



## Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership Chairman's Report - Summer 2019

This is my fifth summer report as chairman and covers the period from July 2018 until now. I propose to outline the major developments for the partnership during the past twelve months in this summer report. It is now on into its fourteenth year of working with the train operating companies in the North of England (the fourth year with Arriva Rail North Ltd.) and the communities and organisations along the Bentham Line. This report reflects on a further very busy and rewarding year for the partnership.

The main funders of the partnership remain Arriva Rail North Ltd., along with XC Trains Ltd, the London, North Eastern Railway and North Yorkshire County Council.

**Northern** have maintained an all round positive interest in the work of the partnership and have provided additional support through one of their year-in-industry students, Hannah Charlton. Their students and apprentices have also been participating in the projects on the line.

**CrossCountry Trains** continue to take a genuine interest in the work of the partnership, in particular the Dementia and Community Rail Project.

Meetings have taken place with the previous communities manager at **LNER**. I hope this will continue to develop with the new post holder.

The partnership also maintains stakeholder contact with **TransPennine Express** as we have service links at both Leeds and Lancaster.

### The Train Naming

The CRP's work on the Dementia and Community Rail project had previously encouraged Northern to create a video for all their staff to assist them with passengers who are living with dementia and other hidden disabilities. During the second half of 2018 they rose positively to the challenge of decorating and naming a diesel unit to act as a roving ambassador for the project.

Bedecked inside and out with forget-me-nots and the Bentham line logo, the Class 150 unit was named 'The Bentham Line - A Dementia-friendly Railway' on January 23rd. Peter Wilkinson, Managing Director of Passenger Services at the Department for Transport undertook the naming and was generous in his praise for the work being undertaken on the line and how it supported the ideas behind the new Community Rail Strategy.

Peter and the other guests, including people living with dementia and their carers and supporters, then travelled to Bentham on the freshly decorated unit to unveil a new piece of art at the station and to record elements of the new strategy video.

Undoubtedly, this was a very proud day for the partnership and, especially, those involved in this ground-breaking project and, clearly the highlight of the past year.

## **Tickets and Fares**

The tickets gates at Skipton, now in their third year, continue to be good 'fare trappers' and the understanding gate-line staff remain a positive asset. Revenue teams at the West Yorkshire stations offer understanding too. Further improvements in consistency in issuing and checking tickets on trains would help. The vast majority of conductor-guards approach this conscientiously but sadly a few others are less thorough. Ticket machines have yet to be installed at the rural stations.

The 'off-peak' and 'advance' fares have been appreciated and well used by passengers since their introduction in autumn 2016. The number of tickets presented on mobile devices continues to rise and is now very noticeable on all services.

The partnership and local rail users' groups feel there is still a need for promotional fares for families travelling together and for 'excursion fares' being made available to all to selected destinations at various times of year; possibly Morecambe and South Cumbria during the summer and city visits in spring and autumn. It would also be a positive move to introduce a 'day rover' ticket for the line.

The Dales Railcard continues to be available to local residents for £10.00 per year and again the associated flat-rate winter fare was £7.00. As an example, this benefits Bentham passengers travelling to Keighley and beyond but is no bonus for anyone heading westwards from Bentham.

## **Timetable**

The implementation of the May 2019 enhanced timetable has been challenging with continued pressure to find appropriate slots at Leeds, along the Aire Valley and between Carnforth and Lancaster. The latter of pinch points can have a detrimental effect on the line's punctuality.

With the introduction of the 07:20 service from Leeds to Lancaster and the 09:41 Lancaster to Leeds there are now 8 services in each direction Mondays to Saturdays. There continues to be 5 services each way on Sundays, however, in the May 2019 timetable these were terminated at and started back from Lancaster with onward connections to and from Morecambe. Sadly, the eastbound connections are poor.

Connections at Carnforth to and from the Furness Line are now good for all Bentham Line services and there are an increasing range of connections for the rest of the UK at Lancaster and Leeds. The 21:30 service from Lancaster to Skipton now connects into the last service from Skipton to Leeds at 22:47.

The mean (average) service interval is now 2 hours and 5 minutes, though there remain some 3-hour gaps in services in each direction. Overall, there is a fairly regular clock-face appearance to the timetable for most of each day.

Clearly, there is further work to be done on the timetable to get it to the full service intended by December 2019. The early morning services from Leeds to Morecambe and return now need to be moved 30 minutes earlier to provide a commuting opportunity into Lancaster, and through services to and from Morecambe need to be reinstated on Sundays.

Whilst timetable consultations are improving they need to take place much earlier and definitely before the timetable is submitted by Northern to Network Rail.

Over the past few months there has been an increase in the number of refurbished Class 150 units on the Bentham Line, though Pacers continue to be used on many services. The partnership continues to press for at least a Class 158 standard of service.

The timetable improvements have brought an increase in passengers, particularly at the more rural stations on the line and on the daytime services, and with the industrial dispute suspended a good degree of regularity has returned to the line.

### **Community Rail Officers**

Catherine Huddleston has now been with us as our partnership officer for 45 months. She continues to build the range of contacts for the partnership, both on and beyond the railway, and remains keen to build her knowledge of the rail industry. During the past year Catherine has promoted the partnership and its activities widely on Facebook, Linked-In and Twitter, and has monitored carefully the resulting public engagement. The wide range of social media posts cover everything from train service disruption to promoting the CRP's work and activities. She is presently working on posts to promote travel on our enhanced services both on and beyond the line.

Catherine is an enthusiastic member of Women in Community Rail and keeps up-to-date with all the latest developments in community rail by regularly attending conferences and seminars. She has a keen interest in the dementia project and has developed a host of contacts in that sphere.

She is currently working on an art project with Lancaster and Morecambe and Craven Colleges on a station art panel project to reflect 'Community Life'.

Simon Clarke, of Community Rail Lancashire Ltd., has been able to continue to offer his development officer services to the CRP for a half day per week, in particular, through his work on the CRP website and his expertise in the railway industry, as well as supporting a number of activities.

One of Northern's year-in-industry students, Hannah Charlton, has also been working with the CRP over the past year on various tasks and on the Dementia project in particular.

During the first few months of 2019, I was pleased that Brian Haworth kindly volunteered his free time to help the Bentham Line with the students and apprentices projects.

This spring the directors of the partnership took the decision to employ a second part-time CRPO for one year, as a result of the increased demands on Catherine and myself, with the partnership and its projects continuing to develop and grow.

As of 1st July, Brian took up the new 22-hour part-time post and he, Catherine and myself have already begun developing plans for the work ahead.

### **Dementia and Community Rail Project**

The project has brought together a positive development team, with members of the Alzheimer's Society, Northern, CrossCountry, ACoRP, the Forest of Bowland AONB and Dementia Friendly Keighley joining the CRP on a monthly basis to progress the project.

The CRP developed a 2-hour dementia awareness package with supporting materials which has now been very successfully presented over 25 times to more than 250 participants, by the partnerships 3 dementia friends champions, Rod, Catherine and myself. Those attending have included front-line staff, station adopters, TOC management, directors, transport executives, CRP officers, BTP officers, university students, apprentices and pupils undertaking National Citizens Service. The most recent sessions have been held at Leeds station and at the SYPT in Sheffield.

As well as Northern, the CRP has engaged with Network Rail at Leeds, CrossCountry, Grand Central, TransPennine Express, LNER, Transport for Wales, Transport for Scotland and several

other CRPs including the Tyne Valley, the Penistone Line, the Cambrian Coast Line, Community Rail Lancashire and Cumbria.

The partnership, supported by Northern, has now organised and accompanied several dementia group visits to Morecambe and the Birch Hills Trail in the Forest of bowling AONB. With guests coming from Keighley, Shipley, Brighouse, Skipton and Bentham to enjoy afternoon tea at the Midland Hotel, have a picnic with Eric or bird watching and a woodland walk. More group visits are being planned throughout this summer.

During the second half of 2019, the CRP worked on an art project linked to the dementia project called 'A Window on Bowland and The Dales', in association with Pioneer Projects who are based at the Looking Well arts centre in Bentham. The participants in the 'Making Art' group were ten local people who are living with dementia who were supported by individual volunteers. The words and pictures they created were turned into a major stained glass-style illuminated artwork for Bentham station and a series of posters for the line by professional artist, Alastair Nicholson. The artwork was unveiled by Peter Wilkinson during his visit to the line in January. The group also visited the station later in the month to view their work and enjoy afternoon tea.

### **Engagement with Young People**

For the first time, over the past year, the partnership has been working with Northern's young apprentices and year-in-industry students. All have visited Bentham to receive an introduction to community rail, CRPs and station adoption. The vast majority have also participated in a dementia awareness session.

The first year engineering students, who are based at Myerscough College near Preston, come from Northern's 4 maintenance depots, are working on a sculpture for the line; a project called 'Crossing the Border' based on the line-side markers from the steam era.

The year-in-industry students have been developing the 'Sheep on the Line' project focused on rail safety, railway and local history and art activities. The students produced their own supporting materials and made their own contacts with schools. The east group worked with Cononley Primary School and those in the west supported Carnforth North Road Community Primary School. Both groups offered initial presentations in their respective schools, followed by visits to Saltaire and Salts Mill or Carnforth Heritage Centre. Everyone, teachers and support staff included, worked on creating large safety sheep artworks which are about to be presented to the schools have been framed. Large copies of the sheep, printed onto dibond will be installed at the local stations next week.

To see the pupils interact constructively with the students was a great delight and the events proved to be very positive experiences for all concerned.

### **Marketing**

The Joint Marketing Team meets quarterly with Northern to progress the promotion of the line and associated activities. The team have also covered the promotion of the dementia project.

The main challenge remains the much wider marketing of the line beyond the Northern network. To this end, the partnership has continued to contribute to ACoRP's work on Scenic Rail Britain, including their website, and helped again with the campaign this May, as part of our Community Rail in the City event at Lancaster.

Following the publication of a new 5-year Yorkshire Dales National Park Plan the CRP invited them along to a marketing meeting share ideas on the promotion of the rline and national park. These included gateway stations and walking and cycling initiatives.

New circular Rail to Trail walks have recently been published for Lancaster and Morecambe; others are in the pipeline. A new line guide is about to be published in the form of a z-card; it folds up small. Northern have once again supported the partnership with poster campaigns for the Dales Railcard winter offer.

Northern ran a social media campaign to complement the work of the CRP during Dementia Action Week in May and to follow up on the promotion surrounding the train naming in January. The latter was widely reported in the press across the North and through rail sources, and seen on regional television news programmes.

## **Station Adoption**

**Morecambe Bloomers** who are the adopters at **Morecambe** station have continued to expand their range of container gardens, with new planters on the platform and along the entrance railings.

The **Lancaster and District Conservation Volunteers (LDCV)**, who adopt **Bare Lane** station, have further extended their gardens and planters and have now developed the area to the rear of platform 2 where the signal box once stood. They have further developed their series of information panels and poster cases giving both information about the group and the history of the station information. Some Midland Railway replica signage has also been installed. Again this year the group has worked with the local primary school.

A couple, living close to **Clapham** station, have adopted the station and have already introduced planters on both platforms with the support of the partnership. They have also engaged with the parish council with a view to securing further funding and the interest of other parties in the village and are looking to develop artwork for the station with a local artist and the village primary school.

The community-orientated volunteer group at **Bingley** station has also adopted the station at nearby **Crossflatts**. Planters have been introduced at both stations and heritage signage restored at Bingley. Their unique barge-shaped planter at Bingley reflects the town's close association with the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, as do the two new large display panels developed in association with the Canal and River Trust. Book exchanges have been established in both waiting rooms. Bentham Line and line and

The LMCRP remains keen to see that local groups with a genuine local community interest adopt the stations along the Bentham Line and is happy to support such groups alongside Northern.

## **Bentham Station - A Community Station**

The station continues to be a focal point for, and a window on, the community. Local minibuses continue to be based at, and operate from, the station and the Bentham News group continue to hold their thrice monthly meetings and recording sessions in the building. In addition, their newsletter is distributed from the station. The Extra Care Group also make use of the meeting room and the Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group, LASRUG, hold bimonthly meetings at the station. There are other one-off users.

The LMCRP and FOBS are founding members of the Bentham and District Dementia-Friendly Community and are represented on the panel of trustees. Using the LMCRP dementia project and the work of others locally, as a starting point, representatives from a variety of local organisations and voluntary groups are developing a dementia-friendly approach to services and activities throughout the town. FOBS were recently presented with a certificate to mark their dementia-friendly approach at the station.

Last year the partnership acquired the services of a local cleaner/handyman. He keeps the facilities throughout the station building and the outside appearance looking good.

The volunteers of FOBS continue to develop new ideas to move the station forwards and have recently twinned the station toilet with one in Santa Clara La laguna in Guatemala. A scheme designed to support water and hygiene initiatives in developing countries.

FOBS used the funds raised at their annual coffee morning in January to purchase a water bottle fountain for the station waiting room and installed it themselves. This is part of the national 'Refill' project.

Some 20 businesses and voluntary groups participate in the planter sponsorship scheme and Bloomin' Bentham continue their successful gardening endeavours at the station into their tenth year.

They await confirmation of a Northern station improvement grant for the adventurous plans they submitted to the partnership, Northern and Network Rail an adventurous plan to make Bentham the first totally 'green-energy' station with a 30-panel photovoltaic array. The project also includes charging points for cars and bicycles.

FOBS held their seventh anniversary bash in September 2018 with guests from across the north, including a contingent from their 'twins', Myholmroyd Station Partnership. Framed copies of the newly designed art deco-style line posters and dementia posters were presented. FOBS visited Myholmroyd later that month, where a pie and peas lunch was served and enjoyed. They were presented with a framed Tour de Yorkshire print by the local artist.

## **In Conclusion**

My sincere thanks go to the directors, management committee members, Northern, CrossCountry, Network Rail, rail user group members, friends groups, station adopters, sponsors and the many additional volunteers who have together contributed a vast amount of time to developing the Bentham Line and enhancing its stations, as well as helping to secure a brighter future for the line with a considerable emphasis on the communities it serves.

May I offer my personal thanks to Catherine Huddleston (CPRO), David Alder (Treasurer) and Simon Clarke (CRDO and Secretary) for their unstinting support and help with all the ideas and schemes. My sincere thanks go to Rod Tickner, the vice chairman, for his regular press releases and, above all, his invaluable support of the partnership's Dementia and Community Rail project.

My thanks also to Pete Myers, Richard Isaac and Lyndsay McCartney of Northern who have continued to positively support the work of the partnership.

The partnership was formed in April 2006 and has been 'designated' since October 2012. Having welcomed the new Community Rail Strategy last November, we now look forward to gaining 'accreditation' from the Department for Transport in October.

Gerald Townson

Chairman, LMCRP Co. Ltd.