



Leeds - Lancaster - Morecambe Community Rail Partnership

PRESS RELEASE 16.1

Hello to Arriva Rail North and thanks to Northern Rail

On April 1st it is all change for the local rail services as the new franchise for operating the local rail services across the North of England begins. The new company is Arriva Rail North, who already run the Welsh and Cross Country rail franchises, as well as a numerous bus services.

The eagle-eyed rail user will have noticed that during February and March the old Northern Rail branding has been steadily removed from stations and rolling stock, as the Serco and Abellio joint venture comes to an end.

Gerald Townson, Chairman of the Leeds, Lancaster & Morecambe Community Rail Partnership (CRP), which covers the Bentham Line, said, "We look forward to working with Arriva, during the new franchise, to help promote the services on the line and further develop links with the communities served by the line. Their proposals for the Bentham Line include numerous timetable improvements. From December 2017, the service between Leeds and Morecambe will increase from 5 to 7 or 8 trains in each direction Monday to Saturday and from 4 to 5 trains each way on Sundays. Commuting and later evening services are included in both directions. New rolling stock will be introduced which will allow us to say goodbye by 2019 to the outmoded four-wheeled Pacer diesel units which have 'noddled' along the line for 30 years. There are a lot of positive things in the pipeline for the communities on the route which we welcome."

Rod Tickner, from Keighley, press officer for the CRP, added, "Over the last eleven years with Northern Rail, a great deal has been achieved beyond what was originally meant to be a steady state franchise with no growth. Locally there have been consistent increases in patronage, with almost 500,000 journeys being made on the Bentham Line each year. We now have a year-round Sunday service whereas services only ran in the summer in the past. Northern Rail has positively and consistently supported the CRP and its projects and we would like to record our appreciation for all that has been achieved on the Bentham Line and elsewhere."

The Bentham Line serves the major stations in the Aire Valley to Skipton, traverses the Craven area, skirting the Forest of Bowland AONB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and passes through the Wenning and Lune Valleys to reach Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham Port.