

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 16

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1. New Northern Rail Franchise will include 4 trains per hour Harrogate/Leeds

Arriva Rail North won the franchise bid for local rail services across the whole of northern England excluding the Transpennine Express services with effect from 1st April 2016. They take over the existing rolling stock and the current staff who will be transferred under TUPE rules from the current Abellio-Serco partnership. The Arriva Group is one of the largest providers of passenger transport in Europe. It is part of the German State Railway company Deutsche Bahn, and is responsible for DB's regional passenger transport services outside Germany.

Within the UK, the Arriva Group operates Cross Country, Chiltern Trains, London Overground, Arriva Trains Wales, Grand Central and Tyne & Wear Metro. Their Group MD is Chris Burchell who has confirmed that they "*will be investing £1.2 billion to deliver a step-change in quality for customers and dramatically improving services, stations, information and ticketing.*"

Northern Rail has 214 Pacer carriages operating as 102 train units - around a third of its entire fleet. Arriva has ordered 281 new carriages as part of a 3-year plan to phase out Pacer trains*. This means 2,000 more trains each week, a 12% increase, with a 37% increase in peak time capacity by 2019.)

Marcus Handley, Arriva's Customer Service Bid Plan Manager knows the Harrogate Line well, having lived in Knaresborough for many years. He consulted our Group during the franchise bidding consultation phase and hence as soon as their success was confirmed he was invited to speak to the next Harrogate Chamber Meeting on 11th January 2016.

In a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation, Marcus highlighted these points for the Harrogate Line:

- *Faster Journeys Harrogate – Leeds = 4 trains per hour between 0700-1900*
- *Additional late evening service to York*
- *Improved Sunday Services*
- *All trains refurbished with WiFi and more seats*
- *More staffed stations*
- *More parking spaces at Harrogate*
- *Commitment to work with Northern Rail and North Yorkshire CC*

We were pleased to hear that Arriva Rail North has appointed Alex Hynes as Managing Director designate for the Northern Franchise. Alex is the current Northern Rail MD, so continuity is assured. Alex will be speaking at the next meeting of the Railfuture Yorkshire Branch on 9th April in Leeds.

See: www.arrivarailnorth.org Enquiries to: enquiries@arrivarailnorth.org

* Andrew Jones MP confirmed in the House of Commons on 12th January 2016 that all Pacer trains in service on the Northern Franchise will be withdrawn by the end of 2019.

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2. Leeds Bradford Airport MasterPlan recognises potential for a Parkway Station

Harrogate Chamber has long been promoting the need for a rail link to Leeds Bradford Airport in order to relieve traffic congestion on local roads and save passengers the cost of car parking at the Airport. We have continued lobbying the Airport Management, the Leeds City Council, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the Harrogate Rail Officers Group, plus the local MPs and Parish Councils, etc.

Our proposal was to build a new station on the existing Harrogate Line where it passes closest to the Airport and then to use the existing long-stay shuttle service for transfer to the Terminal Building, just as occurs when passengers park their cars at the Airport. This proposal had been resisted by the consultants engaged by the DfT and the WYCA on the grounds that people do not like to change mode.

On 3rd March 2016, Leeds Bradford® Airport unveiled a new Masterplan outlining its vision for the future - entitled the '**Route to 2030**'. See: <http://www.leedsbradfordairport.co.uk/about-the-airport/airport-masterplan>.

The key features were quoted as:

- *Upgraded airport entrance and commercial gateway development*
- *'Commercial Hub' and airport hotel in close proximity to terminal*
- ***Rail connectivity linking Leeds, Bradford, Harrogate and York including 'Parkway' station and Tram Train / Light Rail options***
- *Upgraded road access and public transport enhancements*
- *Timely expansion of terminal building and investment in apron infrastructure*

This is the first time that our proposal for a Parkway Station has been recognised as a likely solution to the need for a rail link, after WYCA Consultants rejected a direct heavy rail link as impracticable due to the gradients involved. They suggested a new light rail as an attractive but very expensive option.

Our detailed proposal for a Leeds Bradford Airport Parkway Station can be downloaded from our web site. (Ref: HT475). The benefits and rationale are summarised as follows:

- *Avoidance of high capital and maintenance cost of new route infrastructure and rolling stock*
- *Operationally efficient. There is no requirement for separate exclusive/dedicated rail or bus services which would import significant recurring additional on-costs of operation.*
- *Reliably faster generalised and actual journey times than any other mode.*
- *Improved regional connectivity to the Airport from the whole LCR including Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Skipton and Wakefield plus North Yorkshire, etc. via Leeds or York.*
- *Better, simplified regional penetration to include Harrogate, Knaresborough, York and beyond.*
- *Significantly lower and more efficient use of public funds with sustainable opex costs.*
- *Many additional local Park & Ride beneficiaries including Arthington, Bramhope, Pool and Yeadon, whilst Cookridge is within easy walking distance.*
- *Overspill for constrained Horsforth station in terms of car access, parking and platforms.*
- *Will make a proportionately greater fare-box contribution to net costs than any other option*

This is a highly cost-effective, operationally efficient and better penetrating approach using existing infrastructure to best advantage. Entirely consistent with firm prioritised and committed plans already in place for improved walk-up service frequencies, train capacities, and electrification. It takes full advantage of 25kV electrification of the Harrogate Line, prioritised by the Electrification Task Force.

Future service frequency upgrades (e.g. 10 mins) will benefit both the Airport and the whole corridor. Long-term sustainable option providing far better regional penetration than any other option. Excellent wider connectivity to LBA across Leeds City Region via both Leeds and York stations – including HS2. Uses scarce capacity on the rail network to best advantage by integration with existing services.

Multifunctional station combining airport access with substantial local commuting needs.

Train to terminal interchange by shuttle bus from Parkway Station should be better than that already provided between nearby long-stay car parking and the terminal in terms of timing and shelter.

Recognises objective DfT data/advice that this regional airport, like most others, functions primarily for leisure users with limited demand for more revenue-generative business users. Consequently any new direct heavy or light rail link to the Terminal has a poor business case for major capital investment.

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3. Leeds, Bradford, Skipton & York could have direct rail links to Airport on Harrogate Line

Clearly a new LBA Parkway Station on the existing Harrogate Line is the best way to ensure frequent fast rail transfers from Leeds City Station to the Airport. With the current diesel operation the journey time would be about 15 minutes outward to the Airport and 17 minutes inward to Leeds City Station.

From December 2017 that should be available four times an hour or every 15 minutes from 07.00 until 19.00 and every 30 minutes from around 06.00 until 23.00 on weekdays and similarly at weekends. When electrified, the journey times would be less than 15 minutes each way every 15 minutes. This compares with a current scheduled bus journey time of 30 minutes off peak but as long as 40 or 50 minutes in the morning and evening peaks

Currently with diesel operation, the Journey from the Airport station to Leeds would be 16-17 minutes which would drop to less than 15 min with electrification, running every 15 minutes all day every day. Harrogate will be approx. 20 mins. and York approx. 50 mins. When the Harrogate Line is electrified, then the headline journey time advantage of a Parkway Station on the Harrogate Line will be very attractive to the people most likely to use it i.e. business users. The Leeds-Airport journey time will be unbeatable by any other mode by a significant margin - including tram-train.

Bradford could be integrated with direct services when Harrogate is electrified to provide through services. This is because the Leeds-Bradford Forster Square services already share the same tracks and platforms at Leeds station and out as far as Wortley Junction where the Harrogate line diverges.

This means there is no track/timetabling conflict or capacity issue at Leeds. In fact it could improve platform utilization by reducing dwell/turnaround times at Leeds. The services could also stop at Kirkstall Forge, Apperley Bridge, Shipley and Frizinghall, giving Bradford four stations with a through service to the Airport. Bradford now has more local journeys to/from Harrogate than any other local destination outside the Leeds-Harrogate York route itself. It is in the top 10 flows by journey

Furthermore and probably even more sensible would be to integrate Skipton-Leeds services once the Harrogate route is electrified. This would connect Skipton, Cononley, Steeton, Keighley, Crossflatts, Bingley and Saltaire additionally into the equation adding five further stations within Bradford Council's geography (more than double the number that LCC will have). Skipton services also use the same tracks and platforms. By integrating both Bradford Forster Square and Skipton to Leeds services with the Harrogate-York services we get four trains per hour - the magic number that is widely recognised as a "walk-up" frequency! *(Alternatively the Ilkley services could be integrated likewise.)*

This proposition could be used to accelerate the electrification of the Harrogate Line and provide some of the desired cross-city services through Leeds Station, whilst improving platform availability.

We think this strategic vision should make the LBA Parkway proposal extremely compelling. It ties together the airport station and electrification, gaining a massive synergy, although neither would become interdependent in terms of funding or implementation.

(With acknowledgement to Mark J Leving, now Senior Associate, First Class Partnerships Ltd)

4. Harrogate Line Improvements – track, signals, more car parking, new stations

North Yorkshire County Council has approved a comprehensive "**Strategic Transport Prospectus for North Yorkshire**", subtitled "*The Places in Between: Contributing to The Northern Powerhouse*". It was launched on 2nd November 2015 by the NYCC Executive Members for Business and Environmental services, County Councillors Chris Metcalfe (Tadcaster) and Don Mackenzie (Harrogate).

In respect of rail services, the Prospectus states on page 24: *Much of the railway infrastructure in the North of England is largely untouched from the Victorian era and no longer meets the demands of a Northern Powerhouse. We support the aspirations for high speed connected cities set out in The Northern Powerhouse. In line with industry practice, we have set out a High Level Conditional Output Statement and this points to the following interventions to achieve those outputs.*

Improving east – west connectivity

- Transformational change on York – Harrogate – Leeds Line.

There is a strong business case for electrification of the line and in early 2015 the Government's Electrification Task Force concluded that the York – Harrogate - Leeds Line was a tier one priority for electrification. Harrogate is the largest town in North Yorkshire and supports the Leeds City Region and

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with high quality attractive housing, exceptional schools and safe and strong communities, all making it attractive for professionals to live.

Our long term plan for the line is for a £170m investment to bring about the electrification of the line, transformation and modernisation of Harrogate Station, and double tracking all of the remaining single track sections to improve performance and resilience. These works are being phased over the next 10 years, with the first sections of double track that are being funded by the County Council to be completed by 2018. The County Council are also mindful of the capacity constraints at Leeds station. Care must be taken to ensure that important local services are not overly compromised by the need to accommodate HS2 and other strategic rail services.

At the same time plans that City of York have for York Central Area will provide for an alternative north of the City approach to a new Platform 12. This will avoid crossing the East Coast Mainline thus providing greater resilience, increasing capacity and further reducing journey times.

The Harrogate Line Rail Officers Group brings together the key personnel from the County Council, Harrogate Borough Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, City of York, Network Rail, Northern Rail and now Virgin Trains East Coast. Brian Dunsby has represented Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce at the meetings of this Group since 2002 and has lobbied for upgrading. The following specific projects on the Harrogate Line have been proposed – but not yet approved or funded:

- Double-tracking the single track section between Knaresborough and Cattal
- Re-signalling the line between Harrogate and York. *(Leeds-Harrogate was done last year)*
- Improvement of level crossing safety and reducing delays to traffic. *(Especially Starbeck)*
- Increasing permitted line speed in sections when the above work is completed
- New Platform 12 at York Station with access via the existing freight line. *(Part of York Central)*
- Additional car parking capacity at existing Stations where practicable
- Potential for new Stations at Flaxby Moor and Leeds Bradford Airport. *(Not agreed by all!)*
- Electrification of the whole line – Leeds-Harrogate-York. *(In DfT Tier 1 – but "paused")*
- Re-opening the line from Knaresborough to Ripon and Northallerton for ECML diversions.

See www.northyorks.gov.uk/

5. Harrogate Station improvements – platforms, waiting rooms, toilets, lighting, etc

Northern Rail, which manages Harrogate station, is introducing new and improved facilities after listening to feedback from staff, customers and local businesses. The work is being done in two phases, costing a total of £1.2m, and is expected to finish in the first half of 2016.

Phase one is now complete including new toilet facilities, upgrades to the existing waiting room on Platform 1, and various improvements to the station concourse area, which has a new floor, wall and ceiling finishes as well as lighting upgrades, automatic doors and improvements to the interior decor.

In phase two, a new, heated waiting shelter will be built on Platform 3 for customers who wait there for trains towards Leeds. The improvements have been funded by the National Station Improvement Programme in partnership with Network Rail and the Department for Transport.

Andrew Jones MP, Parliamentary under Secretary of State in the Dept for Transport, has welcomed the investment: *"It is great to see work underway here at Harrogate station, which will ensure better journeys. The improvements in facilities are delivering a 21st century environment. Of particular importance is the better waiting area on Platform 3. This is overdue and will be warmly welcomed.*

Richard Allan, Commercial Director for Northern Rail, said: "Harrogate is one of our busiest stations and we are delighted to be able to secure these improvements. "We announced our draft plans last November and we have included feedback from customers, colleagues and stakeholders into our plans. "The biggest request from feedback was to provide bigger and better waiting area for customers on Platform 3, so that is now part of our plans."

Gary Walsh, Area Director at Network Rail, added: "Stations are important gateways to communities they serve. Harrogate is a crucial part of the economy in Yorkshire and these improvements will help the station to better serve the thousands of passengers which use it every year."

See: <http://www.northernrail.org/news/7744>

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6. Virgin Trains East Coast confirm direct Harrogate/Kings Cross every two hours

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 every two hours. The average end-to-end journey time will be 2 hours 40 minutes. We are expecting an earlier morning southbound service arriving in Kings Cross around 09.00 and a new morning northbound service arriving into Harrogate around 11.00.

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. Neil gave a comprehensive presentation to the Harrogate Chamber Meeting on 9th November 2015 to which all members of the Harrogate Line Supporters Group were invited.

The key points for Leeds, York and Harrogate services to and from London were:

- *2018 - 65 new Super Express Trains to replace the current fleet*
- *Faster journey times - e.g. Kings Cross to Leeds in 2 hours and to York 1 hour 45 mins*
- *2019 - Two hour journey time between Leeds and London on one service per hour*
- *Three trains per hour, every other hour, between London and Leeds*
- *Hourly service from York fast to London (3 tph York-London from 2020)*
- *Kings Cross-Harrogate via Leeds - seven services per day each way-15 minutes faster*

However these extra services are still subject to an adequate allocation of paths on the East Coast Main Line by the Office of Rail & Road, who are being lobbied by open access operators pressing for more paths to operate long distance services on the ECML to the detriment of VTEC services. We have repeatedly lobbied the ORR to emphasise the importance of direct Harrogate-Kings Cross services.

The new Managing Director of Virgin Trains East Coast, David Horne, gave a similar presentation to the Railfuture Yorkshire Branch AGM on 23rd January 2016. He showed a video of the launch of the new Virgin service saying that they took over a good business with good customer service, but they are refreshing this to keep it at its best. Rail passenger demand dropped over the decades until the mid-1990's; since then there has been huge growth. Virgin's West Coast route has grown faster than the East Coast, and they want to repeat the transformation made in the West on our East Coast line.

This transformation will include 65 new Hitachi trains able to run at 140 miles per hour. They have plans to improve ticketing and catering, and to serve Sunderland, Middlesbrough and Huddersfield.

VTEC recently cut 10% off their standard anytime fares and watched the demand for their services grow. A "low fare finder" page has been introduced on their website, and later in 2016 new technology will be launched to make buying tickets simpler and easier. Staff now have i-phones to help them serve customers and there is a new team of regional managers. There are 3,100 staff across Great Britain with their main base in York. New services will be introduced in 2019 using new trains.

However, in the meantime, the existing trains need to keep going for another 3 to 4 years, so a refurbishment programme is going ahead and he illustrated the first of its newly refurbished trains as part of a £40m project to improve its customers' experience. All of Virgin's trains on its east coast route are being given a makeover with stylish new interiors bringing added customer comfort and a touch of the glamour for which the Virgin brand is famous. A total of £21m has been earmarked to complete the refurbishment of the trains' interiors, including adding luxurious leather seats to First Class, new carpets and fittings throughout, as well as bringing the distinctive Virgin red on-board.

The refurbishment programme, which also includes a £16m investment in new diesel engines and the re-branding of the exterior of the trains, has been brought in ahead of the arrival of Virgin's new fleet. David Horne said: *"Our new fleet of trains arrive in 2018, but we want to ensure the trains people are catching right now deliver the same comfort and glamour for which Virgin Trains is known."*

David added *"The East Coast Mainline features some of the world's iconic rail journeys and has played host to some of the most famous locomotives ever made, including the Flying Scotsman. Our own uniquely Virgin Flying Scotsman was unveiled last year and is a symbol of this major investment that will bring the Virgin style and a dash of glamour back to the east coast route in the build up to the launch of our new trains."*

See: <http://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com> Enquiries: customers@virgintrainseastcoast.com

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7. New InterCity Express Programme trains now under construction in the UK

On 3rd September 2015 Hitachi Rail officially opened a £82 million Rail Vehicle Manufacturing Facility in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham which will build the new electric and bi-mode trains for both the Great Western Main Line and the East Coast Main Line.

The first 12 trains are being manufactured in Japan and four are now in the UK for a full testing and acceptance program. Trains destined for the Great Western Main Line will be introduced in December 2017. The East Coast Main Line should see the first new trains go into passenger service in 2018.

Hitachi will complete delivery of all of the trains for Great Western by 2018 and for East Coast by 2020. However this begs the question whether the lines will be electrified in time to operate them on time!

The Class 800 bi-mode and Class 801 electric trains - facts and figures from Hitachi:

- *Total of 866 carriages (122 trains) being manufactured – 369 for the Great Western Main Line and 497 for East Coast Main Line. 63 trains will be electric trains and 59 trains will be bi-mode.*
- *The total value of the IEP contract will be £5.7bn over 27.5 years. This includes the manufacture and delivery of the trains, new maintenance depots and infrastructure upgrades. The contract is also for the ongoing maintenance and servicing of the fleet*
- *Hitachi has invested £82 million in a state-of-the-art Rail Vehicle Manufacturing Facility to build the bulk of the trains – 110*
- *12 pre-series trains are being shipped to the UK from Hitachi's Kasado Works in Japan*
- *Key benefits: environmentally efficient, faster trains, reduced wear on the rail infrastructure, increased passenger comfort and capacity (in the morning peak, capacity into King's Cross will be increased by 28% and into Paddington by 40%)*
- *The interiors were designed in consultation with the Train Operating Companies and rail passenger and safety groups. Key priorities were: safety, accessibility, capacity and comfort.*
- *The trains will be maintained at depots in Doncaster, Bristol, Swansea and London.*

The family of new Class 800 series trains will constitute a step change in capacity, improved reliability and reduced environmental impact on every train journey. Hitachi Rail Europe will carry out the maintenance for the next 27.5 years. The trains are a combination of fully electric and bi-mode trains, the latter having diesel and electric propulsion. The trains can travel at up to 125 mph, in various formations from five to ten cars.

As part of the IEP, Network Rail will deliver infrastructure changes and Agility Trains (a consortium of Hitachi Rail Europe and John Laing Investments) as the Train Service Provider will finance and deliver the Hitachi-made, Hitachi-maintained trains into passenger service each day.

(Ed: The key disbenefit is the astronomical operating cost! MJL)

8. Railfuture Yorkshire AGM in Harrogate hosts Transport Minister & VTEC MD

On 23rd January, the Yorkshire Branch of Railfuture held an important meeting in Harrogate, hosted by Harrogate Chamber. Andrew Jones MP spoke enthusiastically about rail, using the following notes.

It is over 150 years since the north helped pioneer the railway which created the first Northern Powerhouse. We have made a renewed commitment to build a world class railway for the north that will: transform connectivity; link up northern cities; speed up journeys; improve performance; and make the new Northern Powerhouse a reality.

First, we're finding the right franchise partners who share our vision to transform services for passengers and before Christmas we announced two new contracts, Northern and TransPennine, who will together oversee a £1.2 billion programme of investment. Among the benefits will be 500 new carriages with room for 40,000 more passengers into the north's five biggest cities every weekday. Also an extra 2000 rail services a week along with the scrapping of the antiquated and unpopular Pacer trains.

Rail commuters into Leeds will see an almost 52% increase in seats in the morning peak on TransPennine Express trains and a 40% increase in capacity on Northern trains. Bradford will get new direct links to Liverpool, Manchester Airport, Wakefield, Sheffield, Chesterfield and Nottingham using

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brand new trains. While York will benefit from faster trains to Liverpool and Manchester, and more trains to Newcastle, Hull and Scarborough.

We are continuing to invest in the infrastructure too by completing the Northern Hub and modernising stations. Work to electrify the Transpennine line has resumed after Network Rail's upgrade plan was re-organised and we expect the scheme to be complete by 2022. It will mean faster journeys and more capacity transforming services for passengers across the north.

A new body, Rail North Limited, representing 29 northern local authorities, will take joint-control of the new franchise contracts, to be managed from Leeds. But on a wider scale, the creation of Transport for the North represents a radical devolving of powers away from Whitehall so the north has control of its own transport destiny.

Work is currently underway to put Transport for the North on a statutory footing. Transport for the North will also have access to a new national transport development fund earmarked for schemes like those proposed by the Chancellor last summer: the Northern Powerhouse Rail and an east-west high-speed rail network from Liverpool to Hull; offering dramatically reduced journey times and improved frequencies between the great cities of the north.

There are many other rail schemes in Yorkshire I could talk about. I recently visited Leeds Station for example, to see the stunning new southern entrance. There are the new intercity express trains for the East Coast Mainline -and then there's HS2 which we're due to start building next year. We've spoken at length about the transformational benefits that HS2 will bring to the North, but now the focus is moving towards individual cities. HS2

Ltd is working closely with Network Rail and Leeds City Council to design and deliver a long-term, integrated rail plan for the city. On 30 November 2015 Sir David Higgins published his "Yorkshire Hub" report setting out his recommendation for a new hub station in Leeds. It's really encouraging that the report has got the backing of Leeds City Council, local authorities across West Yorkshire, the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, and Network Rail.

So to conclude: in the last Parliament we made a pledge to build a modern transport system for the north and to create a new Northern Powerhouse. Now we are starting to deliver on those pledges. The two new rail franchises, upgrading the Transpennine line and brand new trains are just the start. The goal is to develop a rail network in the north of England that can compare with any other region across Europe.

(David Horne MD of Virgin Trains East Coast then spoke and his remarks are summarised in Section 5)

9. Railfuture UK presented two national awards to the Harrogate Line Supporters Group

At Railfuture Annual Conference in Bristol on 7th November 2015, our group of volunteers campaigning for improvements to Harrogate's rail services was recognised twice in the national award scheme.

Harrogate Line Supporters Group – founded by Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce in 2011 – was awarded the Best Campaign Gold Award at the Railfuture Rail User Groups Awards for 2015.

Brian Dunsby, who leads the campaign group, was named Best Campaigner and was presented with the Clara Zilahi Gold Award in recognition of his contribution to rail campaigning.

Mr Dunsby said: *"The judges were most impressed by the more than 200 people involved in our Harrogate Line Supporters Group and the role of the Chamber in promoting enhanced rail services for the wider economic benefit – not simply a small group of rail enthusiasts trying to reopen a local line closed by Dr Beeching. The Railfuture Director, Roger Blake, told me he was pleased by the way we had shown that local rail groups can have an impact and can create change in their rail services."*

The Chair of the Railfuture Yorkshire Branch, Nina Smith, said *"these awards were just reward for the skilful and tenacious campaigning by Brian Dunsby and the Harrogate Line Supporters group. Virgin's greatly enhanced East Coast Service from 2019 is testament to this successful campaigning. She added that the Dept for Transport's Electrification Task Group has recommended the Harrogate Line as one of the north of England's top six lines needing early electrification, and it is imperative that the Secretary of State accepts this recommendation and announces a timescale for electrification."*

For more details on Railfuture campaigns and meetings see: www.railfuture.org.uk

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10. Changes in Harrogate Chamber leadership and administration

On 12th November 2015, Brian Dunsby announced that he will step down from the voluntary role as the Chief Executive of Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce at the next AGM. Brian has led Harrogate Chamber since 2002, helping to dramatically increase average attendance at each monthly meeting to around 100 local business people. During that time, he has also helped to expand the Chamber's involvement in the town and significantly improve the work done to promote and support Yorkshire businesses, to promote local tourism and to improve traffic and transport connectivity.

Together with the Perlex Associates team – his wife Beryl, and Secretariat Maggie Hall and Chris Muir – Brian will step down at the Chamber's next AGM in May 2016 after 14 years at the helm. Perlex has previously administered several professional institutes and trade associations including numerous national and international conferences and trade shows, after selling out their expanding Perlite business Silvaperl.

The Chamber's Management Group has nominated Sandra Doherty to take over from Brian Dunsby, subject to formal approval from the Chamber membership at its AGM. Sandra has been the owner of Alexa House Guest house on Ripon Road since 2006, having previously run a Building Services Consultancy Partnership and then worked as a business manager for over 30 years in several small businesses in both South and West Yorkshire. Sandra was also Chair of Accommodation Harrogate, the association of small hotels and guesthouses in Harrogate and is a Non-Executive Director of Visit Harrogate. Sandra has previously served three years as Harrogate Chamber President until May 2015

The current President Mike Shaw is also standing down and will be succeeded by Michael Webster.

Brian has been asked to continue representing the Harrogate Chamber's interests in traffic and transport developments in the area. He will continue to manage the informal Harrogate Line Supporters Group. See: www.HarrogateLine.org

11. Rail Future - Yorkshire Branch Meeting

All recipients of this Bulletin are invited to the next meeting of Railfuture Yorkshire Branch on Saturday 9th April 2016, 13.00 until 16.00 at Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Square, Leeds LS3 1AD.

The main speaker will be Alex Hynes, Managing Director of the current franchise holder Northern Rail and the designated MD of the new franchisee Arriva Rail North.

A buffet lunch for £5 is available from 12.00 if pre-ordered. Admission is free but non-members of RFY must pre-register with the Membership Secretary Paul Colbeck, 14 St Giles Way, Copmanthorpe York YO23 3XT. Paul.colbeck@railfuture.org.uk.

FOR INFORMATION:

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for passengers and freight. Railfuture is a voluntary group representing rail users, with 20,000 affiliated and individual members. It is not affiliated to or funded by train companies, political parties or trade unions, and uses one-member one-vote democracy.

For more details or to join see <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/>

PLEASE SEND NEWS OF ANY OTHER MEETINGS OR PLANS THAT MAY AFFECT THE HARROGATE LINE TO: info@harrogateline.org .

Thank you for your continued support.

Brian L Dunsby
HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP.
P O Box 888, Dept HT13, HARROGATE HG2 8UH
Tel: 01423 879208 Fax: 01423 870025
Mobile: 07836 537512
brian.dunsby@harrogateline.org
www.harrogateline.org