

MID CHESHIRE RAIL REPORT

No. 104

SPRING 2019

ISSUED FREE

The Newsletter of the Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association, the Voice for Users of the Manchester-Stockport-Altrincham-Knutsford-Northwich-Chester and Crewe-Winsford-Hartford-Liverpool Lines.

Visit our website at www.mcrua.org.uk and find us on Facebook by searching for Mid Cheshire Line or by clicking on the link - <https://www.facebook.com/#!/betterrailservicesmidcheshireline?fref=ts>.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS by John Oates

We are pleased to provide an extra spring *Rail Report* as there is so much going on (or in some cases not going on!) that is seemed waiting until May to report on this would be too long for our members.

From May there will be some very good improvements to services on the **Crewe-Liverpool line** including Sunday services at Acton Bridge. Simon Barber provides more detail below. London Northwestern certainly seem to be getting on with delivering the committed franchise improvements for the line, something lacking with Northern on the Mid Cheshire Line. Whilst on the Crewe-Liverpool line, we were delighted to hear a few weeks ago about the formation of **The Friends of Acton Bridge Station** established through the active involvement of Acton Bridge Parish Council and with active support from London Northwestern's Stakeholder Manager, Vicky Cropper. If you live in the area, please contact the parish council either direct or through their Facebook page. By the time you read this the initial working parties to improve the station environment will have taken place, though The Friends have asked for more volunteers to support what they're doing, as this way they'll achieve more, faster. Please join in if you live near Acton Bridge and are able to. There is an open day at Acton Bridge station on **Saturday 27 April from 1030 to 1230**.

The poor **Mid Cheshire Line train running performance** continues. The figures at the end of Period 12 (the 4 weeks to 2 March 2019) show a PPM (Public Performance Measure) of 80.00% (last year same period 83.81%) with an MAA (Moving Annual Average) declined by over a percentage point since our last *Rail Report* to 77.08% (last year same period 79.63%). The targets are above 92%. As well as the underlying reason that the timetable is not robust as discussed in our last *Rail Report*, the last few months have seen a recurrence of failures in the signalling system both between Cuddington and Mickle Trafford, as well as over the single line between Northenden and Cheadle Village Junction prior to Stockport. Network Rail seem to be struggling to come up with a long term fix for the signalling on both these section. Added to this, Northern is suffering from a continuing shortage of drivers. Last year I heard David Brown, Northern's Managing Director state at a presentation that Northern had recruited a lot more drivers. Perhaps they still haven't recruited enough and/or it may be due to the fact that for drivers in Northern based west of the Pennines, Sundays are a "voluntary" day, which is not the case east of the Pennines. This dates back to First North Western and Arriva Trains Northern days in the early 2000s. With Northern now having had the franchise for almost 3 years, it really is time this was sorted out.

Train services on Saturdays on the Mid Cheshire Line recommenced in mid-February for the first time since mid-August 2018 following the suspension of the RMT's strike action over the role of conductors. As we write, Northern and the RMT are in continuing discussions with ACAS. Fingers crossed. It's noticeable that Saturday patronage has been way below previous levels. If you haven't already done so, please help by putting the word around about the resumption of Saturday services.

Last time I wrote about the very unsatisfactory situation at **Greenbank Station** with the demolition of the historic shelter without consultation, its eventual replacement with an inferior one, and the continuing failure to replace the live train running information, poster cases and litter bins on the Chester-bound platform. I also noted the very poor facilities on the Manchester-bound side (station footfall in excess of 200,000) and of scholars often unable to board their afternoon train as it is too full and then with a wait of an hour on a station with little shelter. Northern have committed to do their best to ensure a class 150 Sprinter unit is on this train, but since I last wrote about this there have been more than a few occasions of a class 142 Pacer unit being used, leaving 30+ scholars behind.

Northwich Town Council whose area encompasses Greenbank Station arranged a meeting with Northern to discuss these items to which they kindly invited us. At the meeting Northern made a number of commitments. This was followed by an on site meeting at which Northern made further commitments. Northwich Town Council, we and others are watching closely to see Northern deliver on these commitments. Whilst on this subject, I mentioned last time about a possible Christmas present of a “Sardines Express” ticket wallet - <https://www.brainboxcandy.com/sardines-travel-card-wallet/> I was bought one for Christmas and it’s caused quite a bit of amusement to our conductors and station staff. I see it’s currently out of stock, but keep checking back if you want one ☺

The saga over our committed “**Two Trains an Hour**” service due to start in December 2017 rumbles on. Our MPs are involved in pushing for this commitment to be delivered with two, Mike Amesbury, MP for Weaver Vale and Esther McVey, MP for Tatton particularly active. Indeed, Esther invited some of us to meet with her on 8 February to bring her further up to date on the position. Our civil servants at the Department for Transport in London should not be allowed to let this situation continue where Mid Cheshire continues to have poor rail and road connections to the major employment centre of Manchester. This is strangling the Mid Cheshire economy and impacting on the living standards of all of us in the area. No doubt you’ll be letting your elected representatives know your views!

The consultants involved with assessing the **Mid Cheshire Rail Link**, the line from Crewe to Northwich and Knutsford via Sandbach, Middlewich and Gadbrook Park are now expected to deliver a further draft report towards the end of this March. This will also encompass the related options for the **Manchester Airport Western Link**. We’re looking forward to it and to Mid Cheshire being much better connected than currently with Crewe for onward connections.

More than a few of you will remember “**Paddy’s Engine**”, LMS 4-6-0 “**Black Five**” no. 5407 (BR 45407) owned by the late Paddy Smith of Mobberley. There was a Railfilms production about it which some of you may have. 5407, as 45407 is still regularly seen out and about on the main line on special trains, now being owned and maintained by Ian Storey & Son of Bury. Some years ago when we and the CRP were trying to run a further series of special steam trains over the Mid Cheshire Line a number of people gave us donations towards the project to help towards keeping the fares down. Sadly, we were unable to organise these primarily due to rising costs. Paddy’s widow, Sue Smith had given us £500 towards the project in Paddy’s memory. With us no longer able to organise these trains, Sue has very kindly donated the money to MCRUA in Paddy’s memory to support the development of the Mid Cheshire Line. She says “.... I’m only sorry he is not here to see his donation put to good use.” Those of us who knew Paddy, I was lucky to be one, will remember him as a very kind man. Thanks, Paddy & Sue.

That’s all for now. Enjoy the rest of our special *Rail Report*. If you can support what we are doing further, this will be appreciated by us and many more.

MAY 2019 TIMETABLE by Andrew Macfarlane

This will be essentially a “no change” timetable on the Mid Cheshire Line. Network Rail has refused to allow Northern to run any additional passenger trains on the line due to “increased risk at level crossings”. We are trying to find out the detail of this strange and surprising claim. Northern has a contract with the DfT to operate two trains an hour on the Mid Cheshire Line, and hourly trains on Sundays, starting in December

2017. Network Rail is controlled by the DfT so it is bizarre and unacceptable that they are preventing Northern from delivering on their contract. Network Rail claims that it is becoming 'passenger-focused'. It needs to demonstrate this here. MCRUA has raised this issue with local MPs Esther McVey and Mike Amesbury at face-to-face meetings and we encourage members who live along the MCL to contact their MPs to demand that the promised train service is delivered in full.

NORTHERN POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE BY “BACK OFFICE STAFF” AT TIMES OF DISRUPTION CONTINUES OR DOES IT? by John Oates

I wrote in the previous issue about our frustrations with Northern's back office staff who seem quite happy to abandon their customers at any excuse. As I summarised it, when there is disruption for whatever reason for more than an hour or two along the Mid Cheshire Line, Northern seem to simply abandon the service and leave passengers to sort out getting to their destinations themselves. For those who didn't receive the previous issue, it will be available on www.mcrua.org.uk once this issue is published.

And this continued.

On Tuesday 18 December 2018 it was announced by Northern and National Rail on their websites that the line between Manchester and Chester was closed “due to a fire near the railway”. What actually happened was that on this very windy day a number of roof panels had become unsafe on the cinema adjacent to the railway line between Altrincham and Hale. The fire brigade attended, setting up an exclusion zone around the cinema, this including the railway line for a few hundred yards south of Altrincham Station.

Under British Rail and previous franchises services would have run from Piccadilly to Altrincham, running into platform 3, a signalled move, returning to Piccadilly from platform 3. Services would also have run from Chester to Hale with empty trains “turned round” through the use of the crossover at Hale supervised by a Movements Operations Manager (MOM). This way services for the bulk of the line would have continued more or less as normal.

As we have become used to under Northern, they simply cancelled all trains throughout the line for 4 hours with no road replacement services, abandoning their customers. More of the same desperately poor customer service from Northern.

Then on moving into 2019, Northern's approach seems to have changed. On Tuesday 29 January the directional levers on the single line between Northenden and Cheadle Village Junction (near Stockport) failed. To our astonishment all trains continued to run throughout the line. There was much late-running, up to 30-40 minutes, but a full service was maintained. This continued throughout the day.

Then on Wednesday 30 January there was unusually heavy snow in the Altrincham area. The bus station at Altrincham Interchange was closed with buses turning early in their route. Metrolink stopped running into Altrincham. And the points at Navigation Road on/off the short single line section through Navigation Road Station failed just before the first services in the morning. Again to our astonishment, Northern continued to run services between Chester and Altrincham, turning them there before they returned to Chester, thus keeping a full service going on the busiest Altrincham-Knutsford-Northwich-Greenbank section of the line. There was little they could do about getting passengers from Altrincham to Stockport and Manchester with local roads being closed, no buses and no Metrolink, but at least they did the best they could. The points were back in operation by late morning.

Then on Thursday 31 January the directional levers for the signalling on the single line between Northenden and Cheadle Village Junction failed again, remaining in a failed state throughout the day. Again, Northern ran an almost full service, though with delays, with Network Rail implementing “pilotman” (temporary) working operations to keep the single line going. The service was thinned out by the removal of the peak hour extras to allow the rest of the Mid Cheshire service to run reasonably to time. This continued into

Friday 1 February with the signalling on the single line still failed, but apart from the loss of the peak hour extras, services continued to run, if somewhat delayed.

Saturday 2 February was a further RMT Strike Day with no passenger train services over the Mid Cheshire Line. It seems this allowed Network Rail enough time (in between freight trains) to complete the repairs such that a normal service resumed on Sunday 3 February.

Well done, Northern. Considering your customers. Long may this continue!

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS by Paul Wilkinson

2019 Membership update (data as at 14th March 2019) - Thank you for your continuing support.

If you received this Rail Report by Post: Please check your envelope for your membership number. If it is in the form of:

18xxx - your membership ran out on 28 February. We invite you to renew using the enclosed form. If you received this Rail Report by email, you will also receive the renewal form if appropriate

19xxx - you have recently joined or already renewed. Thank you for your continued support.

Members who receive this Rail Report **by email** will also be invited to rejoin if not already done so.

Members are asked to specify how they wish to receive future communications from MCRUA on the back of the 2019 subscription renewal form. The Committee would like to clarify that those who opted for “post ONLY” (option A on the form) will only receive the newsletter (and the pocket timetable if a new one is starting). They will not receive email updates which are occasionally sent out between mailings of the newsletter. These will not be sent out by post. If you wish to receive the newsletter by post and the email updates (by email) and you opted for “post ONLY” you need to switch to Option C (receiving everything by email and by post). Option C will keep you updated with MCRUA’s Occasional News. Please note: To reduce costs, electronic distribution is preferred. You can change your mailing option by contacting the Membership Secretary at membership@mcrua.org.uk.

FORTHCOMING RAIL REPLACEMENT BUSES DUE TO PLANNED ENGINEERING WORK

From Monday 1st April to Thursday 4th April (inclusive) and from Monday 13th May to Thursday 16th May (inclusive) the 22.46 train from Chester to Manchester Piccadilly is replaced by a bus throughout its journey. An additional bus runs at 23.33 from Knutsford to Manchester Piccadilly. The Chester-Piccadilly bus is “set down only” at stations from Knutsford onwards. Also between the same dates the 22.40 and 23.41 trains from Manchester Piccadilly to Chester are replaced by buses throughout their journeys (the bus replacing the 23.41 train departs from Piccadilly at 23.46). Additional buses will run at 23.27 and 00.23 from Knutsford to Chester. The 23.46 Piccadilly-Chester bus is “set down only” at stations from Knutsford onwards. This late night bus replacement continues to happen every 6 weeks. Contrary to the notice posted on Northern’s website, the bus calling point at Altrincham is Stand A in the bus station.

SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THROUGH FARES TO METROLINK by Andrew Macfarlane

Through fares from the Mid Cheshire Line to Metrolink stations have existed since Metrolink opened in 1992 although they have never been adequately publicised. The through fares to “Metrolink City” changing at Altrincham onto Metrolink have previously been similar to the fares to Manchester via Stockport. Indeed for a time the fare from Knutsford to Metrolink City was less than the fare from Knutsford to Manchester via Stockport. Since the recent fare increase however the through fares are simply an add-on of the fare to Altrincham and the fare from Altrincham to Metrolink zones 1 to 4. So the fares to Metrolink Zones 1 to 4 (the equivalent of Metrolink City) are now significantly more than the fare to Manchester via Stockport. From Knutsford the Anytime Return Fare to Metrolink Zones 1 to 4 is now £13.60 whereas the return fare to Manchester Central Zone via Stockport is £10.70, a significant difference. MCRUA has approached Northern about this and are awaiting their comments.

A SPECIAL TRAIN WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

The following is from the Retro Railtours website:

The Retro Devon Seaside Saturday 25th May 2019

Grab your bucket and spade, we're off to the seaside! Our first train of 2019—heading down to Devon - will commence its journey in Huddersfield, heading over the Pennines towards Greater Manchester before travelling south along the Marches route. We will arrive in Paignton around midday. Paignton is the quintessential British seaside town, noted for its beautiful scenery and sandy beaches. If you wish, there are steam trains towards Kingswear and Greenway Halt – where you can visit Agatha Christies' house. Our train will also call at Bristol Temple Meads, Exeter St. David's and Torquay — where you may choose to alight. You will have around 3½ hours in Paignton / Torquay, around 4 hours in Exeter, or just over 6 hours in Bristol.

Train Information

Two DRS Class 37 diesel locos have been requested as the motive power for this tour. Our famous on board 'Real Ale Bar' will be available, serving a variety of hand-pumped Real Ales, wines and hot snacks. We are the only mainline operator to serve real ales by hand-pump in Britain! As usual, there will be three classes of accommodation to suit all budgets.

Standard Class

Our standard class accommodation is very comfortable, with tables and large windows allowing you to enjoy your Retro experience.

First Class

If you want a little extra luxury, First class is perfect. With wide, padded seats, our ex-Intercity First Class coaches provide the perfect ambience to enjoy the scenic journey.

Premier Dining

Our Premier Dining option will make your day extra special. Our on-board chefs prepare a Great British Breakfast in the morning and a 3-course evening meal on the return journey. If you want to re-create the Golden Age of Train Travel, this is certainly your opportunity! We can be flexible with requirements for children, any special requests or dietary needs. Please call us to enquire.

Timings

The following timings are **provisional** and have not yet been confirmed by Network Rail:

	Outward (dep)	Return (arr)
Huddersfield	06:10	22:20
Stalybridge	06:50	21:40
Reddish South	07:10	21:20
Stockport Edgeley	07:20	21:10
Wilmslow	07:40	20:45
Crewe	08:30	20:30
Shrewsbury	09:10	20:00

Fares

The following fares are available:-

From all pick up points to any set down point:		
Standard Class	(Adult)	£84.50
Standard Class	(Child)	£70.00
First Class	(Adult)	£120.00
First Class	(Child)	£100.00
Premier Dining	(Adult)	£215.00
Premier Dining	(Child)	Please enquire.

Online bookings are now open at <https://www.retrorailtours.co.uk/booking.php> or Retro Railtours can be contacted on 0161 330 9055 (out of hours there is an answerphone).

FARES NEWS by Andrew Macfarlane

Transport for Wales has said that it does not intend to continue the Club 55 offer which was a feature of the Arriva Trains Wales franchise. First Transpennine Express is carrying on with Club 55 but it is not known when their next offer will start. System One tickets in Greater Manchester increased in price as from 2nd January. The Greater Manchester Rail Ranger ticket is now £7 for adults and £3.50 for children aged 5 to 15. Prices of The GM Traincard and GM CountyCard increased from 2nd January. The popular Wayfarer ticket increased to £14 for adults, £9.20 for holders of English National Concessionary passes, £28 for groups of up to 4 people no more than two of whom are adults and £7 for children aged 5 to 15.

VIDEO OF THE MID CHESHIRE LINE

Don Coffey has produced an interesting 1 hour 18 minute video of a cab ride on the line. It can be found here on You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnE57L2uB7c>.

NEW 16-18 RAILCARD

A new national 16-18 Railcard is to be introduced in September. This will provide 50% off fares and there will be no minimum fare, a welcome introduction.

CREWE TO LIVERPOOL LINE by Simon Barber

As John Oates has mentioned above, the Crewe-Liverpool line will see a better train service from the timetable change on Sunday 19th May. This is slightly later than expected, but there are some very welcome changes. We have got almost all the improvements we asked for - and what is more, the improvements that London Northwestern (LNw) have promised go beyond those that they are obliged to deliver as part of their franchise agreement. London Northwestern do seem to be listening to passenger feedback. What a contrast to the Mid Cheshire Line, where we are still battling with Network Rail and Northern to get the train service increases that they should have delivered from December 2017.

The biggest improvements will be felt at Acton Bridge, which will see the return of train services on Sundays, roughly every 2 hours, and will have more trains on weekdays and Saturdays so that most of the 4-hour gaps in the timetable are eliminated. Hartford gets more northbound trains so that there are two trains an hour northbound for most of the day (with a couple of gaps); there are already two trains an hour southbound. There will also be an earlier southbound departure from Hartford on weekday mornings, at 0637. This will allow an arrival in Euston at 0853 after a leisurely 30 minute connection at Crewe - a longer wait than ideal, but enough to get a coffee and a bacon sandwich, essential at that time of day! Today the earliest possible arrival in London is 0941. The first arrival in Birmingham will be 0750, compared to 0818 today. At Winsford the weekday timetable is little changed, but all three stations benefit from an increase in the Saturday evening service in both directions. This gives more choice of return trains from Liverpool on Saturday evening (and presumably less overcrowding), but unfortunately the last train from Liverpool is still to be at 2204 - too early for most theatre or concert visits. As the last train on weekdays and on Sundays is just after 2330, why not on Saturdays too? Sunday services will start a bit earlier in both directions and all three stations will benefit; the first arrival in Liverpool will be 1006 (it's 1120 today) and the first arrival in Birmingham will be 1211 (it's a very late 1315 today).

LNw have also announced that from May, many trains between Liverpool and Birmingham will continue beyond Birmingham, all the way to London Euston. This is useful for our Cheshire stations because it provides through trains to Birmingham International (for the airport and National Exhibition Centre) and Coventry. Let's hope this does not reduce the reliability of our service! We may find that southbound trains are advertised at our stations as being 'London trains' but I would not suggest them as a good way to travel to

London, because the journey will take 3¾ hours or so. It will still be fastest to change onto Virgin trains at Crewe or Stafford. It will also be faster to London to change onto LNW's own Crewe to London service at Crewe, because from May these trains will run direct to Stafford instead of via Stoke to Stafford. They will take about 2¼hr from Crewe to Euston. There's no sign of LNW re-introducing the catering trolley on these services, unfortunately, but it means there is going to be a real choice of fares and journey times to and from London.

As well as pressing for a later train on Saturday evenings, MCRUA will keep making the case for the remaining 4-hour gaps in the timetable at Acton Bridge to be filled (including the awkward gap on weekday evenings northbound, which prevents most day trips to Birmingham or London): for the few remaining one-hour gaps at Hartford to be addressed, and for more frequent services at Winsford, including the elimination of the 90-minute gap northbound in the late afternoon. We have also drawn LNW's attention to the car parking problems at all three stations. LNW do appear to be taking this seriously and they have started discussions with landowners to try to find a solution at each station. In particular we are hopeful that the Acton Bridge car park, which used to be larger than today, can be expanded back to its former size quite quickly. We have also not lost sight of the long-held wish - and need - for trains to Warrington, Wigan and Preston. This appears to be LNW's wish too, but it is outside the scope of their franchise agreement so we are into 'railway politics'.

All this timetable news comes with one small caveat, which is that these times are not formally announced on the LNW website yet. They have however been published in the National Rail Journey Planner, so they are public, but they could be subject to last minute change. As always, it's sound advice to check before you travel. The difference now is, you might just be pleasantly surprised when you do!

METROLINK NEWS by Andrew Macfarlane

The new Metrolink Zonal fares came into effect from 13th January. More information can be found here: <https://www.tfgm.com/public-transport/tram/zonal-fares>. Return fares were abolished. There is a choice of single fares or day tickets, which give you unlimited travel within the selected zones for the rest of the day. Both 7-day and 28-day Metrolink paper season tickets can now be purchased from Metrolink ticket machines without the need for a photocard or a Get Me There card, a welcome improvement. The tram service to Ashton-under-Lyne increased to every six minutes on Monday to Saturday from 28th January.

NEWS FROM THE LINE by Andrew Macfarlane

As from 2nd January the booking office at Altrincham no longer sells Metrolink single and return tickets, a retrograde step. This was a particularly useful facility on cricket or football match days when there are long queues at the ticket machines. Altrincham booking office continues to sell Metrolink season tickets. The notices above the ticket windows at Altrincham informing passengers that Northern has Penalty Fares on the Mid Cheshire Line are incorrect. No such scheme is in operation (yet) although Penalty Fares schemes are spreading across the Northern network. Altrincham to Hale has been identified as a potential "Pathfinder" scheme for Tram-Train operation in Greater Manchester. Hale certainly deserves a better service but there could well be significant disruption to the train service on the Mid Cheshire Line whilst this scheme was constructed. Hopefully an option would be chosen which did not entail rebuilding overbridges on this section. New platform seats were installed at Cuddington in January 2019. New, larger noticeboards for the joint use of the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership and MCRUA have recently been installed at stations along the line. Please look out for them at your station.

FREIGHT NEWS

Biomass trains between Liverpool Docks and Drax Power Station are now mainly hauled by more powerful Class 60 locomotives rather than the class 66s previously used. The contract between the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority and Viridor comes to an end on 31st May. From 1st June Suez will operate the contract (including the operation of the Refuse Transfer Stations such as the one at Northenden) but Viridor will still be responsible for the processing of Refuse Derived Fuel at the Runcorn Energy from Waste plant.

SSE has announced that it will be closing one of its four generating units (the 485MW Unit 1) at Fiddler's Ferry Power Station near Warrington. The power station's remaining three units will continue to operate as normal due to them receiving Capacity Market contracts, but the plant's overall capacity will reduce from 1995MW to 1510MW. SSE has said that it will continue to keep the long-term future of the power station under review.

LOCAL RAIL NEWS by Andrew Macfarlane

It was announced on 21st December that the Virgin West Coast franchise has been extended to March 2020. Trains have not run to Manchester United Football Ground Halt on matchdays since December 2017, allegedly because of a lack of paths on the busy section through Oxford Road and Deansgate. Electric trains began operating in passenger service on the Bolton line as from Monday 11th February. Only just over a third of trains are electric pending the completion of the new power feeder cable from Heyrod (north of Stalybridge) to Manchester Victoria. A full electric service should operate from May 2019. Class 319s are now operating the following services via Bolton: 50% of trains between Manchester Victoria and Buckshaw Parkway and 33% of trains between Manchester Airport and Preston (Northern services) and Manchester Piccadilly and Blackpool North. It has taken 10 years from when this electrification scheme was first announced!

CREWE DIESEL DEPOT OPEN DAY ON SATURDAY 8th JUNE

This is thought to be the first-ever open day at Crewe Diesel Depot, now the home of Jeremy Hosking's Locomotive Services Limited. The Open Day will be from 09.30 to 16.00 and is being organised by Virgin Trains, Locomotive Services Ltd and Railway Magazine. There will be steam, diesel and electric exhibits. A maximum of 5,000 tickets are to be sold (at £12.50 each for adults) on a first-come, first-served basis. You can buy a ticket online at <https://www.classicmagazines.co.uk/promotion/allchange>. Readers without internet access should call 01507 529529 to obtain tickets or write to: Crewe Open Day Tickets, Customer Services, Mortons Media Group, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs, LN9 6JR, enclosing a cheque payable to Mortons Media Group.

PETITION TO QUADRUPLE THE TRACK BETWEEN PICCADILLY AND OXFORD ROAD

Members may wish to sign this petition in the light of Transport Secretary Chris Grayling still not authorising the building of the additional through platforms 15 and 16 at Manchester Piccadilly. The petition can be found at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/232155>.

2019 MUSIC TRAINS PROGRAMME by Michael Ross

We have a full programme arranged for 2019, running from April to October. New bands as well as returning regulars and a new venue – in Knutsford - as part of Knutsford Music Festival. We start from Chester to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley on Wednesday 24 April to promote Chester Folk Festival. On Wednesday 22 May we will have a Music Train from Altrincham to Alexanders in Chester with Herding Catz and the Dave Roberts Quartet. On Wednesday 29 May we will have another Chester to Plumley Music Train with the Deportees.

2019 Music trains from Chester

Wednesday 29 May – to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley with the Deportees

Friday 21 June – to the Angel in Knutsford with Nelson Peach

Wednesday 10 July - to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley with Pastry Shoes

Wednesday 7 August – to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley with Terry Burgin Blues Band

Wednesday 4 September - to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley with Port Sunlight Sea Dogs

Wednesday 2 October - to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley with the Time Bandits

2019 Music Trains from Altrincham to Chester

Wednesday 22 May – to Alexanders with blues from Herding Catz on the train and Dave Roberts Jazz Quartet at Alexanders

Wednesday 3 July – to Alexanders with jazz from Loose Change Buskers on the train and Terry Burgin Blues Band at Alexanders

Wednesday 11 September – to Alexanders with jazz from Marts ManJazz3 on the train and the Deportees at Alexanders

(You need to book the combination package of taxis to and from the station plus sausage'n mash at Alexanders through the Alexanders website alexanderslive.com).

Groups on Music Trains

Groups are very welcome to join the Music Trains.

If you plan to bring a group of 10 or more people on a Music Train from Chester to Plumley, please contact me in advance about your plans so that we can agree a date or dates. That way we can avoid having too many groups on one evening as well as the many people who come as individuals or in smaller groups – who can just turn up at a station on the night.

If you plan to bring a group on the Music Trains from Altrincham to Alexanders in Chester then just go ahead and book online with Alexanders. There is a maximum of 45 places available.

We are happy to arrange extra Music Trains for groups of 30 or more people on weekdays - five are arranged already. They can be in the daytime or in the evening. In the daytime we mostly go to the Railway Inn at Mobberley. The costs are the train ticket and a contribution to the band's fee – there is no extra charge for arranging the Music Train. Contact me to discuss arrangements and possible dates. It might also be possible to arrange a group Music Train by combining two groups, if between them they can bring 30 or more people.

SAPHOS TRAINS PROGRAMME FOR 2019

Saphos Trains have announced their steam-hauled special train programme for 2019. The full programme can be viewed here: <https://saphostrains.com/>. Their first train in 2019 is on Saturday 13th April “The William Shakespeare” from Preston, Wigan North Western, Warrington Bank Quay, Hartford, Crewe and Stafford to Stratford-upon-Avon. Standard class and first class are already fully booked on this train with only Premier Dining seats remaining. Eight other Saphos Trains trips call at Hartford in 2019. Saphos Trains can be reached on 0800 038 5320 or enquiries@saphostrains.com.

ALTRINCHAM WINTER LECTURE SERIES

The Altrincham Electric Railway Preservation Society is again running its popular Winter Lecture Series at Altrincham Methodist Hall, which is on the corner of Barrington Road and Woodlands Road, around 5 minutes' walk from Altrincham station in the direction of Manchester. Meetings are on the second Friday of the month starting at 7.30pm. Admission is £3.50 inclusive of “half time” refreshments (AERPS members are free). The remaining programme is:

12th April. “Great Western and Southern Steam in the West Country” by Alf Storey.

STEPHENSON LOCOMOTIVE SOCIETY PROGRAMME

The Stephenson Locomotive Society continues to meet in Manchester, at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, very near St Peter's Square Metrolink station at 2pm on Saturdays. The remaining programme for this season is:

13th April. “British-built Steam Locos.: Down Under” by Dr Michael Bailey.

8E RAILWAY ASSOCIATION PROGRAMME

The 8E Railway Association continues to meet at the Gladstone Club, Station Road, Northwich CW9 5RB, which is a short walk from Northwich station in the direction of the town centre. Meetings take place on the second Tuesday of the month and start at 7.45pm. Admission for first-time guests is free, subsequent meeting entrance fee is £3. Free sandwiches are provided at the half-time break. The forthcoming programme is:

9th April: "Developments at Corwen" by Paul Reynolds

14th May: "Steam in the Snow" by Les Nixon

10th September: "Cornwall (Part 2)" by Stephen Gay.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have joined since the last Rail Report:

Mr P Oakes of Alderley Edge

Mr C Spurling of Dutton

MID CHESHIRE LINE PEOPLE

We welcome Nicola as a new member of staff at Knutsford. We also welcome Chris Jackson as the new Regional Director for Northern for the West and Central Regions (the Mid Cheshire Line is in the Central Region of Northern).

IN MEMORIAM

We regret to report the death of MCURA member Mr Anthony Harrison of Northwich in September 2018.

DISCLAIMER

Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the MCRUA Committee.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

National Rail Enquiries	03457 48 49 50 or 0207 068 0500
Virgin Trains Ticket Sales (to buy any rail ticket)	0871 977 4222 (08.00 to 22.00 every day)
London Northwestern Railway ticket sales (to buy any rail ticket)	03333110006
Northern ticket sales	0344 241 3454
British Transport Police for non-emergencies	0800 40 50 40 or text 61016.
Network Rail (to report infrastructure faults)	03457 11 41 41 or 0207 557 8000
Train Running Information - TrainTracker	03457 48 49 50 and then Option 1.
Northern Customer Services	0800 200 6060 (0700-2200)
Transport Focus (complaints appeals)	0300 123 2350
TfGM Bus, Rail and Metrolink Enquiries	0161 244 1000 (0700-2000 Mon-Fri, 0800-2000 Sat/Sun)
Metrolink Customer Services	0161 205 2000 (seven days a week)
Merseytravel Public Transport Enquiry Line	0151 236 7676 (08.00 to 20.00 every day)
National Public Transport Enquiry Line	0871 200 22 33 (07.00 to 22.00 every day)

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.nationalrail.co.uk (includes a journey planner which shows times and fares and a facility to obtain real time train running information for any station)

www.northernrailway.co.uk (includes details of forthcoming engineering work under "Travel" and then "Improvement Works")

www.networkrail.co.uk (includes a link to download the National Rail timetable)

www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk (to buy any GB rail ticket using a credit or debit card)
www.tfgm.com (includes a Journey Planner called "MyTfGM" which shows scheduled tram times if you plan a journey involving Metrolink).
www.metrolink.co.uk (shows any current problems with the tram service and details of future engineering work)
www.traveline.info (a national public transport journey planner).
www.transportfocus.org.uk (the website of Transport Focus, the statutory body for rail and bus users).
www.railfuture.org.uk (the website of Railfuture, the independent, national, voluntary body for rail users)
traintimes.org.uk (an unofficial website which provides rail information derived from official sources in a user-friendly format).
www.uksteam.info (details of steam-hauled special trains on the main line).
www.brfares.com (lists all available fares on the National Rail network).
railwayherald.com/railtours (lists special trains (both steam and modern traction) on the main line).

YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIRMAN John Oates, "Swallowfield", Slade Lane, Mobberley, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 7QN.
Tel: 07860-513309 (mobile), Email: john.oates@mcrua.org.uk

VICE-CHAIRMAN John Hulme, Brow Cottage, Leighs Brow, Barnton, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 4HT.
& WEBMASTER Tel: 01606-76092, Email: john.hulme@mcrua.org.uk

SECRETARY Paul Wilkinson. Email: secretary@mcrua.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Paul Wilkinson, 48 Romana Square, Altrincham, WA14 5QB.
Email: membership@mcrua.org.uk

TREASURER Simon Barber Tel: 01606 801606, Email: simon@antrobus.net

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Andrew Macfarlane, 25 Prestbury Avenue, Timperley, Altrincham, WA15 8HY.
Tel: 0161-928-9394, Email: andrew.macfarlane6851@gmail.com.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

David Miller, 16 Primrose Hill, Cuddington, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 2TZ. Tel: 01606-888093.
Michael Ross, 80 Lache Lane, Chester, Cheshire, CH4 7LS. Tel: 01244-683477, Email: mkk.ross@btinternet.com
Harry Boardman Email: harry@hacabo.co.uk
Chris Lodington Email: chrislodington@hotmail.co.uk
Mike Battman Email: battman@ntlworld.com
Richard Bragg Email: rj.bragg@ntlworld.com
Judie Collins Email: judieco@hotmail.com

Mid Cheshire Rail Link Campaign Sub-Committee. Chairman: Stephen H Dent. Telephone: 07710 288824. Email: stephendent@outlook.com.

MID-CHESHIRE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

Email: railofficer@midcheshirerail.org.uk

Location: 2nd Floor, Nicholas House, 1, Black Friars, Chester, CH1 2NU

Postal address: 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port CH65 0BE **Visit:** <http://www.midcheshirerail.org.uk>

FRIENDS OF ALTRINCHAM INTERCHANGE – Please contact Andrew Macfarlane.

MCRUA is affiliated to Railfuture, the national, voluntary body for rail users.

MCRUA MEMBERSHIP There are five classes of membership of the Association:

Individual under 21 years - £2.00, Individual 21 years and over - £7.00, Family - £10.00, Voluntary body - £20.00 and Corporate - £100.00.

You can join or renew online at www.mcrua.org.uk/membership. Alternatively, you may pay by standing order, details available from the Membership Secretary membership@mcrua.org.uk. Standing Orders are fixed price for five years from the start of the payments.

You may also pay by cheque made payable to **Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association** and sent to the **Membership Secretary, 48 Romana Square Altrincham WA14 5QB.**

Members are required to specify how they wish to receive future communications from MCRUA. There are three options:

Option A: by POST ONLY: only receive by post the newsletter (and the pocket timetable if a new one is starting). You will not receive email updates which are occasionally sent out between mailings of the newsletter. These will not be sent out by post

Option B: by EMAIL ONLY: only receive by email the newsletter, (with link to the pocket timetable if a new one is starting). You will also receive occasional email updates sent out between editions of the newsletter. These will not be sent out by post

Option C: to receive BOTH PRINTED AND ELECTRONIC versions.

Please note: **To reduce costs, electronic distribution is preferred.**

You can change your mailing option by contacting the Membership Secretary at membership@mcrua.org.uk.

Please consent to either: A by post OR B by email, OR C both by post and by email

A	I wish to receive by post ONLY printed Rail Reports, Notices of General Meetings, occasional information regarding special events and other information of legitimate interest to members.	Yes / no	
B	OPT-IN I wish to receive BY EMAIL the Rail Report 3 or 4 times a year.	Yes / no	
	OPT-IN I wish to receive BY EMAIL Notices of General meetings – usually the AGM		
	OPT IN I wish to receive BY EMAIL occasional information regarding special events and other information of legitimate interest to members.		
C	OPT IN I wish to receive by email AND by post , the Rail Report, Notices of General Meetings and occasional information regarding special events and other information of legitimate interest to members.	Yes / no	
Name		Renewal	New member
Address		Individual	Family
Town			Number in family ?
Postcode			
Email address			

Signed consent date.....

Please send to MCRUA Membership Secretary, 48 Romana Square Altrincham WA14 5QB.