

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 17

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1. Rail Regulator approves paths for Virgin Trains East Coast Harrogate/Kings Cross

The Office of Rail and Road has at last made their decision on the allocation of paths on the East Coast Main Line. The good news for Harrogate is they have found in favour of Virgin Trains East Coast bid to run additional direct trains between Harrogate and London from May 2019. This is the key paragraph:-

"71. In line with our duties, and particularly those to promote railway service performance, protect user interests and promote use of the network, we approved the VTEC extensions to Bradford, Lincoln and Harrogate on the basis of the clear evidence of net benefits from better serving these communities. We will direct Network Rail to agree firm rights for these service extensions from May 2019, as requested by VTEC"

The official announcement on 12th May was that the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has approved applications from Virgin Trains East Coast and First Group for new train services travelling on the East Coast Main Line (ECML) between London and Edinburgh. The new services will benefit passengers travelling to Middlesbrough, York, Newcastle, Morpeth, Lincoln, Leeds, Bradford, Harrogate and Stevenage. These services will be introduced in stages over the coming years, in some cases once Network Rail completes a programme of work to increase track capacity.

In 2014 and 2015 ORR received applications from three train operators seeking to introduce new train services on the ECML. They carried out extensive consultation and analysis of the competing applications, looking at the benefits they would bring to passengers, the effect on public funds, the benefits of competition, and whether they would make best use of the capacity on the route.

The result was that they approved the applications from Virgin Trains East Coast and from First Group, but did NOT approve applications from the Great North Eastern Railway Company Limited (GNER).

John Larkinson, ORR's Director of Railway Markets and Economics said:

"These new train services will give passengers more choice on services to Edinburgh and London and provide more frequent trains to towns and cities which are not so well served by rail today.

"Our decision has been informed by extensive analysis, formal industry hearings and detailed engagement with all parties. We have carefully weighed up the potential passenger benefits and the financial impacts on existing operators and the government, as we are required to do by law."

Full details can be seen at <http://orr.gov.uk/news-and-media/news-and-announcements/2016/rail-regulator-approves-future-new-passenger-services-on-the-east-coast-main-line>

The ORR decision letter and supporting evidence, including transcripts from hearings, are available to read at: <http://orr.gov.uk/what-and-how-we-regulate/track-access/current-work/east-coast-main-line>

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2. Harrogate response to confirmation of Virgin direct IEP Trains Harrogate - Kings Cross

The leaders of Harrogate's campaign for more direct rail services to London have welcomed the news that the Office for Rail and Road has finally approved Virgin Trains East Coast's bid for pathway allocations to bring those plans to reality. Brian Dunsby, leader of the Harrogate Line Supporters Group and former Chief Executive of Harrogate Chamber, said to the local media:

"This announcement is a great relief to everyone who has been involved in the long campaign for more direct rail services between Harrogate and London. These new services with new high speed trains every two hours each way will be of great benefit to Harrogate District's businesses, residents and visitors for many years to come. (See photograph of the first new IEP train below.)"

"On behalf of the business community, Harrogate Chamber put a great deal of time and effort into creating reports to show the many benefits that such services could bring to our town. We are very grateful for the continued support of the Dept for Transport, our MP Andrew Jones, North Yorkshire County Council, Harrogate Borough Council, York City Council, Rail Future Yorkshire Branch and many other local organisations and individual supporters."

Brian also acknowledged the significant technical and commercial contribution from Mark Leving, the former Managing Director of Hull Trains, who first proposed running direct Harrogate-London Trains in 2008, but at that time the ORR declined to allocate any paths for Harrogate-London services.

"So we were very pleased to win the support of Virgin Trains East Coast which, when it won the franchise, immediately announced it would include a two-hourly return service to and from London in its plans for the coming years. The decision by the ORR to allocate the required pathways is the final step in confirming that these services will be introduced, and our aspirations set out in 2008 will finally become reality."

"It was particularly heartening to see the ORR refer to the benefit to communities being a key part of its decision. The needs of the Harrogate community and economy have always been at the heart of our campaign and we believe this final decision is recognition that those needs must be met."

Brian Dunsby concluded *"Now we need more car parking spaces at Harrogate to enable more passengers to use the new trains!"*

There had recently been some concern that the ORR would not approve all the paths that Virgin needed to operate their proposed new services and would instead allocate them to rival open access operators. So we collaborated with HBC, NYCC, HIF, HIC, VH & YAS in a joint letter to the Chairman of the ORR Prof Stephen Glaister urging him to ensure their decision was in our favour. The issue was also featured in a front page news story in the Harrogate Advertiser and sister papers and web site.

Tom Horner, Transport Planner at Harrogate Borough Council commented: – *"This is an excellent outcome for us. Interesting to note that the ORR specifically mentions benefits to communities in terms of Harrogate, Lincoln and Middlesbrough so the letters to the ORR produced recently will have hopefully had some positive impact."*

Virgin Trains East Coast Management expressed appreciation for our support for their bid as follows:

Andy Sparkes, Virgin Trains Bid Director confirmed the importance of our support as follows:

I wanted to personally thank-you and say how grateful we are for your support over the last few months, in highlighting the importance to the ORR of increasing direct services to Harrogate. If you have any further questions about the decision, I'd be happy to have a more detailed conversation."

Maxine Joicey, Virgin Trains General Manager, Leeds Station, also expressed appreciation of our support: *The decision is excellent news for both us and the communities of customers whom we serve. This means we can go ahead with progressing the launch of additional services to Harrogate from May 2019. Thank you for your support with our application and for championing our cause."*



Richard Branson launches new Azuma IEP

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3. Virgin's planned schedule for direct IEP Trains Harrogate - Kings Cross from 2019.

Virgin Trains East Coast have now confirmed that new IEP Class 800 bi-mode trains are scheduled to be operating a direct Harrogate to London Kings Cross service via Leeds from May 2019, initially seven times a day each way on weekdays and six times a day each way at weekends, which will be every two hours. The end-to-end journey time will be about 2 hours 50 minutes. The weekday timetable is:

Southbound: Departing Harrogate	Northbound Departing Kings Cross
05.xx	06.xx
07.xx	08.xx
09.xx	10.xx
11.xx	12.xx
13.xx	14.xx
15.xx	16.xx
17.xx	18.xx

Virgin hope to operate a standard clock-face timetable; so it would be the same time past the hour, with the exception of the first southbound service. Actual times are not yet available, but we are expecting the earlier morning southbound service to arrive into Kings Cross before 09.00 and a new early morning northbound service to arrive into Harrogate before 10.00. These times will be ideal for both business and leisure travellers in each direction.

4. Virgin Trains East Coast now offer FREE Wi-Fi for pre-booked passengers

From 16th May, VTEC have introduced free Wi-Fi for anyone who books a Virgin Trains East Coast journey on their web site provided they have opted in to receive their marketing communications.

Specific Wi-Fi codes will be issued for each VTEC journey that is booked on-line which can be used on most laptops, tablets and mobiles, which should be set-up as follows:

- Select the 'VirginTrainsEC-WiFi' network when prompted (or in your Wi-Fi settings)
- Launch your internet browser and you should then be directed to the Virgin Trains East Coast landing page virgintraineastcoast.train where you can log on to the service
- Sign in
- Enter your Wi-Fi code
- Enjoy your free on board Wi-Fi

If you've got any problems, the experts in the VTEC Wi-Fi support team will be happy to help you get connected - call 01163 66 33 36 or email at wifi@virgintraineastcoast.com

5. Arriva Rail North's plans to transform rail travel in the North of England!

Arriva Rail North won the franchise bid for local rail services across the whole of northern England including the Harrogate Line services with effect from 1st April 2016. They took over the existing rolling stock and the current staff who will be transferred under TUPE rules from the current Abellio-Serco partnership. We were pleased to hear that Arriva Rail North has appointed Alex Hynes as Managing Director for the Northern Franchise. Alex was the former Northern Rail MD, so continuity is assured.

Richard Allan, formerly Commercial Director in the previous franchise, is now Customer and People Experience Director. When I queried the job title, Alex explained the role: *"The Customer and People Experience Director will oversee the delivery of strategies that enable our people to deliver an excellent service to our customers including training, communication, coaching, development, empowerment, technology. Highly engaged employees deliver excellent customer service, something old Northern proved (highest ever employee engagement drove highest ever customer satisfaction)"*

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On launching the new Franchise, Alex Hynes said: *Rail passengers across the North will soon benefit from new trains, a 37 per cent increase in peak time capacity and revamped ticketing as Arriva launches the new-look Northern rail franchise today. One of the largest transport networks in the UK, Northern provides more than 16,000 weekly train services to a population of 15 million people. By 2019, Arriva will have increased services to more than 18,000 each week whilst also replacing the unpopular Pacer trains through a multi-million pound rolling stock investment programme.*

The unveiling of the new franchise was marked in a ceremony at Manchester Piccadilly station where Transport Minister Andrew Jones joined Arriva UK Trains Managing Director Chris Burchell, Managing Director of Northern Alex Hynes and transport partners from Rail North. The start of the franchise marks only the beginning of Arriva's plans to transform rail travel in the North of England. By injecting a total of £1bn throughout the next nine-years, Arriva said that their plans include:

- New and refurbished trains: Within three years, Arriva will introduce 281 new carriages, fully refurbish the remaining fleet and remove all Pacer trains. All trains will have free WiFi by 2019.
- More services and faster journeys: A 12 per cent increase in the number of services by 2019 – giving passengers greater choice with over 2,000 more services each week from December 2017
- New timetables will also provide 100 new through journey opportunities across Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and other regional hubs.
- More capacity: With more and longer trains, there will be a 37 per cent increase in peak time capacity within the next three years.
- Improved connections through Northern Connect: Launching in 2019 with new trains, inter-urban Northern Connect services will provide faster city connections through a network of 12 long distance routes. They will provide faster connections to Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield, including new services from Bradford to Manchester Airport and Lincoln to Leeds. Northern Connect services will offer free WiFi, plug sockets, tables, air conditioning and seat reservations.
- Significant station improvements: Investing in stations to give customers easier access to information and providing new seating and waiting areas. This includes video help points being introduced at 447 stations and customer information screens at more than 160 new locations.
- Value for money and choice: Creating easier ticketing options, including advanced and off-peak fares, encouraging leisure journeys and reducing peak overcrowding.
- Northern employees: 45 currently un-staffed stations will be staffed and there will be extended opening hours at 54 locations.

Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Northern, said: *"Today is the day we begin to deliver our plans for the exciting next phase of Northern and each and every one of the team is focussed and determined to deliver for customers. Investment is exactly what customers wanted and we are looking forward to achieving major improvements before the end of the decade."*

Alex subsequently spoke to the Railfuture Yorkshire Branch AGM in Leeds on 9th April and gave a detailed presentation on the above points and also answered numerous questions from members.

In the May issue of CONNECTIONS EXPRESS, their regular email bulletin for Northern stakeholders, Alex amplified his vision for the franchise as follows:

We are now just over a month into the new franchise and the dust is beginning to settle on what is going to be a transformational time for the railway in the North of England.

Forgive me if some of this is already known to you, and for many it will, but it's worth just looking at some of the detail of the new Northern franchise, operated by Arriva, for the next nine years. There's a billion pounds of investment coming. Yes, that really is £1 billion. It's a staggering amount, but with it comes the responsibility to ensure it is invested wisely and to the maximum benefit for the people who use our railway. You wouldn't expect anything less from Arriva and Northern.

Over the first 44 months of the franchise we will have a clear focus on four main business activities. I call it our 4 in 44 and you will see and hear it mentioned regularly. The illustration below may help your understanding.



6. Northern's plans for more frequent and better trains for York-Harrogate-Leeds

The new franchise specification shows that the frequency of services between Harrogate and Leeds will be doubled for most of the day from December 2017. They will operate four trains an hour, every 15 minutes each way from 07.00 until 19.00 and every 30 minutes from around 06.00 until 07.00 and from 19.00 to 23.00 on weekdays and similarly at weekends.

Speaking about the whole Franchise, Alex Hynes said "there will be 140 diesel carriages and 141 electric carriages in service by 2020. The Pacers will have gone and these new trains will benefit from: CCTV; Free Wi-Fi; Air conditioning; Electronic seat reservations; 100 mph capability.

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All other trains will be refurbished to such a high standard that you won't be able to tell they aren't brand new. It won't be a case of new seat covers – it will be totally refurbished interiors and exteriors.

We are going to add more than 2,000 extra services every week and around 400 additional services on a Sunday."

Naturally we made enquiries about the prospects for better diesel trains on the Harrogate Line pending our aspirations for electrification in the next round of investment. The official answer on rolling stock is "no immediate changes - they will remain Class 15X and Pacers for now – but all Pacers will be gone by January 2020".

However we understand unofficially that the Harrogate Line will be receiving refurbished Class 170/4 **Turbostar** trains cascaded from ScotRail, when they are replaced by electric trains on the Edinburgh-Glasgow line in 2018. These are three-car diesel trains built by Bombardier Transportation and previously ADtranz at Derby between 1999 and 2005. The same class of trains has been used on the TransPennine Express services between Manchester and Hull. They are capable of 100mph – although not on the Harrogate Line as it stands at present!

7. 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 sent by email on request. (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*

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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.

8. 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 07.00 and from 19.00 until 23.00 on weekdays and similarly at weekends. When the Harrogate Line is electrified, the journey times between the Airport and Leeds City Station would be less than 15 minutes each way every 15 minutes. Harrogate will be about 20 mins and York about 50 mins. 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

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 prioritise the electrification of the Harrogate Line and provide some of the desired cross-city services through Leeds Station, whilst improving platform availability. It would also meet the repeated demands from Bradford Council and others for a direct rail link to the Airport – with no extra capital or operating costs! A suggested schematic diagram is attached for comments.

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)

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9. Changes in Harrogate Chamber leadership and administration

On 12th November 2015, Brian Dunsby announced that he would step down from the voluntary role as the Chief Executive of Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce at the next AGM.

At the Harrogate Chamber AGM on 9th May 2016, the Perlex team that has administered the Chamber since 2002 retired and new officers were elected. The new contact details are as follows:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE - Sandra Doherty, Alexa House. Tel: 01423 501988 Mobile: 07872 576022 e-mail: ceo@HarrogateChamber.co.uk (The current e-mail Chief Exec address will be automatically redirected at the end of May.)

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER - Vicky Carr, The Content Market. Tel: 01423 501323 Mobile: 07867 538634. e-mail: press@HarrogateChamber.co.uk

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT SPOKESMAN - Brian L Dunsby, Perlex Associates. Tel: 014223 879208 Mobile: 07836 537512. e-mail: Transport@HarrogateChamber.co.uk

The new web site for the Chamber is now under construction at www.HarrogateChamber.co.uk

Perlex will continue to administer the Harrogate Christmas Market and the Yorkshire Business Market using PO Box 888, HG2 8UH. Please look at the following web sites for more details: www.HarrogateChristmasMarket.org and www.YorkshireBusinessMarket.org.

Brian Dunsby 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 Harrogate Line Supporters Group.

10. Rail Future - Yorkshire Branch Meeting

All recipients of this Bulletin are invited to the next meeting of Railfuture Yorkshire Branch on Saturday 4th June 2016, 13.00 - 16.00 at Brian Jackson House, New North Parade, Huddersfield HD1 5JP

The main speaker will be Chris Nutton, Operations Director of Transpennine Express

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.

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Encl. Schematic diagram of suggested Cross-City Lines via Leeds Bradford Airport Parkway. (HT460)

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