

# ECCLES STATION

## NEWS

**FEBRUARY 2014**

*Welcome to all our readers. In this last month or so there have been plenty rail announcements. Perhaps there is a general election in the offing? Whatever, given the limitations of space and editorial time ESN has had to choose a small portion to include.*

### **NEWS**

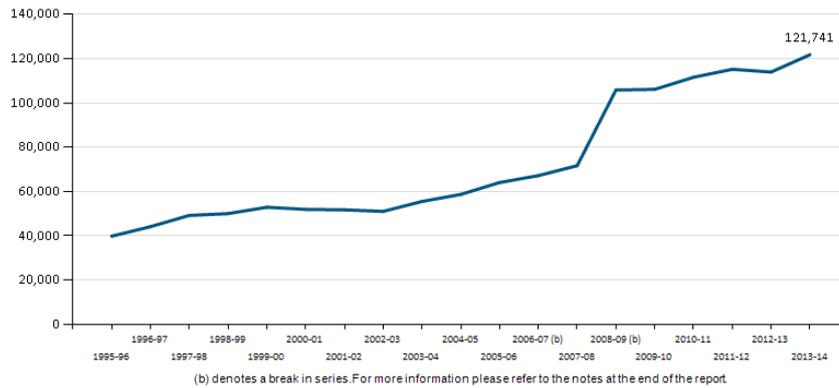
#### **FRECCLES Annual Meeting and AGM**

will be held on **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April** at **7pm** in Eccles Town Hall. Do come along and join us! Further details about the meeting will be posted in due course.

As part of financial cutbacks **TfGM** has decided that it will end the printing of fold-out pocket timetables for its various rail services (*NB: these are not the blue booklets printed by Northern Rail which remain available at Eccles and other staffed stations,*) production of timetable posters for railway stations, and the subsidy for night bus services (from the end of January.) **FRECCLES** is giving consideration to publishing its own version. Let us know if you will miss the fold-out pocket timetables or have you an alternative so we can gauge the demand!

A graph from the **Office of Rail Regulation** website shows the growth of North West rail passenger journeys over the past 20 years. The figures on the vertical axis are in thousands. The journeys are within, and to or from, the North West area. If you wish to see the full figures go to:

<http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/displayreport/report/html/af0a338f-cb90-4b8a-b413-403d5c917857>



Passengers are being advised to check before they travel on the **West Coast** main line in February as **Network Rail** continues its programme of investment and improvements. There will be no direct services between London Euston and Watford over the weekend of 14 and 15 February and 21 and 22 February while Network Rail installs the latest upgrades in the Watford area.

On Monday 16 and Monday 23 February only two of the four lines through the area will be open until 4pm which means there will be an amended service in operation affecting **Virgin Trains and London Midland services**.

The closure and reduced service levels are necessary to allow **Network Rail** to install overhead power equipment and new points on the West Coast main line at Watford.

*Over the next five weeks **train services on the Liverpool and Manchester route will be amended on Friday nights and Sundays**. Network Rail will close the railway between Manchester and Liverpool via Newton-le-Willows on the next five Sundays (1, 8 15 and 22 February; and 1 March) and to extend the current amended Monday to Thursday evening timetable to include Friday nights until 27 February.*



Photo courtesy of  
Network Rail.

*These closures are needed to allow Network Rail to catch up on the delivery of the electrification programme which has been delayed because of the cumulative impact of severe weather, an accident involving an essential wiring train and equipment failure. **Additional closures may be required** and engineers are currently assessing if and when these will be necessary.*

In support of the **Mayor and Mayoress of Burnley's 2014 / 2015 Charity Appeal**, Northern Rail operated a special service on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December, giving 70 people the chance to be the first in many years to travel from Burnley to Manchester without changing trains. Mrs Kathleen Birtwistle had organised the trip to take place along the new Todmorden Curve, raising money for three causes – Pendleside Hospice, The Christie Hospice and homeless charity Emmaus. However, due to the delay in the line being operational, the trip would not have been able to take place.

**Northern** worked extremely hard to make sure the trip could still go ahead, and the charities would still benefit, by running a 'special' service from Burnley Manchester Road to Manchester Victoria via Hebden Bridge.

*Since 2013 **CrossCountry** has been trying a system that allows **Advance Purchase tickets for its services to be sold on the day of departure, right up to almost the time a train leaves a station.** These tickets are often much cheaper than other fares available to passengers travelling the same day, and are available exclusively through CrossCountry's website, its 'Train Tickets' App, telesales office, or The Trainline. Permission has now been granted for this to be permanent.*

**CrossCountry's managing director, Andy Cooper, said:** "This decision will be welcomed by our customers as it allows us to continue offering the best value ticket possible, right up to the time they want to travel. We now have the opportunity, if we expect to have seats available, to offer our customers a cheaper fare for their journey. And, like all other Advance tickets, **customers can use their rail cards to get a further discount**, making their journeys even cheaper."

Another milestone was achieved on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January for the **London Crossrail project**, when boring machine "Elizabeth" broke through into the Liverpool Street leaving only 800 yards to go to Farringdon where she will meet her sister **Victoria** and the tunnel boring will be complete. The project will link 40 stations with 60 miles of track on a route between Reading/Heathrow in the west, central London and Shenfield (Essex) in the east at a cost of £14,800,000,000.

### **OUT AND ABOUT...**

Seen on a visit to a couple of beer festivals in the Alfreton area of Nottinghamshire.





**...By TRAIN from ECCLES STATION.**

## LEISURE ON LINE.

A reminder of The Sensory War 1914 – 2014 at Manchester City Art Gallery until Sunday 22 February 2015. Admission is FREE, and with GMT and winter weather what about a Sunday afternoon visit when the trains run to Oxford Road station? The cafe does a decent (not cheap) lunch anyway.

See <http://www.manchestergalleries.org/whats-on/exhibitions/index.php-itemID=121.html>

## ARTICLES

### **Network Rail Apprenticeships.**

Once again Network Rail is seeking to recruit 200 young people from across Britain for its award-winning apprenticeship scheme, which anyone over the age of 17 an opportunity to earn while they learn, gain valuable qualifications and skills and to build a career in engineering. More than 2,000 people have joined the scheme since 2005. These include school and college leavers as well as those that were unhappy with their jobs, and chose to go back and into training to secure a more stable, long-term career.



*Photo courtesy of  
Network Rail.*

Erin Henderson, 19, joined as an apprentice in 2013 and is now working on the Thameslink project, based in Ashford, Kent. She said: “You won’t find anything better. When I was in the sixth form there was a bit of prejudice around the idea of apprenticeships. But, I’ve moved out of my

home like my friends that have gone to university - so I don't feel like I've been left out – and I am getting paid. They're all a bit jealous now.”

The first year of the three-year scheme is spent at Europe's largest engineering training facility at the Royal Navy's HMS Sultan in Hampshire, training in one of five core specialist areas: track, signalling, telecoms, electrification and plant and overhead lines. The second and third years involve work on the rail network's front line, gaining vital skills to become maintenance technicians. This on-the-job training is completed by further off-railway learning at out training centres.

The Network Rail Advanced Apprenticeship scheme is open to anyone who is 17 by 31st August 2015. Further details on the scheme, including cases studies of current and former apprentices talking about their own experiences, can be found on the website:

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/apprentices>.

## **Rejection.**

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has rejected proposals by 'open access' train operator Great North Western Railway (GNWR) to provide six new direct train services between London and Blackpool from May 2017, and six between London, Huddersfield and Leeds from December 2016. GNWR planned to operate seven days a week on each route using a fleet of new electric tilting trains capable of running at speeds of up to 140 mph.

The Leeds trains would have called at Eccles Station and produced significant investment there in passenger facilities. The full list of stops for these trains would have been

- Euston
- Milton Keynes
- Nuneaton
- Tamworth
- Lichfield
- Crewe
- Warrington
- Newton-le-Willows

- Eccles
- Manchester Victoria
- Stalybridge
- Huddersfield
- Dewsbury
- Leeds

In its decision letter, the ORR said that the main reason for rejection was that in its opinion the proposed services would not generate enough new revenue to justify allowing them to compete with the Virgin-operated West Coast franchise. (In OR speak 'primarily abstractive')

Ian Yeowart, managing director of GNWR, said: "We are naturally disappointed with the ORR's decision, especially as we reached agreement with Network Rail in May last year that there was sufficient capacity to operate these trains on the West Coast Main Line and across the Pennines. The ORR's reasons came as something of a surprise to GNWR", continued Mr Yeowart, "particularly as GNWR was told last July that forecasts of generation from the first part of the 5 stage test were relatively high compared with previous open access applications that have been approved by the ORR."

Freccles received an e-mail stating: "Thank you for your continued support. If you have read the ORR's decision letter you will have seen that they did at least recognise that Eccles was worthy of special consideration."

We are still considering our next steps in response to the decision. I can assure you that we have not given up. In the event that we re-apply – one of the options under consideration – I will get in touch again to discuss how we can make a more convincing case to the ORR with regard to Eccles."

GNWR, GNER and Grand Central are part of the UK Trains division of Deutsche Bahn owned transport operator, Arriva, and so already operate such trains on the East Coast main line where competition has kept fare rises below the national average, but the franchise operator has still paid increased premiums to the Government year on year. In contrast the benefits of 'open access' competition have now been denied to those passengers in the north west of England.

GNWR is now undertaking a detailed review of the ORR's decision letter in order to decide what steps to take next. Eccles Station News has heard that there is some concern at the Competition and Markets Authority about the

decision, and of course an apparently anti-competitive ruling has gone down like a lead balloon with about 100 government MPs.

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## **Relief?**

Rail services will be maintained and capacity on key routes will be increased as part of a deal to secure additional rolling stock for the north of England, Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin announced on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2015. If there is no devil in the detail then this will be most welcome news for rail travellers in the north as there had been doubt resulting from the decision by rolling stock leasing company Porterbrook to move trains running on the Transpennine Express route to the Chiltern franchise. In addition, the Department for Transport has agreed a plan with the operators of the Northern and Transpennine Express routes to offer more carriages and seats.

Patrick McLoughlin said: "Rail services across the north are vital for passengers and for the economy. By helping people access work and leisure more easily, we are securing long-term economic growth across the region. That is why we have worked hard with Northern and Transpennine Express to ensure that we expand services and enhance passenger journeys."

Over the coming months, the agreement will deliver a number of benefits to passengers.

**More carriages between Manchester and Blackpool:** Capacity on selected services between Blackpool North and Manchester Airport / Manchester Oxford Road will be increased, providing extra seats for the benefit of passengers in destinations including Preston, Bolton and Salford.

**Additional capacity on Cumbrian Coast services:** Longer trains will provide extra capacity to Carlisle, Maryport, Workington, Whitehaven, Sellafield and Barrow-in-Furness, with potential to create additional jobs. There will also be an enhanced early-morning service from Carlisle to Sellafield, arriving in time for the morning shift at the power station.

**Electric trains on Manchester Victoria to Liverpool, and Liverpool to Preston routes:** Refreshed electric trains, providing faster, smoother and greener journeys, will be rolled out on busy commuter routes between Liverpool and Manchester Victoria from May, at a faster rate than previously planned. In addition, refreshed electric trains will be rolled out on the Liverpool to Preston route in the autumn. This will free up existing diesel trains to create additional capacity elsewhere on the north's network.

**Revised services for South Cumbria and Windermere:** A new 10.53 service from Windermere to Manchester Airport will be introduced, while the existing 13.33 service from Barrow-in-Furness to Manchester Airport will depart at 12.13 to provide more balanced services throughout the day. The 06.18 Manchester Airport to Barrow-in-Furness service will no longer run, but a new, direct 17.14 service from Manchester Oxford Road to Barrow-in-Furness will be introduced, with a connection for Windermere.

**Revised services on the South TransPennine route:** An hourly service will be maintained between Manchester Airport, Sheffield, Doncaster and Cleethorpes. The huge majority of these will remain as direct services. Limited amends are planned with customers for the 15:55 between Manchester Airport and Cleethorpes and the 16:26 Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport needing to change at Doncaster.

**Services between Manchester, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Yorkshire Coast, Humberside and the Northeast:** All services will be operated with a minimum of three carriages or 181 seats, whereas at present some services on the route are operated by two carriage trains with 116 seats.

“Rail travel is increasingly popular in the north of England placing capacity at a premium. That is why we have been working with First TransPennine Express

and the Department for Transport to ensure customers would not be disadvantaged by the loss of some FTPE trains.” said Alex Hynes, Managing Director, Northern Rail. “In doing so we are delighted to be able to provide more seats for customers on some of our busiest routes. Through deploying more electric trains to take advantage of newly electrified routes we are able to help maintain capacity for FTPE and add more seats for customers in the North West.”

## **Transport for Eccles (IV).**

Our previous articles looked at infrastructure provision for roads and buses, and the next natural progression would be to examine the infrastructure and provision of tram services. However this article is held over to next issue, and allows ESN to air one or two pieces of feedback from readers of the articles so far.

Reader Mark Charnley has pointed out that the electronic timetable board in Eccles bus station does not seem to have any logical order to its table. ESN did not doubt Mark but went for a look at this phenomenon:

Service	Destination/Via	Stand	Time
10	Peel Green	E	14:47
100	Trafford Centre\Barton	E	14:48
33	Langworthy	B	14:47
67	Salford Shopping Centr	A	14:48
100	Salford Shopping Centr	A	14:55
110	Salford Shopping Centr	E	14:52

Well the first column of the table is not in numerical order. The destinations column is not in alphabetic order; the stands likewise are not listed alphabetically, and the last column is not in time order! That is quite a feat! How does it sort out its data?

ESN spent some time looking at this board but the clue came from these two photos closely timed photos of the two sides. Look at the one below. Can you see what it is doing? (That is apart from addition of a little green serpent.)



The other feedback was from reader Stephen Hopkins also about the bus article, and our judgement that provision was quite good. He said that he thought the fare offerings were rather expensive and dearer than in London. ESN's view is this is likely correct, but any comment by us is not yet due – the article we carried was about infrastructure and bus provision only. ESN has not yet decided whether to include one on fares because they are so complicated and demanding in research time, but we don't rule it out yet.

**At this stage can ESN add that we welcome feedback from readers – we don't get enough of it!**

## ***Transport of Delight?***

HMG Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin visited Yorkshire on 12 January 2015 for the inaugural meeting in Leeds of 'Transport for the North' which group will have the task of drawing up with the government a comprehensive transport strategy to transform the north's economic infrastructure and help maximise the region's growth potential, rebalancing the national economy.

Transport for the North, is a new alliance of the north's key authorities and agencies and was set up by the government in October 2014. It is led by the city regions that made up One North: Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds,

Sheffield and Newcastle, together with Hull and the Humber, working in collaboration with other northern authorities, the Department for Transport, Highways Agency, Network Rail, and HS2 Ltd. As well as examining east-west rail links to better connect the north, Transport for the North will look at everything from roads, ports and airports to broadband and a joint interim report will be produced in March 2015, and later a delivery programme to make that vision real in the next 15 years.

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said, “Rebalancing the economy and creating a northern powerhouse of jobs, investment, prosperity and bright futures, is a key objective of the government’s long term economic plan. It is crucial we work together to deliver a world-class, integrated transport network for the north that reduces journey times, increases capacity and connectivity and enables growth. We have already made great strides and the creation of Transport for the North is an excellent next step. I want Transport for the North to speak with one voice to government on the big decisions to benefit the region as a whole.”

Chair of the meeting and leader of Manchester City Council Sir Richard Leese said: “This is about how we gear up the north and build a northern powerhouse which can properly fulfill its potential for UK plc. Economic growth doesn’t happen by accident, it happens by design and having the right integrated infrastructure in place is vital for us to generate that growth.”

## **STOP PRESS**

*Apparently February 14<sup>th</sup> is the target date for the switch on of the overhead wires on the Liverpool & Manchester and Huyton to Wigan routes. If achieved this would be two months later than originally planned.*

*There are five refurbished class 319 electric multiple units based at Allerton Depot ready to bring in electric train services on the route so there might just be time for these to go in the May timetable change, otherwise it will be in September 2015.*

*Ecclesians will ask, ‘Will it bring extra trains stopping at Eccles?’*

To find out more about **FRECCLES** or to make contact see our **website:** [www.freccles.org](http://www.freccles.org) or e mail us at [info@freccles.org.uk](mailto:info@freccles.org.uk)

