



West Region Quarterly Report

ComREG Business Matters

12 December 2018

On behalf of



Community Rail Cumbria

- Cumbrian Coast Line
- Furness Line
- Lakes Line

CRL

Community Rail Lancashire

- South Fylde Line
- West of Lancashire Line



North Cheshire Community Rail Partnership



www.communityrailcumbria.co.uk

Recent Activities

Community Rail Development Strategy

The team was delighted to welcome newly appointed Rail Minister Andrew Jones to Millom last month for the launch of the Department for Transport's Community Rail Development Strategy.

During the visit the minister took a particular interest in speaking with staff and residents from Stanfield House engaged in the *Rail Journey to Recovery* initiative. We were also able to showcase Millom station and the range of initiatives now thriving within the original station building – all credit to the Trustees and staff. Although short, the visit enabled the Minister to see and travel through Cumbria first hand. Thanks to all involved in making the event such a success particularly Kul Bassi from the DfT who has been unstinting in his efforts to emphasise the importance and crucial role of Community Rail to other departments within government.



Carolyn Watson (Director, Communities & Sustainability, Northern), Tim Owen (Chairman, Furness Line CRP and Lakes Line CRP), Andrew Jones, Warren Birch (CRPO for Cumbrian Coast Line)

Millom Discovery Centre



Thanks to ACoRP DCRDF funding, plans are well underway to transform the Millom ticket office and café into a new Rail Marketing Centre. The café has recently undergone a major overhaul, expanding its capacity and already creating new employment – much needed in Millom! The ticket office has been moved to the main reception area, increasing sales in the gift shop and raising local awareness of previous CRP initiatives such as the Education Rail Room and Discovery Centre. Plans are well underway for an Easter launch of a range of rail marketing initiatives, including the production of promotional material based upon ACoRP's Scenic Rail Britain initiative, an active marketing role for staff, and video presentations of scenic railway journeys throughout the UK.

Friends of Askam Station have resurrected a project with spectacular results. The group had previously received some funding from the Local Committee for a small station project but following support from Community Rail, Northern (Arriva), and the Parish Council a more ambitious project was realised. The station platform now has the addition of replica railway benches; a concentric path leading to the garden area and various interpretation boards giving visitors and rail users a potted history of the villages of Askam & Ireleth. The station is a lovely place to enjoy the stunning views up the Duddon Estuary and the project has enhanced the station with charming and well-designed additions to the station platform.



Friends of Foxfield Station is a small group which includes two Network Rail staff. The group worked for two consecutive days under the expert tuition of a qualified carpenter, resulting in two generously sized treated timber planters being produced. Once dried out and coated with coloured preservative, these planters will enhance the island platform at Foxfield station for years to come.



Forthcoming Activities

Date	Activity
11 December	Lakes Line Community Rail Partnership meeting
12 December	ComREG Business Matters
13 December	Furness Line Community Rail Partnership meeting
16 December	Virgin Rail Christmas Event at Carlisle Station
11 January	Cumbria Better Connected
11 January	Ulverston Healthy Town Group
30 January	Cumbrian Coast Line Community Rail Partnership meeting
16 January	Sandgate School Rail Safety Session

23 January	Northern-Cumbrian Coast Rail User Group Liaison meeting
5 March	Lakes Line Community Rail Partnership meeting
11-12 March	ACoRP Community Rail Conference

Developments

Broken Lives Mended

In response to requests for more information regarding how Community Rail has successfully improved the lives of people undergoing rehab for alcohol and substance abuse, filming is underway for a sequel to the original video titled 'The Rail Journey to Recovery'. This new production, called *Broken Lives Mended* focuses on individual stories of addiction and highlights the prominent role Community Rail has played in their own recovery process. This new video, scheduled for launch in March 2019, will be supported by a comprehensive brochure depicting the project in entirety and containing information about how CRP's can reach out to – and support - marginalised communities.

The Edge of Empire

Compilation and design of storyboards depicting the role Roman history has played in Maryport's heritage are now complete, accompanied by a very enthusiastic reception from stakeholders and local community representatives alike. Installation on the platform is integral with other improvement works, but the original target date has been delayed by Network Rail consents, meaning final completion of this highly-significant project will now roll over into the New Year. Owing to the project's significance, a range of publicity events are in course of preparation.

Sandgate School

Kerstin has been re-connecting with Sandgate School and plans are being reinvigorated to develop independent travel opportunities for sixth form students living with physical and mental special needs. An initial rail safety session is scheduled for January involving colleagues from Northern and Network Rail. A review of the project plan is underway and a funding bid being drafted.

May 2018 Timetable – Recovery/ Marketing Plans

The team continues to work closely with Northern and Cumbria Tourism on developing plans for rebuilding confidence in the railway network. Cumbria Tourism has appointed Gemma Proctor (former project lead for the GoLakes initiative) to develop their plans for a travel campaign. However, due to ongoing issues such as RMT industrial action and continued operational problems, a focussed marketing and promotions campaign is still on hold. Discussions are also underway for options to offer discounted rail fares and other potential benefits which will help to attract local people back onto the train.

Energy Coast Rail Upgrade

Cumbria LEP's Strategic Outline Business Case for upgrades to the Cumbrian Coast Line, a project so vital to economic and social development in West Cumbria, was due to receive approval last month by Network Rail's Investment Panel. The news that Toshiba was pulling out of the scheme to build a new nuclear power station at a site adjacent to the Sellafield complex delayed the decision process. The business case is currently being reviewed although the Benefit Cost Ratio has remained the same. The case will be resubmitted to DfT following discussions at an investment Panel later this month.

Morecambe Bay Partnership

Morecambe Bay Partnership (MBP) was delighted to announce (on 27 November) the award of a £50,000 grant from the Coastal Revival Fund for feasibility studies into the foot/cycle bridge over the Kent Viaduct at Arnside and the economic value of the wider route from Morecambe to Barrow. Plans have been underway for several years to create a foot/cycle bridge extending from Arnside Promenade across the viaduct to form an iconic link in a long-distance coastal route from Morecambe to Barrow. The Furness Line CRP will be liaising with MBP to shape plans.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/revival-fund-to-save-coastal-heritage-sites-for-future-generations>

Issues

- Continued under performance along the Furness Line particularly is increasingly undermining the team's ability to effectively meet its constitutional objectives. A prime example, raised with Chris Jackson, Regional Director, West, was the recent experience of a young lady who attended a job interview at a local care home. During the course of the interview it had been reluctantly agreed that the reliability of the local train service fell short of what was required to get her to work. The interview panel was not prepared to offer her a job if she was reliant on the rail service - she doesn't have a car or other means of transport and therefore did not get the job.
- Network Rail and footbridge refurbishments
CRC submitted an "observational report" on the passenger footbridges in Cumbria to Network Rail on 2 March 2017 asking for a programme setting out plans for refurbishment. Photographs and narratives described the extremely unsightly and in places, unsafe, condition of many of our bridges. Confirmation was given that works would be carried out on Wigton bridge during the course of 2017/18 and others would be attended to in CP6. Disappointingly, no works have yet been started. Notwithstanding the structural damage which occurs as result of this continued negligence, this approach also undermines the outstanding efforts of our many volunteers who work hard to transform and maintain our stations. CRC seeks a realistic programme of refurbishment works for the passenger footbridges on a planned basis not just a reaction to safety incidents.
- Ongoing issues being raised with Northern regarding the lack of and inaccurate information given to passengers.

Recent Activities

- Six Silent Soldier silhouettes, affectionately known as **'Tommies'** were featured on St Anne's Station from 31st October to 18th November. These were unveiled by the town's Mayor



Councillor Karen Henshaw and the event was overseen by Town Crier Colin Ballard. The unveiling was timed to coincide with the arrival of a train and as luck would have it the driver was offered cakes and biscuits as the passengers boarded.

The planters offered some seasonal colour and contained artificial poppies. The event was well supported by representatives from Northern Rail and several members from other stations along the South Fylde Line joined us on the day.

The silhouettes and the base planters, supported by Northern Rail's Station Adoption Fund will be used again to commemorate Remembrance events in future years.



- New planters and seating were installed at Squires Gate Station in November. Part-funded by Northern Rail and a grant from the *Designated Community Rail Development Fund* (DCRDF) The planters were sourced by CRL working with Ark Plastics.

The paired planters include a bench with a back rest and are made locally in Accrington from recycled plastic.



- A meeting of all the Friends Groups along the line was successful. A briefing about expectations, grants and activities by Community Rail Officer Simon Clarke was well-received and information sharing about who to contact about what and how was very useful. Common problems were identified and will be forward to the relevant providers. Ideas were exchanged about 'whole line' activities taking place on a particular day or celebrating/commemorating an event.

- There are plans to meet again in the new year hopefully with different guest speakers giving an insight into their roles along the South Fylde Line.
- At the time of compiling this report (end of November), pupils from Pear Tree School in Kirkham are taking part in a 3-day programme 'On Track to Train'.

Forthcoming Activities

- Friends groups along the line are undertaking some research about the history of their stations with a view to putting poster displays together to include old photos. Ansdell have already undertaken some similar work and the Friends Groups see value in raising awareness of the line's history and its stations.



Developments

- A Station Friends Group is close to being formed at Squires Gate station and discussions have taken place about the issuing of a licence for the redundant land opposite the station. A leaflet drop is planned in order to recruit more volunteers.
- Discussions continue with the developer of an adjacent housing estate and the local council about the provision of step-free access to the station. Not only will this development offer easier access for those experiencing mobility issues, but it will make it more convenient for residents of the 400 planned homes to access the station.
- The Enterprise Zone partnership and the new Energy college are being encouraged to contribute signage to the station along the lines of 'Alight here for as a way of encouraging increased use of the station.
- CCTV cabling and fittings have just appeared on several stations along the line it looks as though the route will be well-monitored in the very near future! Great news!

Issues

1. Continued poor service levels along the SFL, partly blamed on unit failures as a result of leaves on the line. No one remembers leaves on the line ever causing this level of disruption in the past.
2. Services cancelled – see above
3. Services not completing their route, being turned back at St Anne's leaving passengers high and dry at Squires Gate, Pleasure Beach and Blackpool South stations.

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4. Late running trains caused by the the very tight diagram involving Colne, Ormskirk, Preston & Blackpool South.
5. Some trains have called at stations in one direction only 'scooping up' passengers on route to Blackpool South, then running 'fast' on the return journey, not stopping, leaving passengers, who had arrived at the station within a reasonable time and expectation of catching their train as per the published timetable somewhat bewildered as the trains cruised through.
6. Passengers, both regular and incidental are losing faith and confidence in the service. Anecdotal evidence as well as comments from rail users to Friends group working at the stations tell the story of potential passengers making alternative arrangements for journeys – switching to taxis to get to Manchester Airport & Manchester rather than risking an unreliable rail service.
7. Reputational damage continues and needs to be addressed through better signage, information and communication.



West of Lancashire Community Rail Partnership

Overview:

Preston to Ormskirk

This has been a frustrating period for the West of Lancashire CRP as the service has been a mix trains and bus following the meltdown after the introduction of the May timetable. Even today one return trip in the middle of the day remains a bus replacement.

Confidence in the service has been severely affected and the on-going industrial relations issues means that the service is now only operating on 5 days a week as there is no Saturday bus replacement for passengers on this line and of course it remains one of the very few Northern lines without a Sunday service.

The immediate impact of the current situation is that our marketing campaign for the line 'Make a Bee Line for the Station' has had to be suspended. It was just about to be launched when everything went wrong!! As soon as we have a full service on the line for 6 days a week the CRP will look to reinvigorate this campaign.

Undaunted though the station partnerships along the line continue to develop their plans and ideas for their stations. Croston station has been a delight all summer as the picture below illustrates. **The Friends of Croston** station work hard on both the used and unused platforms at the station.



The new Rufford group is also working up plans for attractive displays at the station and signage to show how to get to nearby Rufford Old Hall. The attractive displays on the disused platform at Burscough Junction have been part of a much bigger project which Daisy Chapman-Chamberlain has reported on in previous educational updates to ComREG.

Wigan to Southport

A key issue for users along this line has been the reestablishment of train services to south Manchester. From the May timetable change 2 peak trains from Southport and the reverse in the evening from Manchester have been introduced. Northern are developing plans to incrementally improve this and it is anticipated that a full hourly service to south Manchester will be reinstated.

The line has a number of active station partnerships and the picture below illustrates the work that has taken place at Parbold.



As Daisy picks up in the education report we are looking to develop educational projects along this line building on the excellent relationship that has been developed at Southport with Merseyrail.

Key issues:

1. The on-going bus replacement of services between Preston and Ormskirk.
2. The impact of the temporary timetables on passenger confidence in the line - the buses take nearly twice as long as the train to travel between Preston and Ormskirk.
3. The impact on passenger numbers of the on-going timetable and industrial relations issues.
4. The delay in Network Rail issuing a licence for the group working on the disused platform at Burscough Junction.



Recent Activities

- In September NCCRP participated in the Heritage Open Days project and opened doors to the station building at Ellesmere Port station.
- In October we held a volunteer day at Ellesmere Port station. Together with our colleagues from Network Rail, Merseyrail and Cheshire West and Chester Council we transformed an overgrown garden outside of the station. Please see photos BEFORE and AFTER below:



The work will continue in the garden in spring 2019.

- We took year 2 pupils from Westminster Community Primary School in Ellesmere Port to see a mock-up of the new Merseyrail train in Liverpool City Centre. The children enjoyed the trip.
- On 9th November a Remembrance service was held at Little Sutton station.



Forthcoming Activities

- Community Rail in the City 2019

Developments

Work continues on:

- the CRP's website and publicity;
- line plan development;
- Community engagement in Ince and Elton;
- Marketing campaign for Halton Curve;
- Little Sutton station restoration project.

Issues

- New Halton Curve services from Chester to Liverpool have been deferred until May 2019 due to the rolling stock issues.
- Transport for Wales, new franchisee for our line are not currently engaging with the CRP or rail user groups on our network.
- Lack of services between Ellesmere Port and Helsby stations. This part of the line is operated by Northern, there are currently three services a day with no return trains. NCCRP are looking into carrying out a feasibility study for the area in order to build a business case for the improvements on the line.