

# ECCLES STATION

# NEWS

MAY 2015

*Once again, welcome to ESN. Another factually packed month taking a further look at the very important franchise guidance documents released in February, and at the very successful Metrolink services. **Editor***

NEWS

Just after ESN's report about the new electric trains on the Liverpool and Manchester line we received this letter from one of our train spotter brethren:

*Dear Editor,*

*- have just been on one of the new(ish) electric trains from Liverpool. I got the 10.03 from Manchester Piccadilly to Manchester Airport, the service runs hourly but apparently only every other one is electric at the moment.*

*I actually recognised the Thameslink stock because I used the service from Sevenoaks to St Pancras regularly from 2010. They have 4 carriages with all facing seats and 2 toilets in the same carriage - so the 4 car set must be standard in contrast to say the 3 car electric trains on the Glossop and Hazel Grove lines.*

*The design looks from about 25/30 years ago and they don't look as if they have had an internal refurbishment, although they are clean. However the 4 carriage sets will be a big improvement on what we have got, although you will be furious to find out that they*

don't stop at Eccles even though they do stop at a lot of intermediate stations in Liverpool that you wouldn't want to get off at.

They have had an external repainting of course, with "Northern Electric" on every carriage.

Cheers  
John

**At long last** it appears that Eccles Station will be brought into the electronic communication age! Engineers placed the site markings on **both** platforms a couple of months ago.



The marks appear to be for Closed Circuit Television Cameras, Customer Information Screens, Customer Help Points, and a Public Address System. This would be a most welcome improvement to the station, making it much more passenger friendly. *(Better late than never and Freccles will be duly grateful for the installation; but that this is only just happening in the sixth largest world economy prompts troubles the ESN editor about how the railways have been run in the last half century.)*

***FRECCLES has a new logo. It is an adaptation of the previous successful logo, the change is to make the lettering clearer and more noticeable when used in small formats such as on a busy presentation slide and we have changed the colour to reflect the original LMS 'Crimson Lake'.***



*Is that clear enough for our readers?*

It has been proposed that **The Queen's Arms** at Patricroft Station be listed as an Asset of Community Value on the Salford register of such assets. Nina Keshishian of Friends of Patricroft Station has made the proposal which is gazetted as follows:

15/66292/ACV	DEL	Nina Keshishian - Representative	Eccles
<b>GRID REFERENCE:</b>		376308 398752	
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>		Adele Stewart	0161 604 7792
<b>LOCATION:</b>		Queens Arms Hotel Green Lane Eccles M30 0SH	
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>		Assets of community value for the Queens Arms Hotel	

This attractive old building has been serving beer since 1828 (BEFORE the Liverpool & Manchester Railway opened) and is well worth a visit. It features on heritage postcards available for FRECCLES or FROPS.

The rivalry between this pub and one in Darlington for title of 'First Railway Pub' has been covered in the May edition of the excellent local drinkers' magazine 'ALE OF TWO CITIES' edited by Robin Bence of North Manchester Campaign for Real Ale. Do take a look at this:

<http://www.northmanchester.camra.org.uk/viewnode.php?id=17343>

*The Friends of Eccles Station (FRECCLES) held their Annual Meeting at Eccles Community Hall in April. At this meeting **David Yates** resigned his position as Chairman of Freccles after 10 years of notable service which included the founding of the group; the development of a wide range of professional contacts and the transformation of the station from its neglected state. Grateful thanks are due from all Freccles members and station passengers for this sterling service.*

*David will remain a member of Freccles and be replaced as Chair by Steve Hopkins, who has previously acted as Deputy Chairman.*

Also at the Freccles Annual Meeting a speech was given by **Amanda White**. Amanda recently joined Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) with responsibility for rail transport development in the area. Her speech was elucidating and showed that TfGM is pursuing options to increase the frequency of trains calling at Eccles Station.

*FRECCLES is working with an artist to have **some artwork** made to finish off the look of the forecourt area. One of the things that the new Chair Steve Hopkins is pursuing is the allocation of **some parking spaces for rail users only** in John William Street car park at the corner closest to the railway station. It seems that Northern Rail would be interested in such a possibility.*

## ARTICLES

### **Invitation to Tender (II).**

The 'Invitation to Tender' documents issued by the Department for Transport (DfT) on 27<sup>th</sup> February set out minimum service requirements for each station on the routes covered by the franchise. The new Northern franchise will begin in April 2016. To view the tender documents please visit the DfT website: [published documents](#)

There are specifications for trains December 2017 to December 2019 and then a set of tables for requirements from December 2019 onwards. A perusal of the second set shows that as far as Eccles trains go, they are identical to the first set examined last month: so there is no increase or decrease in the minimum requirement at Eccles station during the franchise period. The minimum requirements for Eccles trains are not a great deal different from the provision of the current timetable. The number of trains increases in Monday to Friday peak periods, with one train fewer in late evening, and it could be argued that this is an improvement in service given the low usage of the late evening trains on Monday to Thursday. Saturday and Sunday requirements are the same as provided by the current timetable.

At this point it must be pointed out that the franchisee may offer a more frequent service than the specification and the ultimate destinations of the trains may differ from current practice. The requirements are repeated below for the reader's convenience.

#### **Table Liv1A**

**MONDAY TO FRIDAY** trains calling at Eccles and going to Manchester (Piccadilly, Oxford Road, or Victoria) the earliest arrival at Manchester to be before 06.30 and the last arrival there not before 00.15

Period	02.00 to 06.59	07.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 15.59	16.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum no of trains	1 (1)	6 (4)	6 (6)	6 (5)	3 (3)	2 (3)	none

*(The figures in brackets represent the current timetable provision. Peak periods shown in yellow columns.)*

**Table Liv1C**

**SATURDAY** trains calling at Eccles and going to Manchester (Piccadilly, Oxford Road, or Victoria) the earliest arrival at Manchester to be before 06.30 and the last arrival there not before 00.15

Period	02.00 to 06.59	07.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 15.59	16.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum no of trains	1 (1)	4 (4)	6 (6)	5 (5)	3 (3)	2 (2)	none

*(The figures in brackets represent the current timetable provision.)*

**Table Liv1E**

**SUNDAY** trains calling at Eccles and going to Manchester (Piccadilly, Oxford Road, or Victoria) the earliest arrival at Manchester to be by 09.15 and the last arrival there not before 00.00

Period	02.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum trains	1 (1)	9 (9)	3 (3)	3 (3)	none

So the 'Invitation to Tender' for the Northern franchise requires an improvement in peak hour trains provision, but does not specify an overall frequency of service that would be appropriate for a town the size of, and with the passenger potential of Eccles. Does it specify any other improvements to the passenger offering? To answer that question requires a look at the 'Draft Franchise Agreement' and that will be covered in the next issue of ESN.

Before closing this look at the timetable specifications though, there is a final small table of very unusual service requirements. It is reproduced below:

REQUIREMENT	ROUTE
One service shall be provided each week between the following stations in at least one direction:	Carnforth and Morecambe
	Frodsham and Runcorn (from the last Sunday before Spring Bank Holiday weekend until the second Sunday in September, inclusive).
	Eaglescliffe and Stockton
	Ince and Wigan North Western
	Wigan North Western and Patricroft
	Wigan North Western and Newton-le-Willows
	Worksop and Retford (High Level)
	[Sheffield and Chesterfield (via Woodhouse)]
	Dinting and Hadfield (not via Glossop)
	Dinting and Glossop (not via Hadfield)
	[Fitzwilliam and Mirfield]
	[Fitzwilliam and Normanton]
	Darlington and Eaglescliffe calling at Teesside Airport
	Stockport and Guide Bridge, calling at Reddish South and Denton.
REQUIREMENT	ROUTE
Three services shall be provided each way on Saturdays on the following route:	Sheffield and Cleethorpes calling at Gainsborough Central, Kirton Lindsey, Brigg and Barnetby. These services may be extensions of Sheffield to Retford and Retford to Sheffield services.
REQUIREMENT	ROUTE
One service shall be provided on Mondays to Fridays on the following route which shall be in addition to the services specified in Table LIV 1B:	Manchester to Liverpool departing from Manchester no later than 05:30.

Some of these must be run as a statutory minimum service because the passenger service has not been formally withdrawn. A rail service is set up by act of parliament and can only be closed following specified lengthy and expensive procedures. Sometimes these are evaded by running a regular but infrequent, and inconvenient service on a line.

The Stockport to Guide Bridge train is well known as one of these, and very popular with rail enthusiasts. The Carnforth to Morecambe one almost certainly falls into the same category. However some of the others are puzzling to say the least and ESN would welcome enlightening communication from readers knowledgeable about these things.

Why is the Frodsham to Runcorn requirement seasonal?

Why have some of these appeared now for routes that have not had a passenger service for years or even decades? (e.g. Wigan North Western to Patricroft and to Newton le Willows). Is it a late realisation that these services were never formally withdrawn?

And what is that early morning train from Manchester to Liverpool about? Is it an enforced experiment to test very early morning demand, or is there predicted demand already?

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

The tram routes are designed as an intermediate transport mode between buses and trains. The frequent stops and sometimes tightly curved stretches of line do not allow high speed services as on the railway but do provide service times that are usually faster than the bus. So the tram is not really intended for journeys from Manchester to either Rochdale or the Airport. Think of it as for intermediate length journeys; say up to 10 miles, from Manchester to Oldham, Oldham to Rochdale or Northenden to either the airport or Manchester. Over about 20 years the number of journeys has increased from eight million per year to nearly thirty million as the network has expanded and each individual service become better used.

The stations and track are very expensive pieces of infrastructure: it would make no economic sense to run a tram on it once a day, or once an hour, or only Monday to Friday. It must be extensively and intensively used to bring in fare revenue towards its cost. This is the general case but here we exemplify it by reference to the Eccles Metrolink services.

The extensive use is to run trams for a large part of the day, and a large part of the year. This shares out the cost of the infrastructure and boosts passenger

numbers: tram travel is a viable option for many office cleaners and bar staff! Specifically on the Eccles line there are services almost every day of the year and for a daily period of 16 or 17 hours.

You can see the detail of this on a table below which is taken from Metrolink’s website:

Metrolink take pride in their fast and frequent service operating 7 days a week from early until late 364 days of the year. Please view the tram times for Eccles below.

To	Mon-Thur		Fri		Sat		Sun & Bank Hol	
	First	Last	First	Last	First	Last	First	Last
To Altrincham	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	23:12 <sup>b</sup>	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	00:24 <sup>b</sup>	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	00:24 <sup>b</sup>	07:30 <sup>b</sup>	22:30 <sup>b</sup>
To Ashton-under-Lyne	05:48	23:12	05:48	00:12	05:48	00:12	07:30	22:00
To Bury	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	23:12 <sup>j</sup>	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	00:12 <sup>j</sup>	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	00:12 <sup>j</sup>	07:30 <sup>c</sup>	22:15 <sup>c</sup>
To East Didsbury	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	23:36 <sup>b</sup>	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	00:36 <sup>b</sup>	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	00:36 <sup>b</sup>	07:30 <sup>b</sup>	22:45 <sup>b</sup>
To Manchester Airport	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	22:48 <sup>b</sup>	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	23:48 <sup>b</sup>	05:48 <sup>b</sup>	23:48 <sup>b</sup>	07:30 <sup>b</sup>	22:00 <sup>b</sup>
To MediaCityUK	05:48	23:36	05:48	00:36	05:48	00:36	07:30	22:45
To Piccadilly	05:48	23:36	05:48	00:36	05:48	00:36	07:30	22:45
To Rochdale Town Centre	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	22:48 <sup>j</sup>	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	23:48 <sup>j</sup>	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	23:48 <sup>j</sup>	07:30 <sup>j</sup>	21:30 <sup>j</sup>
To Victoria	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	23:24 <sup>j</sup>	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	00:36 <sup>j</sup>	05:48 <sup>j</sup>	00:36 <sup>j</sup>	07:30 <sup>c</sup>	22:30 <sup>j</sup>

Ok, the 364 days a year would be ideal but permanent way and signalling works, plus road traffic incidents get in the way of this aim rather too often.

What is not clear from this table is the intensive use. Here trams are run very frequently to share out further the high base costs of such a network. This is made possible by three policy decisions. The termini, where platform space is occupied for turn round and recovery time, are at the ‘country’ end of each line only, allowing the very busy city stops to be used as through stations with short dwell times. Only one type of service is offered: each tram has the same acceleration and braking properties and makes the same stops, allowing very close timing (trams could operate a two minute service). Lastly the system is not designed for high speed so very long braking distances between trams are not required.

As with an extensive operating period, intensive frequency is also attractive to passengers. On the Eccles line trams run every 12 minutes Monday to Saturday, and every fifteen minutes on Sundays and Bank Holidays. With this

frequency passengers need not be timetable experts: they can just turn up and usually wait a short while.

This last statement relies on reliability which also does not show on a timetable. On this measure Metrolink has had a poor record in the past with only about three out of four scheduled trams running, if that. Many passengers reverted to the buses.

A less obvious characteristic of success is persistence. In the first few years the Eccles tram was not well used but you don't build such expensive infrastructure to use it only for say 5 years. The trams continued to run to the same timetable pattern as patronage slowly built up. Now they are a very popular with travellers, often running as double sets (4 carriages). Such persistence probably gradually raises awareness of the availability of the tram as a travel option but there is a structural aspect too. Over the years of persistence people will make choices on where to live and on where to work based partly on the proximity of a good transport link. A corollary of this is that the timetable should remain stable over time – it is not something to keep chopping and changing without major reason.

## **Withdrawal of Pacers.**

The Invitation to Tender for the Northern Franchise specifies that the selected franchisee must provide 120 new build units to replace the pacers (class 142 or 'Nodding donkeys') by 2020. The pacers are based on cheap-build bus bodywork and were introduced by British Rail in the 1980s when the government of the day was being more frugal (even than was usual) with railway spending. Though lacking in style they have served well to prop up rail services on less well used routes, and for far longer than most would have predicted. They are cheap to hire but age now makes them prone to failures thus costing more on maintenance. Equally with the resurgence in rail travel, one could ask how much revenue is foregone by running unattractive trains of such basic rolling stock.

But replacing the pacers will not come cheap: the replacement stock will cost in the region of £200,000,000 pounds. One could argue as to whether their replacement is value for money, but this is to ignore the political dimension to

the decision. What if the pacers have become a symbol of governments' neglect of local rail services outside the Home Counties? What if their continued use is demoralising for rail travellers in the provinces? What do we elect politicians to do? Clearly there is economic/political tension in this decision.

This tension is the reason for an exchange of letters between the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Transport (DfT), Philip Rutnam (acting as accounting officer), and the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin. The curious reader can access facsimiles of the letters using the following links; accompanying each link is the DfT summary of the situation.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/407753/dft-permanent-secretary-to-sos.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407753/dft-permanent-secretary-to-sos.pdf)

This letter was written by the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Transport to the Secretary of State for Transport. It seeks a ministerial direction in relation to the withdrawal of Pacer vehicles by 2020. The letter also sets out the reasons for seeking a ministerial direction, those being:

- the low value for money of the proposal
- the precise stipulations reducing flexibility for bidders

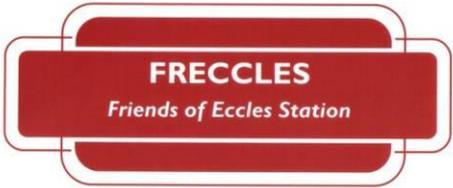
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/407780/dft-sos-to-permanent-secretary.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407780/dft-sos-to-permanent-secretary.pdf)

This letter was written by the Secretary of State for Transport to the Permanent Secretary. It confirms a ministerial direction in relation to the withdrawal of Pacer vehicles by 2020. This letter also sets out the reasons for confirming a ministerial direction, those being the:

- incompatibility of the Pacer vehicles with the vision for economic growth and prosperity in the north
- need for a long term solution that will address the projected shortfall in diesel vehicles

Time, space and energy constraints mean that much material has been carried over for future issues (eg that promised examination of the Metrolink light rail vehicles). Some of the material has been held over because it could be mistakenly construed as political in the context of the General Election in May.  
(Editor)

**Eccles Station News** welcomes feedback from readers. Please do not hesitate to send in your own views, photos or snippets of news to the e-mail address below.



For the last time! From now on it will be:



**FRECCLES**

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