



Monitoring Rail Services &  
the Travelling Environment

## Newsletter Autumn 2016

\*\*\*\*\*

---

### **FROM THE CHAIR AUTUMN 2016**

After eight years as chairman of NCRUG, I have decided that it is time to step down at the forthcoming AGM and let someone else take up the reins and lead the group into a new era. I've been lucky in that I've seen a number of positive developments during my term of office.

Restoration of the Halton Curve is nearer than it has ever been and hopefully, in the not too distant future, we will see timetables showing direct services from Chester stopping at Helsby and Frodsham and then taking the curve to Liverpool cutting out the need to change at Warrington. Additionally, being able to access train services from Runcorn (main line) will be a great advantage.

The main buildings at Helsby and Frodsham stations have been refurbished as befits their grade 2 status and work on the island platform at Helsby should be starting soon. Railway Heritage Trust is contributing to this project and would like to see the small buildings put into community use.

It has been difficult to recruit many new members so membership has remained fairly static over recent years. Additionally, we also need more volunteer helpers at our stations to maintain the present standard. It is likely that NCRUG will be involved in partnership working with the proposed North Cheshire Community Partnership led by Sally Buttifant and supported by Cheshire West & Chester Council which will increase community involvement.

There will a lot of work for the new chairman to do as we come to the end of the current franchise period especially as it is likely that two different companies will be running services in our area. The next few years will be challenging for the new chairman and committee as they endeavour to keep abreast of all the changes and developments.

I have enjoyed my eight years as chairman of the group but the time has come to let a new team to take over the reins. I won't be disappearing completely and hope to be attending committee meetings on a regular basis.

Good luck to everyone!

**Janet Briggs**

## **OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER**

Please make a note in your diary. The meeting commences at 19.00 hrs with a talk by our Guest Speaker, David Powell, Director of Rolling Stock Procurement at Merseytravel. David will share with us the steps taken, and yet to be taken, in selecting the most appropriate rolling stock to replace the current aging fleet of 506/7's and to fulfil the terms of the Long Term Rail Strategy which was announced a couple of years ago. We understand nothing is fixed in stone so comments made during the question & answer session could influence the final specification if David thinks they have merit. So do come along and have your say.

The AGM will be held in Frodsham Community Centre on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October at 19.00 hrs.

We look forward to a good turn-out. Please see the poster announcement at the end of this Newsletter and feel free to bring a friend along as well. All are welcome.

**CWG**

## **12TH JUNE - LOCAL RAILWAY SUPPORTER RECOGNISED IN ROYAL HONOURS**

John Hulme the instigator and visionary behind the Cheshire Best Kept Station Competition has been recognised for his work by the award of British Empire Medal (BEM) in the Queens 90th Birthday Honours List; the NCRUG has been associated with the Competition since its inception and has benefited from the award of prizes at Helsby, Frodsham and Runcorn East.

The NCRUG is pleased that John's tireless work for the railway industry across Cheshire has been recognised at the highest level and is richly deserved.

Congratulations.

**JH**

## **NCRUG INVITED TO HOUSE OF COMMONS**

A delegation from the NCRUG visited the Houses of Parliament on the 7th September, at the invitation of Jason McCartney MP, Chairman of the "All Party Parliamentary Group"; to hear presentations by Paul Maynard MP, (Transport Minister), David McDonald MP, (Shadow Transport Minister), Leo Goodwin, (Managing Director of TPE), Alex Hynes (Managing Director - ATN) and Cllr. Liam Robinson (Chairman of Rail North Ltd). Each delivered presentations to stakeholders in the railway industry emphasising the step changes taking place which will be transformational while also showing their commitment by ordering rolling stock worth £1bn. This rolling stock will be of higher specification than existing stock and will be delivered by 2020.

New trains, new services, new infrastructure were all mentioned while the elephant in the room, Nationalisation, was mentioned by the Shadow Transport Minister! Liam Robinson finished the speeches by referring to "Rail North" as the strategic driver for devolution in the North.

It is reassuring that despite the recent changes in Government and those who drive policy that the message for improvements in rail infrastructure and rolling stock in the north of England continues to focus the minds of all.

Local issues we were able to discuss were Halton Curve, Helsby to Ellesmere Port, new ATN "Connect" Services and the proposed Community Rail Partnership for North Cheshire together with issues affecting the new Welsh franchise.

The Delegation was able to speak directly with Alex Hynes (ATN), Liam Robinson (Rail North), Carolyn Watson (ATN), John O'Grady (ATN), Craig Harrop (ATN), Jim Trotman (Community Rail Cumbria), together with various other consultants and stakeholders.

**JH**

## **HALTON CURVE UP-DATE**

We are pleased to confirm that the project is on target for completion in 2018 and for the service to start operation between Liverpool and Chester commencing with the December 2018 timetable.

A considerable amount of work to increase capacity at Liverpool Lime Street will shortly take place and it remains to be seen if this will impact on the first services due over the Halton Curve. The proposed work will see an additional platform at Lime Street and improve the layout of platforms across the station to improve flexibility, maximising train access to the station and making provision for longer trains to stop.

**CWG**

## **WARRINGTON BANK QUAY to LIVERPOOL LIME STREET - AN UNEXPECTED NON-STOP TRIP**

Janet & I arrived at platform 1 on Bank Quay station mid-morning a few months ago, intending to board the "new" 4-coach electric service for Liverpool Lime St., but we found that the incoming train from Liverpool was running late. After a few minutes the train duly appeared so we took our seats, soon to be surprised by the conductor enquiring about our destination saying that the train was for "Lime Street only." A few intending passengers quickly left the train, leaving this 4-coach service almost deserted!

There are normally 10 stations between Warrington & Liverpool but that morning there was a failed train hindering operations around Huyton.

Our route took us non-stop through Earlestown {platform 4 not the usual platform 3} so we were now heading in the Manchester direction but before Newton-le-Willows the train took the left-hand chord to the west-coast main line and we were soon heading north at speed to Wigan North Western station. The stop here was only to allow the driver to walk the length of the train to change ends for reversal.

We were now heading for Liverpool along the normal Wigan to Liverpool line except that we were travelling at speed through numerous stations, including St. Helens Central. After the junction at Huyton, we were back on the normal route but still travelling fast through all the stations before arriving at Lime Street not much later than usual.

Quite a good tour for the price of an ordinary Frodsham to Liverpool return ticket! On our return during the same afternoon, the route was back to normal.

**PB**

## **LIVERPOOL CITY REGION RAIL USER GROUPS/ASSOCIATIONS**

Earlier this year, following informal discussions, a meeting was held, at Merseytravel's office to take forward the notion of presenting a united front to the Liverpool City Region transport authorities, by all the User Groups/Associations whose areas impinge upon Merseyside and Deeside.

The Groups represented were Mid Cheshire RUA, (MCRUA), Shrewsbury Chester RUA, (SCRUA), Wrexham Bidston RUA, (WBRUA), Wirral Transport UA, (WTUA), North Cheshire RUG, (NCRUG), and Ormskirk Preston & Southport TA, (OPSTA). With the exception of SCRUA and NCRUG all were represented by their Chairman. Steve Boulding represented SCRUA and John Hobbs and Cedric Green represented NCRUG.

Merseytravel were happy to provide the meeting room and are keen that all the local Rail User Groups/Associations should act together and present a united front to them with regard to improving and extending the public transport offer. There is an advantage in showing the positive agglomerative effects of our various campaigns to the Liverpool City Region and beyond rather than each pushing for their own schemes in isolation. For example WBRUA's aspirations to increase service frequency on their line not only improves their local service but also benefits NCRUG's campaign to re-open Halton Curve. Another plus would be SCRUA's campaign to extend the re-doubling on the

Chester/Wrexham line. This would increase capacity and allow new services to be introduced over the Halton Curve and at the same time improve connectivity at Chester and Wrexham to services operating in the areas covered by WBRUA, MCRUA and WTUA. OPSTA, who have recently conducted passenger surveys on the Southport Manchester route, will share their Code of Conduct with others in the group. They are endeavouring to have the service running into Piccadilly rather than Victoria to cater for the requirements of the majority of passengers. Their passenger survey provides hard evidence to back their case. Their experience will help others to factually back up their campaigns for better and more appropriate service provision.

We believe, in most cases, no RU Group/Association scheme should be looked at in isolation because they all have benefits which improve the business cases of other adjoining schemes. One helps the other.

There have been 3 meetings so far this year with another one scheduled for October. In addition we have met separately with David Powell, (Merseytravel's Director of Rolling Stock Procurement) and Cllr Liam Robinson, (Chairman of Merseytravel and Rail North Ltd). It is accepted that future meetings will be followed by discussions with Liam to enable issues to be taken up without delay and to be up-dated on developments from their side.

As we are affiliated to Railfuture we have invited two Railfuture representatives to attend future meetings – one for Wales and one for the North West.

We welcome this opportunity to have regular and constructive dialogue with Senior Management at Merseytravel. This is a significant step forward and acknowledges the value of user groups' in providing unique information and suggestions for improving the travel experience of the passenger.

## CWG

=====		
<b>Contacts:-</b>	<u>PHONE</u>	<u>EMAIL</u>
Chairman: Janet Briggs	01928 732142	<a href="mailto:chair@ncrug.org.uk">chair@ncrug.org.uk</a>
Vice Chairman: Martin Patrick	0151 4201910	<a href="mailto:martinpatrick@btconnect.com">martinpatrick@btconnect.com</a>
Secretary: Cedric Green	0151 6258017	<a href="mailto:cw.green@talktalk.net">cw.green@talktalk.net</a>
Membership: Bob Florence	01928 731209	<a href="mailto:r.florence45@btinternet.com">r.florence45@btinternet.com</a>
Joint Editors: John Hobbs	01925 818791	<a href="mailto:johnhobbs@aol.com">johnhobbs@aol.com</a>
	Cedric Green	<a href="mailto:cw.green@talktalk.net">cw.green@talktalk.net</a>
LSP contact: Mike Taylor	0151 4272288	<a href="mailto:mikeporg@btinternet.com">mikeporg@btinternet.com</a>
British Transport Police:	0800 405040	

**Website:** Visit our website at [www.NCRUG.ORG.UK](http://www.NCRUG.ORG.UK) to leave your comments, favourable or otherwise, and to catch up on latest developments.

**Note:** The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the North Cheshire Rail Users' Group, (NCRUG).

=====



Monitoring Rail Services &  
the Travelling Environment

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

at

**Frodsham Community Centre**  
Fluin Lane, Frodsham

on

**Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> October at 19.00 hrs**

**Guest Speaker:**

**David Powell**

**Director Rolling Stock Procurement at  
Merseytravel**

**Followed by a question & answer session and  
then the 2016 AGM business meeting**

**Non members are welcome to attend**

**Thank you for your continued support**

**Light refreshments will be available**