

MID CHESHIRE RAIL REPORT

No. 98

SUMMER 2017

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/#!/betterailservicesmidcheshireline?fref=ts>.

FROM THE SECRETARY:

TAKE NOTE: The Annual General meeting of the Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association will take place on **TUESDAY 27 JUNE 2017** at 8pm in the Plumley Village Hall, Plumley Moor Road WA16 0TR - some 5 minutes' walk from Plumley railway station (in the direction of the village, from the station bridge you turn right). The meeting will be followed by a presentation given by **Liam Sumpter, Northern's Regional Director Central**. Based in Manchester, the region stretches as far north as Clitheroe and Colne, down to Crewe, Stoke on Trent and Buxton. A copy of the minutes from the 2016 AGM can be found on the MCRUA website. Copies will be available at the meeting or from the Secretary by email. If you don't have access to email and would like copies please contact the Secretary.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS by John Oates

We're pleased to provide our latest "Rail Report" enclosing the **Mid Cheshire Summer Timetable** commencing on Sunday 21 May. This has no changes from the previous winter timetable.

The MCRUA committee, along with Friends Groups on the Line and the Community Rail Partnership members have received the details of the proposed **Draft of the Mid Cheshire Line Timetables for the Revised "Two trains an hour" Service** pattern from May 2018 for consultation, although Northern are saying they are a long way off being finalised. Consistent with the requirements of the new franchise agreement for the Line and a model promoted by MCRUA, comments need to be with Northern through ourselves by 7 July 2017. Sunday services will double from once every two hours to hourly; weekday services will be increased to two trains an hour during off peak times. The proposals include an hourly limited stop faster service from Manchester Piccadilly to Chester stopping at Stockport, Altrincham, Hale, Knutsford, Northwich and then all stations to Chester. There's also to be an hourly stopping service between Manchester Piccadilly and Greenbank.

MCRUA recognises these are only draft timetables and believe the proposals are a good starting point for the consultation. Considerable effort was expended by our Rail Planning Team at the bidding stage for the new franchise and whilst the proposed timetable does not "tick all our boxes", we are pleased to see a doubling of the service on Sundays and weekdays during off peak periods. The devil is in the detail and the problems surrounding sufficient access paths on the busy Stockport to Manchester Piccadilly route. Our role now is to provide Northern with local detail and comment so they can fully understand the needs of the community and improve on the proposals. A senior team from MCRUA has already met Northern to informally discuss the proposals and we are pleased they are taking on board our case. A doubling of the service on the line and a faster service into Manchester has got to be good news for residents in Mid Cheshire, particularly as our local roads continue to get busier and busier.

The Committee would welcome MCRUA members' comments to help put together MCRUA's formal comments. Please send comments to consultations@mcrua.org.uk by 20th June so that we can take them into account. Northern have asked our members not to undertake any PR or share the consultation information.

Meanwhile, we're afraid we've been unable to organise a **Special Train** for 2017. This has arisen for a variety of reasons. Uppermost amongst these is that Riviera Trains, the company from which we hire the trains, has had to relocate its northerly base from Crewe to Burton-on-Trent. MCRUA has been running special trains for many years, and we're sorry not to be continuing with this. If the situation changes, fear not, we'll be in touch through the *Rail Report* and also through our large mailing list.

The continuing decline in **Train Performance** appears to have halted from mid-March. You'll be aware from previous reports that this poor performance has primarily been due to track maintenance problems with the temporary speed restrictions (TSRs) we have appearing to be breeding. This got so bad, that the Mid Cheshire Line even managed to replace the Southport to Manchester Airport route's long-held position at the bottom of the table! A number of TSRs were removed during March, more in April. Work continues and we are very hopeful to be seeing improving figures from early summer. Our **Music Train** season made a great start in April. This year we will be running more trains than ever before. These trains are a superb way of introducing people to the Line who don't otherwise use it. Once they've tried it, we hope they'll continue to use it for leisure and business trips. Please read Mike's full report below.

The Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership (CRP) was delighted to find in March that following their direct franchise extension, Cross Country are now providing £10,000 a year to our CRP. Further excellent news is that at the recent CRP meeting it was agreed that Sally's contract would be extended to 4 days a week from 3 days following her being released from one of her two days a week from Cheshire West & Chester Council. Sally provides more information on the CRP's forthcoming plans below. With this extra resource available to the CRP, we are now looking for **more line volunteers** for occasional help with various tasks such as keeping our noticeboards at local stations up to date, the leaflet and booklet racks replenished and helping to promote the line within local communities. If you are able to help for an hour or two every few weeks, please let Sally know – details on the back page. Your assistance will be much appreciated.

Our **Crewe-Liverpool Line** is still going through franchise renewal with the franchise suffering from what I call "end-of-franchise-itus", i.e. no developments are happening. This is likely to continue into 2018.

After a very cold April and early-May, **spring/summer has definitely arrived**. Time to dig out those boots, plan those trips to Chester, Liverpool, Manchester, and plan days out to the fascinating towns, villages and countryside along our lines.

CHANGES TO THE WAYFARER TICKET FROM SUNDAY 21ST MAY

There were changes to the popular Wayfarer ticket as from Sunday 21st May. The Concessionary version increased in price from £6 to £8 and is now only available to those with an English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) pass (otherwise known as a bus pass). So this will exclude anyone under 63 and also anyone not from England (until 21st May anyone aged 60 or over could buy the Concessionary version). However holders of Disability ENCTS passes will now be able to buy the Concessionary version for the first time. The new prices for the other versions of the ticket are as follows: Adult £13, Group (4 persons no more than 2 of whom are adults) £26 and Child (aged 5 to 15) £6.50. Further details about the Wayfarer ticket can be found on the TfGM website at:

http://www.tfgm.com/journey_planning/Tickets/Pages/tickets_wayfarer.aspx.

OTHER FARES NEWS by Andrew Macfarlane

Northern have kindly provided us with details of the fare increase from Sunday 21st May 2017. The only significant change in our area (apart from the Wayfarer ticket mentioned above) is that Off-Peak Day Return fares within the TfGM area have again increased by 50p. This gradual increase was stipulated by the Department for Transport in the Franchise Agreement for the current Northern franchise so as to equalise fares on either side of the TfGM boundary. It would of course have been better if fares outside the TfGM area had been reduced to the level of those within TfGM!

COMMUNITY RAIL OFFICER'S REPORT by Sally Buttifant

The CRP continues to work on promoting the Line and its attractions. Sally now regularly promotes the Line and Line attractions on social media and is also working on two big marketing campaigns – one centred around vintage travel posters with a modern take and rail days out exploring famous and not so famous women in history (have you heard of Elizabeth Raffald?). The new ‘vintage’ art will be on display at Lion Salt Works from Saturday 5th August until early September with the artist and Sally giving a talk at 2pm on Sunday 6th August. We are planning to produce updated versions of the popular booklets featuring walks from stations on the Mid Cheshire Line but before we can do this we need volunteers to try out the walks. Please contact me if you wish to help with this. The CRP continues to work with volunteers and station friends along the Line and is always looking for volunteers – please get in touch if you are interested.

MUSIC TRAINS REPORT by Michael Ross

Our season started well with the Chester Folk Festival Music Train in April. With three bands and more than seventy passengers on the train we filled both carriages with a band playing in each of them. And there was plenty more music from Full House, Steerage Class and Time Bandits in the refurbished Golden Pheasant. We ended at Chester Station with the front carriage ‘Rolling Home’ and the rear carriage singing ‘Good Night Irene’.

The programme for 2017 is now arranged. As well as six more Music Trains from Chester to Plumley and three from Altrincham to Chester we are also arranging eight for groups. We arrange Music Trains for groups to Mobberley, Chester and Plumley in order to spread the word about the Line.

The 2017 Music Train Programme - all on Wednesdays

Chester to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley

24 May	Deportees
14 June	Nelson Peach
12 July	Mossley Hill Grasshoppers
2 August	Espionage
6 September	Port Sunlight Sea Dogs
11 October	Time Bandits

Altrincham to Alexanders in Chester

14 June	Loose Change Buskers on the Music Train and Terry Burgin Blues Band at Alexanders
16 August	Murray Quartet on the Music Train and Dave Roberts Quartet at Alexanders
11 October	Marts ManJazz3 on the Music Train and Terry Burgin Blues Band at Alexanders

Comments

We always welcome comments, positive and otherwise, about the Music Trains. They will be particularly welcome this month as we plan to enter our Music Train programme for an ACORP award in June (ACORP is the Association of Community Rail Partnerships). We are asked to include evidence of the impact of our programme. Please tell us what you think before 10th June.

FORTHCOMING BUS REPLACEMENTS DUE TO PLANNED ENGINEERING WORK

From Monday 29th May to Thursday 1st June (inclusive) and from Monday 10th July to Thursday 13th July (inclusive) the 22.48 train from Chester to Piccadilly is replaced by a bus throughout its journey. An additional bus runs at 23.30 from Knutsford to Manchester Piccadilly. This continues to happen on a 6-week recurring cycle.

FREIGHT NEWS

In early May news broke that the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority is to terminate its 25-year PFI contract with Viridor Laing, which still has 17 years to run. It is as yet unclear what effect (if any) this will have on the “bin liner” traffic from the four Refuse Transfer Stations in Greater Manchester (Northenden, Bredbury, Brindle Heath and Dean Lane) to the Ineos Chlor Energy from Waste power station at Runcorn, which uses the Mid Cheshire Line.

SCHEME TO REOPEN THE SKELTON JUNCTION TO GLAZEBROOK LINE

On 28th March a scheme was launched to reopen the Skelton Junction (Timperley) to Glazebrook line as a heritage line with steam traction. The £30 million scheme would include restoration of the Cadishead viaduct over the Manchester Ship Canal and is the brainchild of telecoms mogul Neil McArthur who was the founder of TalkTalk. His trust funded the recent restoration of Irlam station building. The scheme would entail the reopening of West Timperley, Partington and Cadishead stations but further details remain to be confirmed. The section of line between Partington Junction and Glazebrook East Junction closed on 3rd August 1982 and traffic on the Skelton Junction to Partington Junction line ended on 10th October 1993 although that section is still officially open.

LIFTS AT ALTRINCHAM STATION

Good news is that the lifts at Altrincham station are now available until 22.15 on Monday to Saturday (and later if you ask at the bus station office). They are available until 20.00 on Sundays.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION ON NORTHERN AND MERSEYRAIL

Three strikes by RMT members have so far taken place in a dispute over the introduction of driver controlled operation (DCO). These were on Monday 13th March, Saturday 8th April and Friday 28th April. The Department for Transport specified in the Northern franchise that 50% of trains had to be under DCO by 2020. Of course passengers have never been asked for their view on the issue. Both sides in the dispute have adopted entrenched positions so it could be a long dispute. A strike planned for Tuesday 30th May was postponed as a mark of respect to those killed in the bombing at Manchester Arena/Manchester Victoria station. On each strike day so far there has been a train service between Chester and Altrincham and a replacement bus service between Altrincham and Stockport but services have finished in the early evening. It would surely be helpful if Northern were to provide posters at stations showing the temporary timetable on strike days. Not everyone has a smart phone.

CHESTER STATION EVENT by John Whittingham

Chester History and Heritage are doing a modest celebration on Tuesday 1st August 2017 when I shall be leading a guided tour of Chester station from 7pm-8.30pm starting from the station entrancebooking is recommended, £3 charge. **It will be exactly 170 years since the foundation stone was laid at Chester station on 1st August 1847.... no doubt Thomas Brassey was in attendance.....**More information on www.westcheshiremuseums.co.uk or telephone 01244 972210.

ALTRINCHAM INTERCHANGE by Ian Stuart, Chairman of the Friends of Altrincham Interchange (This article first appeared in the March 2017 issue of the Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society newsletter)

The Interchange has finally got into an established pattern of operation after the redevelopment which allowed it to re-open for business just over two years ago. From that positive statement, it could be concluded that after £19m of redevelopment that all has been running with few if any problems since that time. In some respects that may be true but in others that, regrettably, is not the case and this is precisely where the Friends of Altrincham Interchange continues to have an important role in trying to improve the experience of the travelling public when using the Interchange. Some problems are not too difficult to resolve such as the adequate supply of water to keep the public toilets operating without having to be taken out of commission in periods of low rainfall. They are designed to be supplied by harvested rainfall but it was discovered that the top-up valve installed had to be manually operated; this has now been replaced by one that kicks in automatically when the level drops. Another recurring problem was the unreliable operation of the lifts which

went on for some months. The root cause was eventually established and their reliability has risen to that which should reasonably be expected. Other problems have proved to be rather more challenging to resolve such as the floor on the decking on the new bridge. It had achieved the status of being a saga. From 31st October until about Christmas, passengers wishing to catch a train towards Chester had to traipse around to Platform 3 to gain access to the bridge to cross the track to reach platform 4. A request from the contractors to be allowed to close the bridge completely in order to do the work was refused and just as well as the 2–3 week job lasted until 17th February, a weekend under 16 weeks. For all this time the contractor's skip had taken up one of the disabled parking bays adjacent to the exit from platform 4. The problem originated from the inability of the glazing panels as fitted to keep out the rain resulting in the ingress of water causing the original tiles to lift. The new contractors are confident that the work now completed will be up to the job! The original revised lay-out of Stamford New Road opposite the Interchange was drawn up in great detail by Trafford Road Engineers but in practice it proved to be less than ideal, especially for the taxi drivers. The layout was re-assessed and some revisions made in consultation with the taxi drivers and everybody's now 'happy'. All drivers, however, now have an additional obstacle in the middle of the road (right beside the taxi rank) to negotiate which is intended to tell everyone that 'You're now entering Altrincham Town Centre' a very good idea these days when the only concept many drivers have of where they are is by listening to the instructions of their satnav.

The Interchange must cater for all modes of transport and one that is growing fast is cycling. The new cycle hub was finally opened a little late after a few minor problems had been resolved and the slow take-up has accelerated so that it is now regularly 30-40% of its design capacity. Lest anyone's cycle develops a fault it has an in-house cycle servicing facility! Altrincham proudly celebrated its success in the North West in Bloom in 2016 and the Interchange had plans to support the impressive displays around the town. Efforts were thwarted by the powers that be but the Friends and the Community Rail Partnership for the Mid Cheshire Line are determined to 'have another go' in 2017; it will, however, need the co-operation of those whose land is involved. In 2016 TfGM put forward to the Minister for Transport a proposal that it should take over the control/management of all stations within Greater Manchester, a total of 97 sites. This was not universally supported. There may be some logic where the site provides public transport by more than one means, such as at Altrincham, but to do so at, for example, Hale, would carry little logic – that would mean three bodies involved at a small site: TfGM, Northern Rail (the TOC) and Network Rail (owner of the trackbed). At Altrincham there are four bodies currently involved, TfGM, both sites and buses, the other two afore-mentioned and Metrolink. The fact that there are currently so many bodies involved makes site management a real challenge – in an attempt to address this challenge, an Interchange Steering Group has been established but with a certain irony, and reluctance to deny the public a voice, the Friends have been denied the opportunity to become involved. Friends of Altrincham Interchange will continue to strive for their objective and can now be easily contacted via their Facebook page - @foaigroup – All comments will be taken on board.

MCRUA PASSENGER COUNTING, SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2016 by Simon Barber

During late 2016, from early September until shortly before Christmas, MCRUA volunteers conducted a passenger counting exercise on the Mid Cheshire Line (MCL). This was undertaken at the request and with the support of Northern Rail and we are grateful for the co-operation of Northern staff, especially conductors. We aimed to count as wide a spread of weekday trains as possible, and in particular to obtain reliable figures for those trains known to be heavily loaded. This information is of great value to MCRUA in campaigning for better passenger services, and we believe it will help Northern Rail in identifying 'hot spots' where more train capacity is needed and in planning revenue protection measures. Within a 3-4 month survey it is not possible to assess the annual growth rate in passenger numbers along the line, because many passenger journeys are seasonal. MCRUA counts the number of passengers boarding and alighting MCL trains, and also the number on board on each section of the line. This tells us the station footfall (boarding plus alighting passengers) generated by each train and the train loading for each principal section of the route. The passenger flows conveniently divide the MCL into four sections; Chester-Northwich, Northwich-Knutsford, Knutsford-Altrincham and Altrincham-Stockport. We also count MCL trains between Stockport and Manchester, but draw fewer conclusions here as it is served by many other trains besides the MCL. The volunteers counted

118 trains (in all or in part) in the Down direction and 113 in the Up direction. Here are the highlights from the data:

Busiest stations: On weekdays, the busiest intermediate station is Knutsford, where the average footfall (boarding plus alighting) across all trains is over 40. The busiest station on the line for MCL passengers, however, is Piccadilly with typical footfall per train of 50-70. At weekends, Chester is busier than Knutsford. (These observations explain why MCRUA campaigns for every train on the line to run to run to/from Piccadilly – no Stockport starters/terminators – and for the forthcoming two trains per hour service to run all the way to Chester.)

Highest footfall: The busiest train at Knutsford, the 0717 MAN-CTR, regularly has footfall of over 250 and has on occasion exceeded 300 footfall at Knutsford station. This leads to increased dwell times and difficult timekeeping. The same train has footfall of over 200 at Greenbank.

Busiest trains: One surprising feature of the 2016 counts is the number of trains now regularly loading to over 100 passengers. These include a considerable number of 'contra-flow' services. The trains (and line sections) where the typical loading is over 100 are these:-

Down Direction – Weekdays

0717 MAN-CTR; loads to 120 after Stockport, 190 after Hale, 245 after Lostock Gralam.

0817 MAN-CTR; loads to 148 after Stockport, 108 after Hale.

1517 MAN-CTR; 114 after Hale.

1617 MAN-CTR; 107 after Stockport, 124 after Hale, 113 after Lostock Gralam.

1709 MAN-CTR; 108 after Stockport, 118 after Hale.

1817 MAN-CTR; 108 after Stockport.

On Saturdays the 1017 MAN-CTR often loads to over 100 throughout its journey and other trains do so seasonally. Evening trains can be heavily loaded, driven by city events.

Up Direction – Weekdays

0602 CTR-MAN; loads to 108 after Navigation Road.

0659 CTR-MAN; loads to 102 after Northwich, 199 after Ashley, 173 after Navigation Road.

1459 CTR-MAN; 160 after Northwich, 138 after Ashley.

1559 CTR-MAN; 112 after Northwich, 124 after Ashley, 138 after Navigation Road.

1659 CTR-MAN; 185 after Ashley, 168 after Navigation Road.

1804 CTR-MAN; 108 after Ashley.

On Saturdays, the 0959, 1059, 1159 and 1259 load heavily between Northwich and Manchester, with seasonal variation and event-driven peaks.

Comparison with ORR data. MCRUA's previous counting exercise took place from April 2014 to May 2015, corresponding closely in time to the annual passenger numbers produced by ORR from ticket sales data. ORR data cannot include ticketless travel. MCRUA counts actual passenger loadings, including passengers without tickets if any, and so, armed with a full year of data, we were able to estimate the extent of ticketless travel on the line in 2014-15 at about 15%. In 2016-17 we will not have a full year of data to compare with the ORR figures.

NEWS FROM THE LINE by Andrew Macfarlane

Navigation Road. Some of the rail in the points on the “heavy rail” line at Navigation Road was replaced in the early hours of Sunday 30th April but single line working over the down (Chester-bound) line between Navigation Road and Altrincham continues at the time of writing (25th May). CCTV is not now to be installed on the rail platform at Navigation Road. The taxi office in the former booking office at Navigation Road station closed in January 2017. **Manchester Piccadilly.** TransPennine Express plans to install ticket barriers across the end of platforms 1 to 3 as a franchise commitment. The steps on both sides of the line at **Heaton Chapel** station had reopened by 10th April. The ticket vending machine at **Knutsford** station no longer accepts cash but it will be replaced shortly by a new ticket vending machine as one of Northern's franchise commitments. Tata Chemicals Europe has announced that they still intend to build an Energy from Waste plant to power their **Lostock** soda ash factory. Hopefully common sense will prevail and the feedstock will be brought in by rail.

LOCAL RAIL NEWS

Ordsall Chord. The main arch of the bridge across the Irwell was lifted into place on 21st February. There is now doubt as to whether the additional through platforms 15 and 16 will be built at **Manchester Piccadilly**. If the Transport & Works Act Order for the scheme is approved by Government, it will be subject to a Benefit/Cost Analysis. **Stockport Rail Day and Longsight Open Day.** The Stockport Rail Day on Sunday 13th August has this year been cancelled, as has the proposed Longsight depot 175th anniversary Open Day, which was to have taken place this summer.

METROLINK NEWS by Andrew Macfarlane

Metrolink's second city crossing (2CC in the jargon) between St Peter's Square and Exchange Square opened on Sunday 26th February and the Metrolink service from Manchester Airport was extended to Deansgate-Castlefield from the same date. This service is to be extended to the centre platform at Manchester Victoria once this has been commissioned, probably sometime over the summer. Also the Altrincham-Piccadilly service was extended to Etihad Campus from 26th February. Work has begun to provide a new substation at Brooklands to boost the power supply and so enable the operation of more double trams. 10 spaces have been lost in the station car park as a consequence of this. There was a line possession in connection with this work on Sunday 14th May. Work was also carried out at the same time to remove the speed restriction over the new crossover points at Sale in the inbound direction. In a highly retrograde step, the times of the first and last trams are no longer provided on posters at tram stops. Tram times can be found in the Journey Planner on the TfGM website. Keolis Amey is to take over the operation of the Metrolink system from RATP Dev in July 2017. They are planning to recruit 300 more staff and they plan to have a greater staff presence at Metrolink stations.

SPECIAL TRAINS WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

Our friends at Retro Railtours are running two trips in the next few months which may be of interest to MCRUA members. On Saturday 15th July they are running the Retro Welsh Dragon 2 to Cardiff and Swansea. They have requested two DRS class 37 diesel locomotives to haul the train and approximate timings are:

Huddersfield	07:00	21:20
Stalybridge	07:25	20:55
Reddish South	07:40	20:40
Stockport	07:55	20:25
Wilmslow	08:05	20:10
Crewe	08:40	19:45
Shrewsbury	09:20	19:05
Cardiff Central	11:35 arr	17:00 dep
Swansea	13:00 arr	15:30 dep

Fares for the trip are £75 standard class return to Cardiff and £79 standard class return to Swansea. First class fares are also available. On Bank Holiday Monday 28th August they are running the Retro Edinburgh Festival Express to Edinburgh for which they have requested a DRS Class 68 diesel locomotive. The approximate timings are:

	Outward (dep)	Return (arr)
Chesterfield	05:10	23:20
Chinley	05:55	22:40
Hazel Grove	06:10	22:30
Stockport	06:20	22:20
Reddish South	06:35	22:10
Stalybridge	06:50	21:55
Huddersfield	07:15	21:30

Mirfield	07:35	21:10
Dewsbury	07:45	21:00
Edinburgh Waverley	12:30 arr	16:30 dep

Fares are £79 standard class return to Edinburgh from all points and £119 first class return. Full details can be found on the Retro Railtours website at: <http://www.retrorailtours.co.uk/index.php>, by email to info@retrorailtours.co.uk or by phoning 0161 330 9055 (answerphone out of hours).

COACH TRIP TO THE SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY ON SATURDAY 17TH JUNE

The Altrincham Electric Railway Preservation Society (AERPS) is running a coach trip to the Severn Valley Railway on Saturday 17th June. The all-inclusive price of £34 (£33 for AERPS members) includes unlimited travel on the railway and admission to the Engine House at Highley. The coach starts from Stockport (on the Edgeley side of the station) at 07.30 and picks up at Sale (07.45), Altrincham (07.55), Knutsford (08.10) and Northwich (08.25). Further information and a booking form can be obtained on the AERPS website at <http://altrinchamelectric.org.uk/excursions/index.html> or by phoning 0161 928 9394 or 0161 976 1831.

CHANGES TO CONTACT DETAILS

Please note that MCRUA Membership Secretary Paul Wilkinson has moved from 60 Romana Square to **48 Romana Square, Altrincham WA14 5QB** (also note change of postcode). Also both MCRUA Newsletter Editor Andrew Macfarlane and Mid-Cheshire Rail Link Campaign Sub-Committee Chairman Stephen Dent have had to change their email addresses due to EE closing down all ex-Freeserve email addresses as from 31st May. Andrew Macfarlane's email address is now andrew.macfarlane6851@gmail.com and Stephen Dent's email address is now stephenhdent@outlook.com.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following people who have joined since the last issue of the newsletter:

Mr Levermore of Chester	Mr Goulden of Knutsford
Mr Pickett of Frodsham	Mr Bell of Delamere
Mr Connellan of Hale	Mrs Ingrid Buckley, Ellesmere Port

MID CHESHIRE LINE PEOPLE

We welcome **Vicky Cropper** to the position of Regional Community and Sustainability Manager for the Central Region of Northern, which includes the Mid Cheshire Line. She comes from Great Western Railway, where she achieved great things on community rail and we look forward to working with her. We say farewell to **Dave Tyrer** as Station Manager for the Mid Cheshire Line and welcome his successor **Pam Williams** to the job. We also say farewell to **Alex Hynes**, who has left the job of Managing Director of Northern to head up the Scotrail Alliance for Network Rail. Long-standing MCRUA member **Councillor Roger Parkin** from Mickle Trafford sadly died during the Christmas period in 2016. He was Chairman of Mickle Trafford and District Parish Council for many years and he was made an Honorary Freeman of the City of Chester on 10th December 2015.

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 Midland ticket sales (to buy any rail ticket)	0121 634 2040
Northern ticket sales (to buy any rail ticket)	0800 200 6060
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 (24 hours per day, 7 days per week)
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 (now includes a new 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).

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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.

New members can now join 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. You can write the information below on a piece of paper if you do not wish to cut the form out of the newsletter.**

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