

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 13

- PROMISES OF MORE AND MORE TRAINS TO HARROGATE!

There have been many important announcements and planned developments affecting rail services to Harrogate since our previous Bulletin No 12 in September 2014. This summary highlights the key items of news and the relevant files or web links are provided in the covering e-mail where possible.

1. STAGECOACH+VIRGIN TAKE OVER EAST COAST MAIN LINE FRANCHISE

1.1 Headline News:

Virgin Trains East Coast will operate two-hourly direct services each way between Harrogate and London Kings Cross from May 2019 using the new Inter-City Express Programme (IEP) Trains. This means six or seven direct trains a day each way, seven days a week, including an earlier arrival into Kings Cross before 09.00 – just as we campaigned for!

1.2 Franchise Arrangements

On 27th November the DfT announced the award of an eight-year franchise for the East Coast Main Line services to a consortium of STAGECOACH and Virgin which will pay the Government a premium of £3.3bn to run the East Coast Main Line. The consortium has committed to invest £140m in stations and trains, reduce travel times from Leeds to London, and also introduce many additional direct services to several destinations – including Bradford, Harrogate and Lincoln from 2019.

The consortium is owned 90% by Stagecoach and 10% by Virgin but it will trade as Virgin Trains East Coast. In contrast the West Coast Main Line service is owned 49% by Stagecoach and 51% by Virgin and they have been running the line successfully since 1998, having doubled the passenger numbers. Stagecoach also operate East Midland Trains and South West Trains with a high degree of reliability

Virgin Trains East Coast took over the existing East Coast Trains rolling stock and most of their staff on Sunday 1st March 2015, operating to the existing schedule until December 2015 when they will make small changes. In May 2016 they will extend several existing services from Newcastle to Edinburgh. The rolling stock will be refurbished, the wi-fi system will be upgraded and Station facilities will be enhanced – with over 500 additional car parking spaces along the line. Further details can be provided in PDF versions of their launch brochure and their Timetable Changes available on request.

1.3 Harrogate Services

Early in 2014 we arranged private meetings for senior business representatives with each of the three short-listed bidders for the East Coast Franchise – namely, First Group; Keolis and Stagecoach/Virgin. We explained the unique characteristics of Harrogate and our need for more regular direct London services. Each bidder was presented with our Information Sheets HT401 and HT424 plus a portfolio of letters from local businesses and members of this group. Whilst none of the bidders were permitted to say what they were planning or to make any commitment on the specific proposals that we put to them, it was clear that they all did recognise the needs of Harrogate businesses, residents and visitors.

Following the DfT announcement of the award, we had a further meeting with the Stagecoach/Virgin Team on 20th January 2015 to clarify their plans as far as Harrogate-London services were concerned. They confirmed that from May 2019 Kings Cross-to-Leeds IEP trains would be extended to Harrogate every two hours, calling at Horsforth only. The fastest new trains will take just under 2 hours from Kings Cross to Leeds and about 2.6 hours to Harrogate. This schedule will also apply at weekends.

1.4 New Rolling Stock

These IEP trains will be bi-mode diesel-electric so they will not be dependent on electrification of the Harrogate Line. Bi-mode trains are fundamentally electric trains, which are equipped with additional under-floor diesel generators to provide propulsion where lines are not electrified.

Hitachi say that the first completed train, a five-car class 800 for the GWML is due to arrive at the port of Southampton in March 2015 with trials expected to begin at the test track near Nottingham in April. They then will deliver three bi-mode pre-series trains, including two five-car sets for Great Western and one nine-car unit for East Coast. With the first set now undergoing static and slow-speed dynamic testing at Kasado, production is at an advanced stage on both remaining pre-series trains.

The first nine production trains will be built in Japan before assembly switches to Hitachi's new purpose-built Newton Aycliffe plant in northeast England, which will assemble the remaining 112 sets. Construction of the Newton Aycliffe plant will be completed by the middle of 2015 and the facility will start assembling class 800 vehicles in mid-2016.

See also: <http://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com>

2. NORTHERN FRANCHISE BID SPECIFICATION ISSUED

2.1 **Headline News:**

The successful bidder for the Northern franchise is required to operate many more train services between Leeds and Harrogate from December 2017. The specification includes at least three trains each hour during the morning and evening peaks and four each hour between 10.00 and 16.00 on weekdays and Saturdays, i.e. double the current two per hour off-peak. Sunday services should also be doubled from one to two each hour between 10.00 and 19.00 between Knaresborough and Leeds. They are also required to upgrade the rolling stock and replace all the Pacers with new trains by 2020.

2.2 **Franchise Arrangements**

On 27th February 2015, the DfT published their Invitations to Tender (ITT) for both the Northern and TransPennine Franchises. The Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said: "This is great news for passengers across the north, who will finally get a rail service that matches up to the booming economy in this region. That means more seats, more services and a brand new fleet of modern trains. Unlike the last Northern franchise in 2004, which included limited plans to invest in services or meet demand, this deal will maintain investment and grow to fit the needs of passengers for years to come.

The key improvements the government wants the bidders for the Northern franchise to include are:

- removal of the existing Pacer trains
- ordering at least 120 new-build carriages
- modernising every train operating on the Northern franchise
- doubling the number of services on many routes on the Northern franchise
- providing more services for commuters, during off-peak times and on Sundays
- investing at least £30 million to improve stations along the Northern franchise route
- creating a Customer & Communities Improvement Fund to invest around £13.8 million
- introducing free wi-fi on all Northern trains by 2020 at the latest

The DfT encouraged bidders to actively engage with the stakeholders as part of the franchising process, but that bidders should mostly be in 'listening mode' seeking to understand the aspirations of the stakeholders so that, where they align with the ITT requirements their plans would meet these as closely as possible. Bidders should not be discussing their own plans nor soliciting our support!

The three short-listed bidders for the Northern Franchise have until 26 June 2015 to submit their bids.

2.3 **Harrogate Line Aspirations**

On the 19 August 2014 the DfT announced the bidders who had pre-qualified for each of the franchise competitions for the Northern and TransPennine Express railway franchises. When they began consultation with Stakeholders, we met each of the bidders to stress the needs of the Harrogate Line. Chamber Officers and Group members representing several larger businesses using the line attended three meetings with the following bidder representatives in November and January.

Northern Franchise:

- **Abellio Northern Ltd;**
 - Russ Cunningham, Head of Operations; + Edward Funnell, Stakeholder Engagement Adviser.
- **Arriva Limited;**
 - David Jones, Stakeholder Manager; + Marcus Handley, Customer Service Bid Plan Manager
- **Govia Northern Limited;**
 - Andy Paterson, Stakeholder Manager.

We explained the unique characteristics of Harrogate District and our need for more frequent services with longer more modern trains. Each bidder was presented with our Information Sheet HT401 plus a portfolio of letters from local businesses and members of this group. Whilst none of the bidders were permitted to say what they were planning or to make any commitment on the specific proposals that we put to them, it was clear that they all did recognise the needs of Harrogate District businesses, residents and visitors.

2.4 **Harrogate Line Timetable requirements**

The invitation to tender states on page 35 for the Leeds-Harrogate Line: *There are currently two off-peak Northern trains per hour between Leeds and Harrogate on weekdays. We have specified an increase to four trains per hour on this route in total by December 2017, when combined with the extra train service that will be provided on a two-hourly basis in the new Intercity East Coast franchise. On alternate hours, this will amount to two extra Northern off-peak trains per hour and one extra Northern train per hour respectively.* (Note: This is puzzling as the IEPs are not actually due until May 2019)

For Sunday services, the invitation to tender states on page 35: *There is currently one Northern train per hour between these locations on Sundays. We have specified one extra train per hour by December 2017, making a total of two trains per hour.*

The detailed train service requirements (TSR) for each line in the Northern Franchise can be seen in a set of six very large spreadsheets, showing the first and last services, minimum station calls and connectivity requirements for each line on Weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays. The Leeds-Harrogate-York line services are shown on sheets LDS1A-F, with one set covering December 2017-December 2019 and a second set from December 2019 onwards – when the IEPs are expected to be in service.

The most significant requirement is for a total of 24 trains between Leeds and Harrogate between 10.00 and 15.29 on weekdays, compared with the current 12 in the same period. The peak period services are also increased from 7 to 10 in the morning (07.00-09.59) and from 8 to 10 in the late afternoon (16.00-18.59). The evening services are doubled from 3 to 6 between 19.00 and 21.59.

In total the Invitation to Tender specifies either 3 or 4 trains per hour every hour between Harrogate and Leeds from 07.00 until 22.00, with the current two per hour before 07.00 and after 22.00.

The ITT indicates that the extra trains may be express as they are only required to call at Horsforth.

2.5 Harrogate Line Rolling Stock

Currently the Harrogate Line is served with a mixture of 2, 3 and 4 car diesel multiple units – the Class 140 series “Pacers” and the more recent 150 Series.

The ITT specifies that the north is to receive a fleet of “newly-built” diesel or battery powered trains by 2020. The documentation specifies that the new franchisee must modernise the fleet of Northern trains, replacing the Pacers and bringing into service a minimum of 120 new carriages for non-electrified routes. It adds that *“These must be newly-built (not re-using components from existing rolling stock) and, unless the Bidder intends for them to be hauled by a locomotive, must be capable of operating under their own power for significant distances on non-electrified routes.”*

This appears to rule out the Class 144e upgraded Pacer offered by Porterbrook, as well as the Vivarail D-Train made from old London Underground D78 stock converted into a DEMU with a diesel generator. These were the trains that we first proposed for electrification of the Harrogate Line!

In addition to a DMU the tender also gives the option of using an IPEMU, such as the converted Class 379 Electrostar which Bombardier has reconfigured to enable the installation and integration of an operational traction battery system for use when the trains leave electrified lines.

In addition to requiring some new trains, the Northern tender also requires the modernising of every existing train in the fleet. The headline improvements that are required by 2020 are Wi-Fi on all trains and power sockets or USB charging points at a minimum of one socket for every two seats.

The Northern tender also specifies fixed or folding tables at a minimum of 90% of seats, air conditioning and heating systems and upgraded luggage space.

3. TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS FRANCHISE SPECIFICATION

3.1 Headline News

The DfT noted the aspiration for direct TPE services between Harrogate and Manchester Airport but did not stipulate such services in the ITT. It will be up to the bidders to make such proposals if they wish.

3.2 Franchise Arrangements

The TransPennine Express franchise provides longer distance intercity-type services, connecting the major cities of Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Hull, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as Manchester Airport. On 27th February 2015, the DfT published their Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the TransPennine Franchise. The Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said: *“This is great news for passengers across the north, who will finally get a rail service that matches up to the booming economy in this region. That means more seats, more services and a brand new fleet of modern trains. Unlike the last Northern franchise in 2004, which included limited plans to invest in services or meet demand, this deal will maintain investment and grow to fit the needs of passengers for years to come.*

Key improvements the government wants bidders for the TransPennine franchise to include are:

- extra capacity for passengers through more carriages, increased frequencies or more services
- providing earlier and later services and more services on Sundays
- creating a CCIF to invest around £2.8 million in passenger benefits
- options for new services such as links between Liverpool and Scotland, Crewe to Manchester Airport and extending Newcastle services to Edinburgh

- working with Network Rail to ensure the electrification of the cross-Pennine Manchester to Leeds route is delivered effectively
- introducing free wi-fi on all TransPennine Express trains by 2020 at the latest

A spokesman for First Group, who currently run the TransPennine franchise and are bidding to continue, said: *"Since the franchise began, the team at First TransPennine Express have worked hard to introduce more capacity with brand new trains, increased frequency and improved journey times. As a result the service is more popular than ever, with 26 million passengers last year compared to 13m in 2004. We are currently in negotiations with the DfT concerning a direct award to continue this successful operation of First TransPennine Express to April 2016 and these talks are progressing well."*

Bidders for the TransPennine Express franchise have until 28 May 2015 to submit their bids.

3.3 Harrogate Line Aspirations

On the 19 August 2014 the DfT announced the bidders who had pre-qualified for the franchise competition for the TransPennine Express railway franchise as follows:

- **First TransPennine Express Limited**
- **Keolis Go-Ahead Limited**
- **Stagecoach TransPennine Express Trains Limited**

We met only the first of the three bidders as the other two were covered by colleagues who were also dealing with the Northern Line. On 13th January, Chamber Officers and a several Group Members met the current Franchise holders, First Group, who are bidding to renew the franchise. The contacts were:

- Graham Meiklejohn; First Group Bid Communications Team
- Chris Nutton, First Group Bid team (Seconded from TPE Management)

They explained that the current four trains per hour could go up to six per hour after electrification which could enable additional destinations to be served, so we stressed the need for a direct link from Harrogate to Manchester Piccadilly and on to Manchester Airport for business and leisure travellers – both outbound and inbound – for example to the Conference Centre and Showground. However there are practical problems with access to suitable platforms and tracks for this route via Leeds Station.

The DfT Report on TransPennine Stakeholder consultation did include on page 81 the following important reference to Harrogate: *Other specific requests included the maintenance / specification of:*

- *Maintaining existing services to Manchester Airport (from, Cumbria, Tameside, York, Manchester, Tees Valley and the south Humber bank);*
- *New links to Manchester Airport, for example from Hull, **Harrogate** and Scarborough;*

The DfT's response was *"We are grateful for the responses we received to this question, which alerted us to the priorities for connectivity and train services, particularly the demand for services to Manchester. In developing the Train Service Requirements (TSR) for the new franchises, we have taken into account the views expressed to us by respondents to the consultation.*

We are seeking to provide as much flexibility as possible to TPE bidders to innovate and develop the best possible package of service proposals for passengers, whilst also ensuring that our specification preserves the minimum level of service we wish to secure. That minimum level of service is ambitious, as we are requiring a substantial increase in capacity and more trains than are currently in service, with a focus on improving service provision in the early morning and especially later in the evening. We are providing flexibility for bidders to determine which locations in the east and north-east should be linked with Manchester Airport and which with Liverpool. We are also providing opportunities for bidders to propose to extend the scope of TPE services, in particular from Manchester Airport to Crewe, from Newcastle

3.4 TransPennine Line Timetable

The detailed train service requirements for each line in the TransPennine Franchise can be seen in a set of six very large spreadsheets, showing the first and last services, minimum station calls and connectivity requirements for each line on Weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays. The Manchester Airport to Leeds route is specified as a minimum of four trains an hour all day.

3.5 TransPennine Line Rolling Stock

The TransPennine Express tender also includes a provision to ensure all trains in the fleet are Wi-Fi enabled by 2020, as well as providing earlier and later services and more services on Sundays. Bidders would have to show how they would introduce extra capacity for passengers through more carriages, increased frequencies or more services. The DfT wants to see options for new services such as between Liverpool and Scotland, Crewe to Manchester Airport and extending Newcastle services to Edinburgh.

On rolling stock, the tender specifies that the new TransPennine franchisee lease the current fleet of 10 four-car Class 350 EMUs until at least 19 September 2018. There is no specified replacement for the Class 170 vehicles that are going to Chiltern; simply the requirement that the franchisee *"lease such other rolling stock as the Secretary of State may reasonably require in consequence"*.

There is clearly a shortage of suitable diesel rolling stock to bridge the period until the TransPennine line electrification is operational and cascaded electric trains can be used.

4. ELECTRIFICATION UPDATE

Along with the Invitation to Tender, the DfT published the response to their consultation on the Northern Rail Franchise and TransPennine Express Rail Franchise entitled: ***Transforming the North's Railways - Stakeholder Briefing Document and Consultation Response.***

On the subject of electrification on page 101, it states that the topic of electrification was very popular amongst many user groups and Community Rail Partnerships. Respondents felt that every effort should be made to exploit the potential of the electrification programme by inviting bidders to show how it would increase the efficiency of their operations, and to extend the programme to cover routes currently scheduled to remain diesel-powered.

Among the responses expressing support for electrification, specific schemes/requirements included:

- Calder Valley;
- Leeds-Harrogate-York;
- Lakes Line;
- Sheffield-Doncaster-Cleethorpes; and
- Manchester-Ormskirk-Preston-Kirkby,

The official response to the consultation on page 103 was: *"Further electrification schemes are being considered and prioritised by the Northern Electrification Task Force of MPs, local authority Leaders and Network Rail. The Task Force is due to provide an interim report to the Secretary of State on priorities for future electrification schemes in the north of England in early 2015."*

Whilst the Task Force was originally due to report to the Secretary of State by the end of 2014, we understand that it is now going to publish its recommendations early in March 2015.

However the TransPennine electrification is reported to be running behind schedule and the DfT has just stated that there are *"uncertainties about the timing and outputs"* about the upgrading project. This likely to create some delay in the design and construction of the Harrogate Line electrification.

5. LBIA RAIL LINK ASSESSMENT FLAWED

The need for a new road or rail link to Leeds Bradford International Airport is being widely recognised with several alternative routes being proposed. Harrogate Chamber has long campaigned for a link between the Airport and the Harrogate Rail Line which runs just half a mile from the end of the Airport's long stay car park – and only 1.1 miles from the Terminal Building. Our initial suggestions for a shuttle bus service between the Airport and Horsforth Station were rebutted by the Airport Management on cost grounds, although we do wonder whether the potential reduction in car parking revenue influenced their decision to oppose the idea.

As reported in our previous Bulletin 12, the Government commissioned consultants WSPPB to study the alternative ways of improving surface connectivity to Leeds Bradford International Airport. Their 161 page report was published on 5th December 2014.

The Chancellor commented on the issue of airport connectivity in the Autumn Statement. The two references to the study are at paras. 1.193 (page 50) and 2.195 (page 86) and are reproduced below:

1.193. International connectivity is also crucial. The government encourages West Yorkshire Combined Authority to develop further the plans to improve connectivity to Leeds Bradford International Airport.

2.195. Leeds Bradford Airport connectivity – The government is publishing the outcome of a feasibility study on improved connectivity at Leeds Bradford International Airport, setting out the potential connectivity benefits of a new link road costing £38 million and recommending further consideration of opportunities for a rail link. It will be for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to consider how to take the recommendations forward.

Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce has made repeated efforts to propose a cost-effective solution at Airport Consultative Committee and Transport Forum meetings and at earlier meetings about the electrification of the Harrogate Line. We proposed a new Parkway Station on the existing line, near the southern portal of the Bramhope Tunnel, close to the long stay car

park. Our proposals were outlined in a paper by our Rail Adviser Mark Leving, available on request as HT470. This was submitted to the Consultants via the DfT.

We believe the Consultants' report into rail connectivity options for Leeds Bradford International Airport has too many flaws and inconsistencies in the assessment to provide adequate objectivity in support of the deployment of significant public funds on this potential project. The Consultants rejected our proposal for a LBIA Parkway Station on the existing Harrogate Line and instead they favoured a new heavy rail link from Guiseley via the Airport to Horsforth - at enormous expense - and when the lines each end of that route are already full!

Our proposal for a LBIA Parkway Station on the existing Harrogate Line scored equal first with a proposed new rail link amongst the ten different rail options considered by the consultants. (Page 49 Section 8.2.2) However it was then dismissed at a late stage in the assessment process on the grounds that an "interchange" between the train and the shuttle bus to the Terminal was not recommended. The use of buses within airports and adjoining facilities is commonplace world-wide and this does not influence passenger choice whether or not to use an airport

In this paper we challenge several technical details in the assessment process and the scores allocated to each option. Furthermore the assessment takes no account of the very high capital cost of a new line with new stations and new rolling stock, compared with making use of the existing Harrogate Line services which only requires a new station - and no new track or new rolling stock.

Likewise the assessment appears to ignore the fact that the existing Harrogate Line services are already fully resourced in terms of on-train and on-track staff, whereas the proposed new line would require new staff on the new trains and the new track and any new stations. Furthermore the Harrogate Line is on the Government short list for electrification, so it would seem logical to maximise the use of this investment which could provide a 15 minute frequency service between Leeds City Station and the Airport. The proposed direct rail link with a 30 minute frequency would require new paths into Leeds Station and through Armley and Shipley Junctions which are currently not available.

Would you please use your influence to persuade the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to undertake a more detailed study of this shorter-term lower cost solution for a rail connection to the Airport?

I would be grateful for your comments and for an introduction to anyone else whom you think should see our report. The full report can be sent by e-mail on request.

6. ACTION REQUESTED

This comprehensive Bulletin is being sent to over 200 members of the Harrogate Line Supporters Group. Please feel free to forward it to other interested parties and then encourage anyone who uses Harrogate Line to send me an e-mail expressing their views and requesting to be added to the mailing list in future. Please send me details of any relevant news or views concerning the Harrogate Line.

This bulletin has been compiled in haste from numerous sources in order to get the good news out quickly. Some of the operating details may change when the new Franchise operators take over.

Thank you for your vital support for this voluntary effort to influence the future of the HARROGATE LINE, led by Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce and the Harrogate Line Supporters Group.

Further news and comments are always welcome. Please make it clear whether they are for circulation to the Group or sent in confidence for internal use in our lobbying campaigns.

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