

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 27

BREAKING NEWS - AZUMA TRAINS ENTERING SERVICE ON 15TH MAY 2019



Photograph by Andrew Whitworth, HLSG, 20/04/18

Statement from David Horne, Managing Director, LNER. (14/03/19)

Since LNER was established in June 2018, we have been focused on delivering the best service possible for our customers and putting the people we serve at the heart of every journey.

One of our main priorities has been the introduction of new Azuma trains, therefore we have been working very closely with those directly involved – the Department for Transport, Hitachi Rail, Network Rail and the Office of Rail and Road – to deliver this exciting milestone.

*The trains have been through rigorous testing with engineers and technical staff to ensure they will meet the high standards that LNER sets for outstanding customer service, and I'm delighted to announce that the **first of our new Azuma trains will enter into service on 15th May 2019.***

The first Azuma train will run on the London-Leeds route, with further trains being phased into service on the rest of the route over the coming months.

Azuma represents the biggest transformation on the route in more than 30 years, and I'm thrilled that we will be able to offer our customers more seats and an even better customer experience as Azuma trains are introduced.

I share with our partners a sense of pride that this new fleet is being built in the North East using suppliers from across the North. Hitachi's train factory in County Durham employs more than 700 people, and 70 per cent of parts fitted on an Azuma are sourced from within a 40-mile radius.

We've worked very hard to reach this point and I look forward to giving our customers more seats, more style and more services.

David Horne, Managing Director, LNER

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HARROGATE LINE – AZUMA SERVICE EXPECTATIONS. (09/03/19)

I had a private meeting with David Horne, MD of LNER, on 9th March when we discussed their plans for the introduction of the new AZUMA trains on to the East Coast Main Line, initially on the London-Leeds services. He told me in confidence that they planned to begin operating the new AZUMA trains from May 2019 – now confirmed as 15th May.

David is also hoping to run “special” AZUMA trains from London to Harrogate for the UCI World Cycle Championships on Saturday 21st September 2019 and then hopefully for the Harrogate Christmas Market on Saturday 16th November 2019.

David was optimistic of being able to begin operating the regular direct London-Harrogate services via Leeds from the start of the new timetables on Sunday 8th December 2018.

The detailed timetables have not yet been released, but I am expecting an early morning Harrogate departure about 06.30 arriving into Kings Cross about 09.00. This should be followed by the current 07.34 arriving about 10.30. The two-hourly service should continue until about 18.30 arriving into Kings Cross about 21.00.

In the northbound direction, the first service should depart from Kings Cross about 07.30 arriving into Harrogate about 10.00 and then one train every two hours until 17.30 arriving about into Harrogate about 21.00. I must stress that these are ambitious timings dependent on the full fleet of Class 800/2 bi-mode trains being delivered and tested ready for service.

LNER TRAINS FOR ECML APPROVED FOR PASSENGER SERVICES. (11/03/19)

New LNER rolling stock for the East Coast Main Line (ECML) has received approval for its Class 800 Azuma trains to enter passenger service. The ORR has authorised the operation of the Class 800/1 nine-car trainsets and the Class 800/2 five-car bi-mode units, which were originally due to enter service in 2018.

LNER announced its new fleet of Azuma trains would not be coming on time at the end of last year due to the ORR suspending the approval of several of the operator’s electrical units due to safety issues. Concerns had been raised over the inter-vehicle jumper cables which could be used by passengers to reach roof-mounted high-voltage equipment, as well as concerns over the use of automatic selective doors opening on the ECML.

The ORR said the manufacturer Hitachi Rail and LNER needed to reach an agreement on minimising these risks before either trainsets are placed into service, subject to the completion of final testing. The trains are expected to enter service between London Kings Cross, Leeds and Hull, and final testing is currently underway.

In September last year, reports surfaced that plans to introduce the new Class 800/8001 Azuma trains had been slowed due to trackside equipment faults. The operator said it was working towards introducing them into service by the end of last year as originally planned.

Network Rail said in a statement that electromagnetic emissions from the new Hitachi trains were interfering with existing safety critical systems and the safety issues would mean that the bi-mode trains could only run on diesel.

ANDREW JONES - COMMONS STATEMENT ON LNER AZUMAS. (12/03/19)

Passengers across the East Coast mainline, including those north of York, in Newcastle, Edinburgh and beyond, will benefit from the introduction of new trains by LNER through the Intercity Express Programme.

LNER plan to bring the new trains into service from 2019 to ensure passengers get the best possible customer experience. It is a complex programme, and, as with any new technology and major investment, the infrastructure and train operations need to be rigorously tested to ensure reliable services passengers deserve from day one.

The Department for Transport is working with Hitachi, the ORR, LNER and Network Rail to ensure that these trains enter service on the ECML as soon as possible. Trains will initially be deployed on the London to Leeds route. Their introduction will be complete across the full East Coast in 2020.

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HARROGATE WELCOMES THE AZUMAS (22/04/18)

The new trains have been welcomed by Brian Dunsby, former Chief Executive of Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce, who has been campaigning for extra London trains since 2008. That was when Mark Leving then MD of Hull Trains first proposed new direct trains between Harrogate and London, but the Office of Rail Regulation declined to allocate paths for them.

Brian has since lobbied at all levels in local and national government to demonstrate why Harrogate needed more trains, both on the East Coast Main Line to London Kings Cross and on the local line to Leeds and York. This AZUMA was the first practical realisation of his vision!

Virgin Trains East Coast won the DTI's ECML franchise competition in 2014 and began operating with the existing diesel Class 43 HSTs and electric Class 91 trains in 2015 which will be replaced by the new bi-mode Class 800 Azuma trains in stages by 2019.

Harrogate Chamber has campaigned actively to get a two-hourly service to the capital. Brian said *"The six new direct services will make an enormous difference to the Harrogate economy. As a town which relies heavily on the visitor economy, both through tourism and the conference trade, strong links to London and the south of England are absolutely vital.*

"On top of that, we have many professional service businesses in Harrogate and they need to be able to get to and from the capital with ease in order to grow and operate successfully. These new trains will make that ambition a reality and we look forward to working closely with Virgin to ensure Harrogate remains a key consideration in their East Coast operations."

VIRGIN TRAINS EAST COAST & LNER STATEMENTS. (11/09/17 & 24/06/18)

At the September 2017 Harrogate District Chamber Meeting, Paul Smith, Commercial Manager for the Central Area of Virgin Trains East Coast, outlined the benefits of the new trains as follows:-

The new Azuma trains currently being built by Hitachi will start to arrive in 2018, meaning:

- 65 trains, comprising 42 electric, 23 bi-mode
- Increase from 155 to 205 services per day
- London - Leeds up to 37 per day
- London - Newcastle up to 44
- London - Edinburgh up to 27
- Direct trains every 2 hours to Harrogate, Bradford, Lincoln & Middlesbrough

From 2019, the Harrogate-Kings Cross services will be dramatically improved in frequency and speed:

Current services:

- 1 service per day north & south
- Northbound: 2 hrs 52 mins
- Southbound: 3hrs 01mins

Access Rights from May 2019 for...

- 7 services per day north & south
- Northbound: 2 hrs 37 mins
- Southbound: 2 hrs 48 mins

The new AZUMA trains are currently under construction at Hitachi's factory in Newton Aycliffe as part of the Government's £5.7 billion Intercity Express Programme.

On 24 June 2018 rail services on the East Coast Main Line were brought back under government control. London North Eastern Railway (LNER), the Department for Transport's operator of last resort, took over the InterCity East Coast franchise from Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC). Despite the change of name and branding, all staff – from operational management to station staff and train guards – as well as timetables, fares and tickets remain the same.

Managing director David Horne said that, as LNER launches, the company's message is that it is "business as usual". He added: "As we go through the initial transition period we remain absolutely committed to running the high levels of service that customers have come to expect. It is the staff who underpins the customer experience on the East Coast, so we're delighted they have transferred with us and that customers can rely on seeing the same faces at their local station and on their usual train."

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ANDREW JONES' LETTER IN REPLY TO OUR CONCERNS. (14/02/19)

Thank you for your emails of 11 January, highlighting support from your members for the re-doubling and electrification of the single-line sections of the Harrogate line between Knaresborough and Cattal.

I can confirm that North Yorkshire County Council and the York, North Yorkshire & East Riding LEP, supported by the Government's Local Growth Fund, are continuing to progress an infrastructure scheme to improve punctuality and performance on the railway line between York and Harrogate and double the frequency of service to two trains per hour. I understand that this scheme is now focused on signalling improvements and minor infrastructure works, as the most cost effective way to deliver improved services for passengers.

As part of the development of this scheme, the County Council has recently commissioned detailed scheme design work from Network Rail to confirm the feasibility of running an additional service on this route to provide two trains per hour, before they provide final funding approval. For further information on the exact nature of improvements being proposed for the Harrogate Line as part of this scheme, I would recommend contacting David Bowe, Corporate Director of Business and Environmental Services at North Yorkshire County Council, in the first instance.

On the subject of re-opening Goldsborough Station, I am aware of two housing development proposals currently being considered in the area that involve either reopening Goldsborough station and/or a major development around Cattal station. I have discussed the issue with Forward Investment and their plans for the Business Park. There is much more to do before a new station could be considered, but as with the doubling of the service, I am very interested in any progress.

P.S. I am pleased to say that Northern will oversee the complete removal of the outdated and unpopular Pacers by the end of 2019. All the rolling stock used by Northern will either be new or fully refurbished to an 'as new' condition.

LEEDS BRADFORD AIRPORT – NEW RAIL & ROAD CONNECTIONS? (21/02/19)

A report to Councillors says: *"LBA is a huge asset for Leeds and Leeds City Region. It is one of the UK's fastest growing airports, supporting over 5,000 jobs and contributing £336m to the city region economy each year. The Department for Transport has forecast that there is the potential to increase the number of passengers using the airport to 7.1 million per year by 2030 and to 9 million by 2050."*

Connecting Leeds and West Yorkshire Combined Authority have announced plans to improve access to the airport by both road and rail. They have released details of three alternative link routes and the planned location of a new Parkway Railway Station, between Scotland Lane and Cookridge, on the Leeds-Harrogate line. The link route options are -

- A. Building of a new road and footway/cycle way from the A65, running along the eastern edge of the airport before joining the A658 to the north.
- B. Building a new road and footway/cycle way that follows the same initial path from the A65, runs to the south west of the airport before joining the A658 where it enters the runway tunnel.
- C. Upgrading the existing A65 and A658 around Rawdon and Yeadon to the airport.

The Parkway will include a 350 space park and ride car park, a station building and bus interchange.

The report adds: *"Current surface access to LBA is poor with existing routes being affected by congestion, resulting in rat-running with associated negative impacts on local settlements. There is a likelihood that conditions will worsen without any infrastructure improvements, given the forecast growth of LBA coupled with the proposed employment allocation."*

WYCA are currently doing a non-statutory consultation on access to Leeds Bradford Airport, mostly around roads in their area plus the proposal for a Parkway Station which we initiated a few years ago!

We suggest that members of our group comment directly using the web link below. This is an informal consultation mainly focused on road changes; statutory consultation will follow at a later time.

<https://www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/airport>

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NORTHERN RAILWAY – CONNECTIONS EXPRESS. (14/03/19)

Statement from David Brown, Managing Director of Northern Railway

As we were going to press the ORR released the findings of their investigation into Northern's provision of passenger information during the disruption following the May 2018 timetable change. The ORR found that Northern took reasonably practicable steps to provide appropriate, accurate and timely information both prior to the May 2018 timetable and in the period of subsequent disruption.

*We welcome that the ORR has determined that Northern was **not** in breach of its passenger information obligations and we are reviewing the detail of the investigation report. Last year was very difficult for our customers for well-known reasons, particularly the ongoing impact of delays to infrastructure upgrades. This meant we did not meet people's expectations and we are sorry for that.*

Following the experience of 2018 we have made improvements, and we continue to invest in better customer information systems and processes. We are determined to deliver a better service for our customers in 2019 with improved punctuality, the delivery of new and refurbished trains, and better stations.

On that note, it's been a positive start to the year. We started to see very early signs of improved performance following the introduction of the December timetable and I'm pleased to report that has continued into the New Year. We are committed to recovering performance to levels our customers rightly deserve, and while we won't fix it over night we will be able to build on this improving trend.

Our May timetable change is approaching and while we'll be introducing service enhancements my team is firmly focused on making sure they also drive improvements in reliability and performance for our customers.

This is reflected in our business plan, which we shared with all our management team in February and are now taking to colleagues across the network. A key focus is ensuring we get the basics right not only to drive performance but also improving the wider customer experience. We'll share more on our plans with you throughout the year and we've included an update on progress with the upgrading of our fleet in this newsletter.

Over recent weeks, we have been putting our brand new trains through their testing programme before bringing them into service for customers during 2019. We have also been training our drivers on the new trains. During the testing, we identified a small mechanical design issue that requires a fix before we resume the testing and driver training. We are already working on the solution and will be back on track with our testing and training soon.



David Brown, Managing Director

NEWS BULLETIN COMPILED BY

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