or with cascaded trains.

ELECTRIFICATION PLANS

This is when uncertainty over progress on electrification is significant. There is a clear timetable for the North-Western electrification. The Chat Moss electrification through from Liverpool to Manchester is now complete (about three months behind schedule) and Northern is now operating most of the Liverpool to Manchester Airport service with cascaded class '319' units. Later this year electrification from Liverpool to Wigan will see further services operated with these electric trains. By early 2017 services from Manchester (and Liverpool) to Blackpool should be operated with electric units. This will free up a substantial number of Sprinter units to be used elsewhere on the network and may lead to the withdrawal of some Pacer units.

However, elsewhere, work on the Great Western electrification is said to be behind schedule. The lines to Newbury and Oxford were due to be electrified by the end of 2016 and Bristol and Cardiff by the end of 2017. Electrification here will free up substantial numbers of diesel trains which can be cascaded to the West Country, possibly freeing up diesel trains there to be transferred to the north. Delays to electrification here will delay any cascade of trains to Northern.

If this electrification were to be delayed by a year, as has been rumoured then there is likely to be a knock on effect on plans to electrify the Welsh Valley lines and the Trans-Pennine route. The uncertainty over future electrification has led the Department for Transport to ask bidders to base their proposals on the assumption that the Trans Pennine route will NOT be electrified during the new franchises. The TransPennine franchise is likely to still be using its Class 185 diesel units which will not then be available for possible use by Northern.

LONDON UNDERGROUND TRAINS

This uncertainty over the provision of rolling stock is the background to an interesting scheme developed by Vivarail to fit Ford diesel engines to redundant London Underground tube trains (the D78 stock which has been used on the District Lines). The promise is to produce trains that look and feel like new stock but at half the price. A demonstration unit is due to be unveiled in May and enough stock has been purchased to form 75 units in two to four car formations.

AND ELECTRIC TRAINS?

The main source of the additional electric trains for Northern appears to be the class 319 units that are currently used on the Thameslink services. They are little newer than the Pacers and Sprinters that they will replace but are reliable and pleasant trains. They bring considerably better acceleration than the diesels which they are displacing. Twenty of these four car units are due to be brought into service in the north-west during the current franchise.

Of more direct relevance to our train services is a clause in the small print of the invitation to tender. This makes it a requirement to lease the class '333' units which are used on Airedale until at least 24th July 2020. Given the small size of this fleet and the costs of training crews (if they were to be moved) it would appear that they are likely to remain in use on our train services. However, it is not clear where additional electric trains might come from, to provide the extra capacity which is required on our line.

TRAINS TO BE REFURBISHED

The invitation states that all trains are to be refurbished by 2020. They must be fitted with Wi-Fi and are all to have controlled emission toilets, unless their use is confined to "very short distance" services.

MOVING THE PASSENGERS

All these trains are of course required to move the expected passenger numbers across the north of England. The document includes forecast passenger numbers who are expected to commute into and out of the major northern cities. The bidders have to produce plans to transport these passenger numbers. Standing is to be restricted. Passengers should not have to stand for more than 20 minutes and each standing passenger should have 0.45 square metres standing space.

Capacity for existing stock has been calculated on this basis. For the '333' units on our line the acceptable number of standing passengers is 107 per four car unit. This reflects the limited space for standing. A number of our peak trains already have far higher numbers standing. This suggests that extra capacity will have to be provided – either through additional services or longer trains. It is for the bidders to produce the proposals as to how this will be done.

TRAIN SERVICES

In addition to the capacity requirement there is also a detailed train specification for train services from December 2017 and December 2019. This is set out on a series of spreadsheets. Inspection of the requirements suggests that they are, in the main, a restatement of the current timetable. Bidders are thus required to continue to run existing services. Additional services, above the specification, will ei-

ther have to be commercially viable or necessary to meet the capacity requirements.

There are however some useful enhancements that are required of bidders. In particular, on our patch:-

Sunday services are to be enhanced from December 2017. Both Bradford to Skipton and Bradford to Ilkley trains are to run every hour (currently every 2 hours)

An additional return Carlisle service is required from December 2019. It is to leave Leeds in the evening peak and provide a later return service from Carlisle.

Services on the line to Lancaster are to be considerably enhanced, also from December 2019. Seven return services are required (currently five). In practice there will need to be three additional services as the current very early Skipton departure is not included in the specification. A service must arrive in Lancaster between 08.00 and 09.00 and a later evening service is to be provided. In between the specification implies a roughly two-hourly service.

BOMBSHELL?

There is a potential bombshell in the requirement that from 2020 at least 50% of train mileage must have the train under full operational control of the driver. This move is strongly opposed by the RMT union. The invitation encourages the maintenance of customer facing staff on trains. This is however not a requirement – and we could see one person operated trains (as is common in continental Europe).

Our group sees benefits in giving drivers responsibility for operating train doors. We believe there is the potential for significant time savings at our frequent station stops. Conductors, freed from the requirement to operate doors, would be able to assist passengers – and revenue protection could be much more effective. We would like to see this enhanced role for on train staff, rather than one person operation of the trains.

BUT WILL IT ALL HAPPEN?

The invitation to tender is, in the main, a positive document. The crunch may however come when the bids are received. Will they be affordable? Whichever government is in power – following the May General election – there will be pressure to cut public spending. Will the bids be consistent with this – and if not then what next? It promises to be an 'interesting' year ahead!

Northern Rail—Current Developments

Electric services have now commenced between Liverpool and Manchester Airport, after several months delay to the electrification between Liverpool and Newton-le-Willows. The refurbished class '319' units look smart. Your chairman will try and get over for a ride when parish duties permit! On our patch, work has commenced on the two new stations at Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge. We understand that trains will be calling from the December 2015 timetable change.

East Coast Franchise

Virgin / Stagecoach are now operating the East Coast services. Stagecoach are the majority shareholder but the branding is all under the 'Virgin' name. Two hourly services to Bradford Forster Square are proposed later in the franchise. We have queried the focus on extra trains to Bradford (rather than Skipton) but have received no reply.

Time Table Changes

There were very few changes to our timetable in December. As usual there were a few minor adjustments, the kind of thing that can catch out the regular traveller.

There are likely to be some changes in May. We understand that timings will be adjusted to allow for Bradford trains to stop at the two new stations. We have not yet seen any details of the timetable.

Service News

Punctuality of train services has generally been good. The charter statistics for West Yorkshire (local trains) over the last 6 months show a consistent pattern. Over 99% of trains have run each month and around 96-97% of trains have been within 5 minutes of schedule when arriving at their destination. There was the usual dip in performance during the leaf fall season – however 99.5% of trains did run – and with 91.6% on time in the worst four week period (from October into November).

Airedale services have generally run well. Four of the class 322 units have been through the works. They have had a disabled access toilet fitted and have emerged in Northern livery. The fifth unit (322 485) is currently away. 333 007 is the first of our '333' units to be taken out of service for its major 1.25 million mile service (!). I did not see it in service between early November and 27th March and I understand there has been some delay with the refurbishment of the doors.

There have, inevitably, been a few disruptions.

On 23rd October there was substantial disruption after a person was struck by a train near Crossflatts

From 14th November there were signalling problems at Skipton which meant that the main platform (2) could not be accessed from the south. Trains were re-platformed but there were a few minor delays. It was about ten days before the fault was found and repaired.

Flooding at Crossflatts disrupted morning peak services on 19th December. Faults with the class 321 and 322 units led to cancellations of a number of peak services in mid December and again in the week commencing 19th January (after a unit failed at Shipley on the 19th)

A track fault at Menston on the morning of 5th February shut the Ilkley line for some hours and led to some disruption to Airedale services

1963: Rod Tickner looks back

I have been trawling through some old issues of the Railway Magazine (RM) again and 50 years on we can look back to the year of the Great train Robbery, which happened on 8th August and was referred to in the RM as "Mail Train Ambush". It was also the year of Dr Beeching's Report "Reshaping of British Railways."

The Railway magazine had two reshaping itself that year – the January issue had a quite dated appearance but a more modern appearance from February, but for the last two months not only did the price rise by 20% (from 2/6 to 3/-) but the page size changed with a coloured photograph on the front.

But it was a year of endings and beginnings.

Locally the following services were proposed for withdrawal in the Beeching Report:

Leeds City and Bradford Forster Square – Keighley- Skipton (local)

Leeds City Shipley-Bradford Forster Square (local)

Leeds City and Bradford Forster Square-Ilkley-Skipton

Carnforth-Wennington

Carlisle-Skipton

Earby – Barnoldswick

Lancaster Green Ayre-Heysham

From a diagram I once saw I recall that there would have been a single line from Leeds to Bingley, Keighley and Skipton with all lines beyond Skipton lifted as would have been the Ilkley branch and Forster Square lines.

British Transport Films (BTF) made a film of Dr Beeching which was shown widely to railway workers and others where he explained the “Reshaping” report and he demonstrated how despite a substantial reduction in route mileage that railways could retain 95% of their existing traffics. My view is that once the feeder services had to be bus or car, then the main line service was not taken up. Often the replacement bus services did not work that well or last that long. I found this film quite soporific.

The Railway Clearing House was disbanded, having been introduced in 1842 to co-ordinate booking of passengers and goods over the many differing companies. It had a number of other functions, but of course, its primary role ceased upon nationalisation in 1948. Effectively this has had to be recreated to allocate receipts to the various Train Operators who share routes!

Steam locomotives were being steadily withdrawn, too many to mention said one month’s report but 71000 Duke of Gloucester was specifically mentioned having only lasted 9 years in revenue earning service.

Alan Pegler bought the Flying Scotsman that year for £3,000: it was the first locomotive to officially reach 100 mph and at the time its record for London-Leeds of 2 hours 31 minutes was unbroken – our modern timings regularly do better.

The last steam locomotive was overhauled at Doncaster, Union of South Africa 60009 which returned to traffic on 6th November. Mallard was withdrawn that year but was immediately destined to be kept as a museum exhibit because of its status as the fastest recorded steam locomotive.

Aire Valley Rail Users’ Group

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the twenty fourth AGM held on Saturday 10th May 2014

at Saltaire Methodist Church Hall.

PRESENT

Eleven members were present.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Peter Allen, John Heaton, Jane Loomes, Andrew Noble, Keith Preston, Keith Renshaw and Simon Wood

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 27th April 2013

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed nem con as a correct record.

CHAIR’S REPORT

The last year has been fairly quiet; the franchise being extended very close to the deadline possibly indicating the closeness of contractual terms being negotiated. However this gives a feeling of a lot of things being ‘on pause’ until the new franchise is awarded in 2016: a sense of drift and lack of direction with no dates given for any improvements.

There have been some suggestions about restrictions on off-peak fares during the evening rush although there is nothing definitive.

However the committee has been working in the background, attending meetings and representing views to the industry, in particular comments were made on the Rail North Strategy document. Tim Calow has also been in discussion with the MP for Skipton.

On the line the trains have run well; the principal problem being trains from Carlisle being delayed by long standing speed restrictions, which are due to earthworks. Some of the class 321 and 322 units are not looking as good as they might.

Thanks are due to the various committee members: Roger Smith for the website, Marten Lougee for his representative work, Simon Wood for the newsletter, Keith Renshaw for membership matters and Rod Tickner for keeping an eye on the finances.

There are minor time table changes from May 18th, many trains will depart a minute earlier from Skipton than previously although other timings remain unaltered. It is noted that with the various changes over time it is no longer truly a clock face interval one. There will be an additional Trans Pennine service each hour giving five trains an hour between Manchester and Leeds although this will impact on local Calder Valley services. The Manchester – Scotland electric services changes will have an affect on connections.

The TPE class 170 units are being transferred to Chiltern Railways, which may lead to a demand for class 158 units from Northern. Northern Rail are finding it difficult to obtain EMUs for their north western services with only three class 319s at present although this should rise to 14 by 1915. There is also the question of how the Pacer stock can be made disability compliant by 2020 although one suggestion has been removal of the toilets but as there are few toilets on stations this could be problematic.

Next year will include consultation on the new franchise. Metro are hosting a briefing day on 17th June. Also AVRUG will be 25 years old and suggestions are required for suitable celebrations.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Rod presented the report with little of note: the main factor is subscription income varies from year to year as some members renew for two or three years at a time. Given the bank balance there is no need to change subscription figures. The level of donations is always a helpful bonus.

Agreed nem con that the report be accepted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following were proposed by John Holroyd, seconded by Malcolm Riley and agreed:

Chair	Tim Calow
Vice chair	Marten Lougee
Secretary	vacancy
Treasurer	Rod Tickner
Membership Secretary	Keith Renshaw
Newsletter Editor	Simon Wood

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

The following were proposed by Chris Young, seconded by Derek Wilson and agreed:

- Peter Bewes
- Andrew Noble
- Keith Preston
- Malcolm Riley
- Roger Smith

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Marten Lougee placed on record his thanks on behalf of the group to Tim Calow for his contribution to AVRUG.

Marten Lougee pointed out that with off-peak restrictions in the early evening this would mean tickets on service to and from Morecambe would not be feasible as off peak.

It was noted that in the latest Metro ten year plan a station at Cross Hills is mentioned.

Apperley and Kirkstall Forge stations are not expected to be ready until later in 2016 after the start of the new franchise.

Peter Bewes reported on Skipton Station.

It was noted that the ticket machine at Cononley gives information on the next four trains.

The lift is now installed at Bingley.

It was noted that the cheap travel on the S & C and Morecambe lines was not well promoted; this being of concern to FoSCL.

The idea of a commuter service from Oxenhope to Keighley on the KWVR was not proceeding. The generally poor connectivity between buses and trains in the Aire Valley was noted.

Noted that Drew Haley had left Northern and now chair of the S & C Development Company; his replacement at Northern was Pete Myers.

After refreshments discussions continued on aspirations for the new franchise and how to mark AVRUG's 25th anniversary.

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group

www.avrug.org.uk

Affiliated to RailFuture

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at Saltaire Methodist Church Hall

Saturday 25th April 2015

commencing at 1400 hours

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 24th AGM held on 10th May 2014
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of committee officers

Chair

Vice chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Newsletter editor

Membership secretary

7. Election of committee members
8. Any other competent business

Light refreshments will be served at 1445 hours before a talk from our guest speaker

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