

# **HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 14**

## **1. New Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport - from Harrogate!**

We were delighted to learn that our local MP Andrew Jones has just been appointed as a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport with ministerial responsibility for the following aspects of the Department for Transport's wide portfolio:

- Northern Powerhouse, including Northern and TransPennine Express franchises
- environment
- Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV)
- connected vehicles
- technology and innovation
- freight and logistics
- national roads and Highways England
- bus policy
- local transport, including roads, local majors, and Local Sustainable Transport Fund
- city growth deals
- smart ticketing
- road safety

Following Andrew's recent leadership of the Northern Electrification Task Force we naturally hope that he will be able to persuade his Treasury colleagues to provide the essential funding for the detailed design work and subsequent construction of the overhead electric wires for the Harrogate Line.

We shall invite Andrew to speak to a future Chamber Meeting on rail and road developments in this area. All members of this Supporters' Group will be invited.

## **2. London-Harrogate Direct InterCity Express Programme Trains**

Virgin Trains East Coast have confirmed that the new IEP trains are scheduled to be operating a direct Harrogate to London Kings Cross service via Leeds from May 2019 six or seven times a day each way seven days a week. The average end-to-end journey time will be 2 hours 40 minutes. We do not yet have the exact timetable, but we are optimistic of an earlier morning southbound service arriving in Kings Cross around 09.00 and a new morning northbound service arriving into Harrogate between 10.40 and 11.40.

We have been informed that TWO of the new Hitachi 800 series bi-mode IEP trains are now operating on a test track in the region. I hope to be invited by Virgin Trains East Coast to join other stakeholders on an overnight demonstration run on the ECML in the near future.

Many of the former East Coast personnel have transferred to Virgin Trains East Coast, including Neil Smith, Head of Communications who is keen to maintain close contact with stakeholders like the Harrogate Line Supporters Group. I can therefore submit any questions you may have for a personal reply.

We are also very pleased to welcome back on to the East Coast Main Line the former Managing Director of East Coast Trains, Karen Boswell, who has just been appointed a Managing Director of Hitachi Rail Europe, the company building the new trains, initially in Japan but ultimately at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham.

## **3. Train Crash at Flaxby on the Harrogate Line**

At about 18.30 on Thursday 14th May a Northern Rail train from Harrogate to York collided with a tractor on a farm track crossing at Flaxby, near Knaresborough. The tractor was virtually chopped in half! The driver was air-lifted to hospital by helicopter. No passengers or train crew were injured. The A59 was closed in both directions for about 1.5 hours causing severe traffic disruption. Subsequent comments by the British Transport Police indicated that this crossing had been the scene of several "near-misses" in recent years. This accident will no doubt lead to renewed calls from Network Rail and the British Transport Police for the closure of such farm crossings as part of the upgrading and resignalling of the line between Harrogate and York, as has already been done between Leeds and Harrogate.

The Transport Police stated that they have been called out to 30 incidents at crossings on the Harrogate line over the past 12 months. In 2014 there were nine recorded instances of this particular crossing being "misused" and in one case it was a "near miss" when the train driver was forced to apply the emergency brake, according to Network Rail.

Misuse most commonly relates to motorists ignoring warnings before crossing or crossing without requesting the signaller's permission. It also includes children playing on the line. Network Rail has closed 900 crossings nationally over the last few years and aims to shut at least another 250 of the 6,300 on the network in a drive to improve safety. Aidan Nelson, who used to be in charge of the York to Harrogate line for British Rail, said the crossing should be closed because *"In the year to November there were nine incidents reported for this level crossing, The best level crossing is a closed level crossing."*

#### **4. New Car Parking Charges at Pannal Station**

We were surprised to learn that Northern Rail are now charging £2 per day to park cars on the western side of the line at Pannal Station near the Coop Store (formerly The Harewood). When I challenged the management I was informed that this was one of a number of their Stations where they were introducing charges in response to the Government's economic conditions for the short terms extension of their Northern Franchise. I protested that this policy was directly contrary to the previously agreed aim of increasing patronage on the Harrogate Line, which formed the basis of the Business Case for electrification.

I suggested that most people who could easily walk or cycle to a Station are most likely already doing so, and hence the only way to attract more passengers to get out of their cars and use the trains was to provide more convenient free car parking at all Stations along the line. Harrogate Borough Council has previously agreed to undertake a study of potential extra car parking capacity at all Stations along the line within Harrogate District. Clearly it is important that this action plan is implemented urgently so that planning protection is applied to potential sites pending funding for the construction of suitable car parks - which should be free for rail users - NOT chargeable by the train operators.

The eastern side of the line near the former Dunlopillo site is controlled by Harrogate Borough Council and this remains free - but it is not large enough to meet the demand! When planning consent was granted for the redevelopment of the former Dunlopillo site, one condition was the provision of more park and ride space near to the Leeds-bound platform. Does anyone know when this will be constructed?

DO YOU KNOW ANY LAND NEAR THE LINE THAT WOULD MAKE A SUITABLE CAR PARK? Please send me full details of the location and if possible the owners of the land.

#### **5. D78 London Metropolitan Line Underground Trains get a new lease of life!**

Founder members of the Harrogate Line supporters group may recall that Mark Leving first discovered that London Underground were planning to replace all their D78 Metropolitan and District Line trains and replace them with new S-stock. These electric trains operated on 750v DC supplied via a ground level third rail conductor. These trains otherwise met the gauge specifications for main-line trains.

As we had been told that there was no prospect of overhead electrification of the Harrogate Line, we researched the feasibility of installing the third rail system as the basis for a higher frequency higher quality service. However there were significant technical issues around circuit isolation and safety. When the Government announced the planned 25kV overhead electrification of the Trans-Pennine route, the logical solution was to push for extension of overhead electrification to include the Harrogate Line as both ends of the Line in Leeds and York would have adequate power supplies for our line.

We were therefore pleased to see that the D78s are being given a new lease of life by conversion into diesel powered electric trains by a new company, Vivarail, run by Adrian Shooter, the former Chairman of Chiltern Railways. Announcing the new scheme Adrian said: *"We're keeping the basic body shell to which will be added modern state of the art traction, braking equipment, engine and other transmission. The modified trains will be a third cheaper than new ones and bringing them north would provide extra seats"*.

There have been criticisms from the RMT rail union and others that the plan amounts to running

"London's cast-offs" on heavy rail routes that deserve newer trains, but Vivarail notes that the 'flexible frame' bogies are barely 10 years old, and promises: new engines and generators; new auxiliary equipment; new traction control systems; new national rail safety systems; a new cab structure; new gangways; new lighting; new or refurbished interiors, based on client requirements; upcycled corrosion-free aluminum body shells; and upcycled 'nearly-new' bogies.

The company has contracted Revolve (Brentwood, Essex) to supply the diesel power modules, and Strukton (Holland), to supply the insulated-gate bipolar transistor (IGBT), which controls the traction motors in both traction and braking. Vivarail says: "*D-Trains are much more than London's cast-offs. Instead they offer a new concept in sustainable travel for local rail services, with a first-class engineering pedigree.*"

*(Editors' note - We are NOT proposing these modified D78's for the Harrogate Line, but we thought that our Founder Members would be interested to learn about this alternative use for the redundant D78s that Mark Leving first discovered.)*

## **6. Rail Future - Yorkshire Branch Meeting 13/06/15**

You are all invited to the next meeting of Rail Future Yorkshire Branch on Saturday 13th June at Leeds Civic Hall commencing at 13.00. The Branch Chair has commented:

*"There is much going on regarding better transport in the north, and I am delighted that the Chair of the Transport Committee of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Councillor James Lewis, will be speaking at our next branch Meeting on June 13th. Councillor Lewis is also a Board Member of Rail North so should be able to bring us up to speed on developments there and at Transport for the North (TfN), of which Rail North is expected to be the rail delivery arm. Because TfN is concerned with all forms of transport, Railfuture and its affiliates will have an important role to play in lobbying for rail and integrated public transport to be prioritised over less ecologically sustainable means of transport".*

## **7. Harrogate Hospitality & Tourism Awards 2015**

We are very pleased to report that the Harrogate Line Supporters Group has been short-listed for the final in the Business Achievement of the Year category of the Harrogate Hospitality and Tourism Award, sponsored by Blue Line Taxis. The citation reads - "*The winning nomination will be either an individual, or a business that has made significant positive change to enhance the customer experience, or grown their business against market expectation/conditions. Being from any sector related to business or leisure tourism, the overall winner's achievement will clearly set them apart from their colleagues and/or competitors.*"

The winning entry from the short-list will be announced during a Gala Dinner in the Royal Hall on Monday 1st June.

## **PLEASE SEND ME NEWS OF ANY OTHER MEETINGS OR PLANS THAT MAY AFFECT THE HARROGATE LINE.**

Thank you for your continued support.

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## **OPEN MESSAGE FROM RAIL FUTURE YORKSHIRE.**

Dear Rail User Group,

Please find attached the June 2015 issue of Yorkshire Rail Campaigner.

Hope you will be able to attend the next branch meeting at Leeds Civic Hall on Saturday 13th June 2015 @ 13:00 hours.

I have included a flyer for you to print and put up somewhere useful.

Enjoy this issue.

Regards,

**Paul Colbeck, Railfuture Yorkshire**

**Member, Branch Committee & Membership Officer**

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