

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 23a

FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS ON NORTHERN'S PROPOSED TIMETABLES

As submitted to Northern Railway Management Team, East Region – 7th July 2017

Originals with contact details can be provided on request, subject to the writer's consent.

Compiled by Brian L Dunsby, HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP.

VERBATIM COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Thanks for this Brian. I totally agree with your argument that it needs to be every 15 minutes, all day, all stations – so that it's a regular, reliable and convenient service.

2. Thanks for this Brian - just when I thought I could not become even more cynical!
"Serious flaws in planning and consultation." A national disease it seems and not only in transport.
Determine everything by spreadsheets and statistics - don't consult those who use, pay and suffer whatever is ordained from on high!

3. Surprise, surprise - TPE propose 15 minute "turn up and go services between Leeds and Manchester etc.

4. Yes it does seem a bit high handed but why have a stopping train on Saturdays only and limited stop elsewhere?
That does seem a bit bonkers to me. People will get confused.

5. I totally agree .. that to miss out vital stops is absolutely pointless and unjustifiable.
Both Pannal and Hornbeam have moderate parking facilities and I guess many of the other stations on the line will have the same facilities.
The only way to keep cars out of towns is to provide parking and a good regular train service.
What benefits would a faster train bring when it would be travelling almost empty? If it is only 6-8 minutes faster then it is not a huge time saving exercise and would not justify the proposed action. The faster train with limited stops is a waste of time and money in my opinion!
It is clear that there has been a serious lack of consultation on this issue and a lack of common sense.
We need more trains stopping at every stop to ensure a good service for all; passengers must have access from as many locations as possible. More parking facilities are needed to get more cars off the roads.
The pending Clean Air Act will be a wake up call to many, pollution is a serious health risk and most of our towns and cities suffer serious pollution problems.
The only solution is to get people onto trains or busses.
In Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon there are AQMAs I have no doubt that as you head towards Leeds and York there will be numerous areas with high pollution levels. If a new service is to go ahead, let this service be of maximum benefit for all?

6. We are extremely concerned that having had the celebration that there would be 4 trains an hour from Leeds to Harrogate that the latest proposals change that euphoria to disappointment.
We are a busy venue attracting over 500,000 people per year and are trying to encourage visitors to come by train but our nearest station is Hornbeam Park so to have only two trains per hour stopping there will not improve the situation for us at all. We truly cannot see that a direct train that saves 6 or 7 minutes compared with one that stops at all stops is a valuable saving, when it cuts out the benefit of the service to such a big number of users.
I would like to recommend, in the strongest possible terms, that this proposal is changed and we end up with 4 trains an hour that stop at all stops. This outcome will help all our businesses including yours. I look forward to common sense prevailing.

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 23a

7. My view is that there should be simple timetabling of a train every 15 minutes between Knaresborough and Leeds and one every 30 minutes between Harrogate and York and vice versa in each case. I also believe that in 2017 (and beyond) there really should be a later service between York & Harrogate than 22.11 (It is even earlier at weekend).

8. Reference the email of 15 May, it seems incredible that the benefits of a regular standard service (i.e. every train stopping at all stations) have not been recognised. The walk-up service is essential in getting people out of their cars. A regular 15 minute service is the nearest one can sensibly get to the ideal.

9. I suppose it depends whether you want the view of a consumer or a competitor?!

However, objectively, I agree with you that for such a small difference in journey time, that customers would prefer a consistent journey rather than confusion of stopping patterns and non-clockface departure times.

You can also add us to the list of people who haven't been consulted, which is why we often have little confidence in attempting to time buses around rail services. But, I've come to accept - frustratingly - that trains will often be seen as more important than buses and bus users, sadly.

10. Thank you for your very informative e-mail and attachments about Northern's proposals for extra trains on our beloved Harrogate Line.

I am very concerned, like you about the proposals and would agree with what you have written. My own concerns are that the better trains will be used on the "express service", introducing a two tier level for passengers. Also I cannot see in terms of green issues the sense in running these express trains that will be half empty, whilst passengers will be left standing on the platform waiting for the next ones!

I am not surprised however by this. Northern are intent on pushing through so many unfair and ill thought out ideas at the moment. E.g. Cheaper fares available only on the Internet, so not available to all; Fares increases; The ridiculous paper tickets that don't fit in the Pass Holders; The Ticket Barriers do not work at Harrogate Station – you can only use your season ticket once to get through and then it refuses to recognise it as valid for the rest of the period of use! Yet Northern publicly deny there is a problem. They are awaiting software to fix the problem! Meanwhile I and countless others are held up every time we try to use the barriers.

I am very concerned about their attitude towards Guards. I would not be at all happy using trains without guards – it would not be safe for many reasons.

Northern have their own agenda – Profits, Profits and seem not to be interested in the public who use their trains.

11. We have undertaken a high level economic benefits assessment of each of the three options now on the table using a respected UK Industry demand forecasting specialist who is both familiar and current with UK revenue modelling, working across the industry.

Taking Option 1 as the base (the first timetable that was circulated i.e. with trains approx 15 mins apart, 2 fast, 2 stopping:-

Option 2 (the timetable with two fast and two stopping trains but not evenly space between Harrogate and Leeds) returns approximately £20k p.a LESS revenue than option 1, or over 3,000 FEWER riders than option 1. We believe therefore It should be discounted on this basis.

Option 3 (the timetable that provides a standard 15" interval of stopping trains between Harrogate and Leeds albeit 2tph don't stop at Weeton) returns approximately £115k MORE revenue or approaching 60k ADDITIONAL riders p.a. than option 1.

Of the three options, option three clearly provides the best ridership and revenue benefits so should be the preferred option by a significant margin.

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 23a

12. The proposals are very poor – particularly for May 2018 as this actually gives a degraded service for 5 stations on the route by forcing many passengers to change trains at Harrogate in future if travelling beyond that town, while offering no extra services for these five stations. These stations may, admittedly, enjoy better trains with less crowding than at present, but there is absolutely no reason why they cannot also have an improvement in service frequency, as HDCC have shown in their proposed draft timetable. (See HT467)

I fully support the 15 min frequency service stopping at all stations between Harrogate and Leeds as argued for by HDCC. The Draft timetable circulated by HDCC shows that this is perfectly possible with the same resources – the same number of units, the operational limitation of using platform 1 at Leeds and of the two platform configuration at Harrogate. This is a much better solution as it gives an enhanced service to all stations, not just Leeds, Horsforth and Harrogate which excludes 35% of the line's traffic - and this should be better for revenue receipts as well as providing a better service for passengers.

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 – as the direct York Leeds service is still faster by a huge margin (40 minutes) the 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 suffer great inconvenience with having to change trains with a delay for the connection 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 35% 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.

If Northern obstinately refuse to budge on having a 15 min frequency Leeds-Harrogate service calling at all stations (or at least Hornbeam Park and Headingley), and crucially having the Knaresborough/York through trains call at all stations between Leeds & Harrogate – which would be astonishing as HDCC's counterproposals make clear common sense – then changes are needed in any event to the inadequate May 2018 plans for peak hour services to at least retain connectivity on the busiest trains which is set to go backwards under current proposals:

- The key inbound commuter train to York, arriving 0830, should stop at all stations from Leeds to serve the many commuters travelling from the 5 omitted stations
- It is bad that the 1811 from York runs non-stop after Harrogate - this is a busy service with commuters, many of which use Hornbeam Park etc., yet passengers are faced with a 30 minute wait for the next stopping service at Harrogate.
- There is no service from Weeton or Pannal into Hornbeam Park or Harrogate at peak time coming up to 0900, a gap there of over 1 hour!
- The 1939 ex Leeds should stop at all stations to avoid a one hour gap that early in the evening - the current 1930 stops at all stations.
- The 1912 and 2012 services from York, at quieter times, should surely stop at all stations to improve the frequency to 2 tph at this time, while it is simply cruel that the 2111 runs non-stop when there is no following stopping service until one hour later.
- Gaps in the morning peak hour service to Leeds from Hornbeam Park and Pannal still exist despite the extra carriages and services available - in fact there are slightly fewer trains. Stops should be inserted for these stations to give an improvement in service.
- There should be an earlier service from Harrogate to Leeds, and a later service from Harrogate to York

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 23a

13. Thank you for the information about the proposed Harrogate Line timetable and I must say that I agree with virtually everything you say in the attached documentation. Some additional points I would make are;

- I agree that a walk up 15 minute frequency suburban Metro service calling at all stations is what is required – as per your proposed timetable. However, a bit of personal interest here, but I see no practical need to omit the Weeton stop every half hour, this would only cause confusion. Turn up and go is the aim, and knowing the train will always stop at every station without needing to check the timetable always helps to get you to where you want to go.
- It is noted that the proposed timetable would not create any additional benefits from what we have now for probably over 50% of the existing users of the line – probably more as it cannot be determined the proportion of joiners at Harrogate and Horsforth that travel to intermediate stations. This is not really a benefit, more about creating a completely new market, new brand for Northern, although I do doubt whether a 6 or 7 minute journey time saving would really make that much difference to the choice of travelling by train or not?
- To omit any additional services and not provide an improved frequency from Headingley and Burley Park – when trains are often full and standing here is not sensible and illustrates a clear misunderstanding of the needs of passengers on the line. Noted and I agree with your comment re special events.
- Another improvement that is definitely required now is earlier starting times and later finishing times and also an extension of the half hourly frequency period further into the evening. This would increase journey opportunities by being able to catch an earlier morning train from Leeds and also reduce the current annoyance of arriving into Leeds in an evening (say from London) having just missed a Harrogate train and then having to wait virtually an hour for the next train.
- The ultimate aim should be 15 minutes all stations stopping services Leeds to Knaresborough, with 30 minute frequency all stations on to York. However, this would probably need Skelton Junction to be doubled and/or additional dedicated route into York station with new Platforms 12 & 13 to provide a reliable service with no impact on East Coast Main Line paths. Network Rail Capacity Improvement Works at Leeds Station for additional approach tracks and new Platform 0 would certainly provide capacity at the Leeds end.
- Do we have any assurances that the trains will be consistent high quality rolling stock – either brand new or refurbished/refreshed. All trains should be 3 or 4 carriages throughout the day, not 2 car - often full when empty trains are split & joined and left in platforms or depots throughout the day to save fuel as happens at the moment.
- Northern appear to be wanting to re-brand themselves with a “Northern Connect” sort of express service – to use their new trains. This may be appropriate for Harrogate (in addition to a 15 minute frequency Metro service), but would be of more benefit if it continued onwards to provide a range of new semi-fast express with non-stop journey opportunities further afield. However, knowing the layout and capacity constraints at Leeds Station I doubt that these would offer much benefit (and probably a slower overall journey) compared with a change of train at Leeds. Possible destinations could be to link up to the proposed new Calder Valley services - Bradford, Halifax, Manchester Victoria, Manchester Piccadilly, Manchester Airport service. Northwards from Harrogate say Knaresborough to York then maybe onwards to Thirsk Northallerton, Darlington, Durham & Newcastle or maybe Malton Seamer Scarborough. I guess there'd be some politics here as they'd be competing with incumbent TOCs on this route.
- A risk of services to a wider range of destinations could be importing delays onto the Harrogate Line. We currently have a nicely self-contained, relatively reliable service unaffected from wider delays. Let's keep it that way.
- We'll soon have a number of Virgin London services from Harrogate. How will these fit in once all the paths are filled?

14. Many thanks for your recent communications regarding proposed Northern Railway timetable enhancements... In order to come to a view, I would be interested to know the reasoning/rational behind the timetable structure and, in particular, why Northern have gone for a 'fast' service between Leeds and Harrogate for services to and from Knaresborough and beyond. Is it for capacity or resourcing reasons?

On a positive note, what I would say is that I do welcome later trains to and from York in the evening, but, again, wonder how Network Rail are going to resource this in terms of ops staff in the signal boxes and the like on route.

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 23a

15. I would like to make a few general comments, not as an expert in rail timetabling or the intricacies of running a rail network, but as a normal passenger, whose requirements for their rail service sometimes seems to be misunderstood.

My reading of the proposed May 2018 timetable is that it lacks simplicity and standardisation of services for passengers in that the benefits of a regular service stopping at all stations have been lost.

Speed is not the major criterion, especially on the length of journeys considered here. It is regularity and frequency which allow a passenger the best chance of being reasonably sure of getting a seat, especially at busy times, and being able to read, or whatever, and spend the time with a degree of efficiency and in comfort.

15 minute services also stand the best chance of increasing rail passenger numbers and reducing car journeys. Poor and irregular frequency, regardless of speed, mean time-table confusion, more crowded trains, more standing and annoyance. This applies not only to the Harrogate Line.

From my point of view a 15 minute service -for all stations - at least between Leeds and Knaresborough, for as long as possible during the day, has to be the right way for his service initially. To misquote, keep it regular, and keep it simple.

On Sundays the proposed 30 minute service is fine.

My knowledge of Harrogate station does not mark it out as an ideal candidate for an interchange station, certainly not without major investment.

This may not be the right forum, but as one who has an interest in Leeds Bradford Airport the construction of the proposed Parkway Station south of Bramhope has always seemed a very obvious and practical (and cheap) solution to an ongoing access problem.

16. Further to the recent publication of the draft Dec 17 & May 18 timetables for the Harrogate-Leeds line, LBA would like to make the following observations.

As you will no doubt be aware the DfT, WYCA & LCC are all in support of and working towards the delivery of a new airport parkway station on the Harrogate-Leeds line just south of the Bramhope tunnel. The intention is for LBA to service this with a 15min airport shuttle bus to get passengers up to the terminal building. I would strongly advocate any future timetabling takes into account the need to run a 15min rail service to include the new LBA parkway station. Without such a frequent service the operation of a shuttle bus service to the station will not be as efficient or convenient for passengers due to dwell times, and the rail service will be used by less passengers thus impacting on its viability, in short the service will not be as profitable. There is strong demand for an airport station but only on the back of a convenient, frequent and reliable service with quick and efficient connectivity to the Airport.

I would also advocate that it's in the interest of Northern to ensure a 15min service calls at as many local stations as it is practicable to do so (including a future LBA parkway station) not just Leeds-Horsforth-Harrogate. The dis-benefit of a slightly longer journey time is marginal when the benefits to the wider community and positive impact on the viability of the service are taken into account. LCC are proposing a 330 space park & ride at the parkway station and this will only be effective if it ties into a 15min rail service. The savings in commuter journey times and passenger attitude will be severely impacted upon if there is a chance those who just miss a service will have to wait any longer than 15mins. People will choose to stay in their cars with all the consequential loss in profit for Northern as well as a missed opportunity to save on pollution and air quality.

It is in the interest of all the major transport infrastructure providers in the Leeds City Region to ensure the aims and ambitions of the LEPs Strategic Employment Plan are promoted wherever possible. A 15min rail service on the Harrogate-Leeds line will help connect the communities in the area which will assist in the Northern Powerhouse agenda and drive the economic growth of the Leeds City Region to the benefit of all.

I hope you find the above observations of some benefit and will help make what is a very welcome and positive step forward in improving rail connectivity in the region.

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 23a

17. I am the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on Harrogate Borough Council and my Group totally endorse the submission made by the HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP with regards to the proposed new Harrogate Line rail timetables. Please give serious consideration to the comments made, this line is a very important connection for the Residents of Harrogate District. Cllr Pat Marsh

18. First of all can I say that your proposals will give the line a boost, but I am at a loss to understand why the you think two semi-fast per hour is necessary particularly between 0900hrs and 1500hrs, I fear what will happen in practice is that these trains will be running half empty most of the time passing through 5 intermediate stations en route, where is the sense in that scenario ?

The mix of semi-fast and stopping trains on such a short line is nothing short of a nightmare for your present and future customers, the fragmented timetable pattern you are proposing is exactly what passengers loath!

As a user of Weeton Station if I wish to travel to York, in future this will require a change in Harrogate in either direction. What about the through ticketing issue and inconvenience? Frankly this is another nonsense and unnecessary.

Sorry to be picking holes in your efforts to improve our rail service. I have had a life long interest in railways; I think we all want this exercise to be a success.

Please think seriously about the semi-fast issue I've a "gut feel" it will fail!

Finally the Airedale/Wharfedale is on our doorstep this all stations route has been a massive success!

19. I'm somewhat concerned regarding the planned timetable changes planned for the Harrogate line commencing in December 2017. Skipping stations to save time doesn't sound that brilliant, and will have significant impact on rail users whose local stations are bypassed as part of this proposal.

I appreciate the difficulties in managing both ends of the line, but this seems like a retrograde step, and has the potential to undo much of what has already been achieved by way of improvements.

I'm not an expert in train timetabling, just a normal user who frankly fed-up with still having to travel on clapped-out Pacer trains!

I think that the planned timetables need a re-think, at least to my untrained eye, in order to make sure that all stops on the line are well-served, as they are now.

20. I work for TSP Projects Limited in York, a Specialist Railway Engineering Design Consultancy, and have 30 years railway infrastructure civil engineering design experience. I also have an operational understanding of the rail service in the area, built up over the years both in my job and, also, as a regular traveller and commuter on the Harrogate Line. I do have a personal interest in these changes, but consider that these would be shared by many others if they knew what the proposed changes being considered actually were.

My timetable consultation comments are in the attached document. (Ref: MG-Harrogate Northern Rail Timetable)

Please note that these are my own personal opinions and not necessarily those of TSP Projects Limited my employer.

I hope that you find my comments to this consultation useful and constructive. If you need any further comments or require additional information I would be happy provide this by email or happy to take part in further discussions with you to explain my ideas at the appropriate time.

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