

# **HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 22a**

## **RESPONSE TO NORTHERN RAILWAY CONSULTATION ON HARROGATE LINE**

### **SUMMARY**

The current Northern Rail proposals for extra trains on the Harrogate Line between Leeds and Harrogate from December 2017 will not meet the expectations and the practical needs of the many businesses, students and residents in Harrogate and north-west Leeds.

The current draft timetable shows the extra trains stopping only at Leeds, Horsforth and Harrogate, omitting the other five intermediate stations. This will deny nearly 40% of the route's regular users at Burley Park, Headingley, Weeton, Pannal and Hornbeam Park stations from benefiting from the additional services.

The four trains per hour promised for the Harrogate line should be a 15 minute interval walk-up service all day, with all trains stopping at all stations just like the London Overground. This is the key to getting people out of their cars because there is no perceived requirement for a timetable and the perceived wait time is always less than about 10 minutes.

This approach is tried and tested and has resulted in significant levels of growth in ridership elsewhere across the UK. Generalized journey times (including waiting time) experienced by users fall significantly because of the increased frequencies. It is a proven, tried and tested highly successful approach which stimulates sustainable modal shift from car to train.

What is the real benefit of saving the 6 or 7 minutes for passengers travelling directly between Leeds and Harrogate when it omits a significant section of the underlying demand by missing all station stops except Horsforth? Furthermore, the proposed intervals between services are not evenly spaced, thus destroying the value of the originally conceived 15" interval "walk-up" approach which significantly reduced generalized journey times by providing services at double the existing frequency.

We have demonstrated that a 15 minute frequency can be achieved within the Franchise Specification, by turning around alternate trains at Harrogate to return to Leeds. The desired saving in journey time can best be achieved by line speed improvements using faster rolling and other operational efficiencies.

### **LACK OF CONSULTATION**

This situation has we feel developed due to a total lack of consultation with key stakeholders in the Harrogate District, which is appalling and is bordering on professional negligence and a waste of public resources. Neither Harrogate Borough Council, nor the Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce, nor the Harrogate Line Supporters Group, nor the Harrogate Line Rail Officers Group have been consulted by Northern Railway staff before publishing their proposed December 2017 Timetable – or the very recent draft May 2018 Timetable which is in many ways even worse. A detailed paper highlighting the failures in consultation is available on request. (Ref HT466)

### **TIMETABLE WEAKNESSES (See HT461 & HT462 attached)**

This timetable also denies direct access on 50% of the Harrogate Line trains from Burley Park, Headingley, Weeton, Pannal and Hornbeam Park to anywhere north of Harrogate. The combined ridership and revenue value to destinations north of Harrogate is significantly greater than it is from Horsforth alone - the only beneficiary of the new "extra" trains.

From Harrogate, the intervals are 7 and 23 minutes apart for most of the day. 50% of the services don't serve the four key intermediate stations of Hornbeam Park, Pannal, Headingley and Burley Park, which contribute almost 40% of passenger usage on the line. (See HT465)

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The proposed timetables also fail to provide the vital earlier morning and later evening services between Harrogate and Leeds that can connect with the early and late Virgin East Coast Trains to and from London Kings Cross. Likewise we need connections with the Cross-Country Trains to and from Birmingham and the South-West.

There is no advantage in having an accelerated service from York to Leeds via Harrogate in the May 2018 timetable by omitting numerous important stops – because direct York Leeds services are still faster by a huge margin (40 minutes). Hence acceleration is irrelevant for York-Leeds passengers, and while some passengers from Cattal, Hammerton and Poppleton may enjoy a 6 minute faster journey to Leeds, passengers from those stations travelling to popular destinations such as Hornbeam Park and Headingley would suffer inconvenience and delay having to change trains and probable need to cross the footbridge at Harrogate.

This makes the May 2018 proposal considerably worse than that planned for Dec 2017, though even the latter still fails to give any benefit for 5 stations between Harrogate and Leeds (once again, as these represent almost 40% of line usage it is a missed opportunity to increase revenue, benefit passengers and reduce congestion) though it does, at least, not make their service worse. It is totally focussed on travel to Leeds and makes many journeys worse to York, and to important secondary stations like Hornbeam Park and Headingley.

The draft May 2018 timetables show turnaround times in Harrogate of 21 minutes and York of 25 minutes, indicating there is plenty of time for these trains to call at all stations each way.

### **INCREASED PASSENGER USAGE**

The official statistics for station usage published by the ORR show at 50% growth over the past 10 years between Harrogate and Leeds, with Burley Park, Headingley, Pannal and Hornbeam Park being the highest. The Harrogate to York section of the line has only grown by 35% in the same period. The five stations where trains are not going to stop had 39% of total passengers over this period. (See Sheet HT465 attached)

### **CAR PARKING AT STATIONS**

As the aim should be to get more motorists and their passengers out of their cars and on to these trains, it is vital that car parking capacity at all stations along the line is significantly increased. Those residents who can easily walk or cycle to a station are most likely to be doing so, but those who live further from a station need to be sure they will be able to drive to the station and park easily, without obstructing nearby residential streets.

### **AIR POLLUTION IN LEEDS**

Against the background of the Leeds City region being seriously challenged in reducing air pollution as a matter of urgency, Leeds City Council needs to be seen to achieve something quite quickly in terms of urban transportation solutions to improving air quality in Leeds and the surrounding area. The new 4 trains per hour timetable on the Harrogate Line could provide a TfL London Overground style standard interval 15 minute walk up frequency and serve all of the intermediate stations but particularly the high-user ones of Hornbeam Park, Headingley and Burley Park as an absolute minimum.

### **MAJOR EVENTS**

Whenever there is an event on at Headingley stadium (cricket/rugby) or at the Great Yorkshire Showground, users will inevitably be faced as now with an inability to access the services (because they will be over-full) but they will then have to watch the half-empty "express" trains speed through the stations (Headingley & Hornbeam Park) whilst they wait for the next train - only to find it is also already full to capacity! The media and other commentators will publicly have a field-day with the transport planners in this circumstance – with double the volume of services but excluding many of the route's key stations!

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## **INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

In order to fulfil the potential of the Harrogate Line several vital improvements to the infrastructure are needed which have been planned or proposed by various parties as follows:

- a) Restoration of the double track between Knaresborough & Cattal
- b) Re-signalling of the line between Harrogate and York from mechanical to electric
- c) Reduce down-time for traffic at Starbeck level crossing by additional rail signals
- d) Close some of the numerous level crossings on the Knaresborough to York section
- e) Upgrade a freight line into York Station to a new platform 12, avoiding Skelton Junction
- f) Reinstate platform zero at Leeds City Station backing on to Platform 1
- g) Create a new platform in Harrogate Station along side the existing waiting line
- h) New Parkway Station on the existing line alongside Leeds Bradford Airport car park
- i) New Flaxby Moor Parkway Station on the existing line by A1(M) Junction 47 with A59
- j) Increased permitted line speeds along the line by attention to the critical sections
- k) Increased car parking capacity at all stations along the line between Leeds and York
- l) Electrification of the route with 25kv overhead electric cables and new rolling stock

## **PLANNING POLICY ISSUES**

The above list of proposed infrastructure improvements together with new or upgraded rolling stock would transform the performance and capacity of the Leeds-Harrogate-York line. It could also become a significant diversionary route whenever the East Coast mainline is shut.

However it appears that some of our key planners and decision makers simply do not understand how to maximize value from some of the services and infrastructure we collectively possess, nor, in the case of the Harrogate line, do they understand some of the fundamentals of urban transport planning and the route's wider regional value and potential.

With the proposed Parkway Station at Leeds Bradford Airport now being progressed and with planning permission granted for a new business park at Flaxby, the value and importance of the standard consistent interval of 15 mins, serving all stops should not be underestimated.

## **AUTHORS & CIRCULATION**

Paper drafted by Mark J Leving, Consultant, Harrogate Line Development Company Ltd. together with contributions from several Harrogate Line Supporters Group members.

Edited by Brian L Dunsby, Transport Spokesman, Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce and issued in the public interest to Northern Rail Management and all members of the Harrogate Line Supporters Group, including relevant Councillors and Council officials.

## **Reference Information attached:**

HT461 - Proposed Harrogate Line timetable from December 2017 – by Northern

HT462 - Proposed Harrogate Line timetable from May 2018 – by Northern.

HT463 - Serious flaws in Planning & Consultation – by Mark J Leving & Brian L Dunsby

HT464 – Feedback from Members on Northern's Proposed Timetables - verbatim

HT465 - Harrogate Line - Station Usage Statistics 2007-2016 – by Brian L Dunsby

HT466 - Harrogate Line Extra Trains 2017e – by Brian L Dunsby & Mark J Leving

HT467 - Suggested 2017-2018 Timetable with Extra Trains - by Mark J Leving