

Annual Review 2021-2022



Unveiling of a memorial seat for Chris Dale, Chairman of TravelWatch NorthWest for 12 years until his untimely death in June 2020

***Working for an integrated and
seamless public transport network
across the North West of England***

TravelWatch NorthWest Annual Review 2021-2022

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
• Chair's Foreword	3
1. Introduction & Background	6
2. Annual Review 2020/21	
2.1 Covid 19 & Conferences	7
2.2 Bus Services	8
2.3 Rail Matters	10
2.4 Light Rail	17
2.5 Consultations	17
3. Plans for 2022/24	17
• Appendices –	
Appendix A – Administration	19
Appendix B – Accounts 2020/21	20
Appendix C – Membership	21

(Cover Photo; Laura Normansell)

Chair's Foreword

The experience of living in the 2020s has not been good for a great many people across the whole country. We all faced the threat of Covid 19 and sadly many did not survive. The virus is no longer centre stage, having been relegated to the wings, but could still pose a real threat in whatever disguise it appears again.

Human injections have suppressed the most serious effects of the virus and had it not been for emergency injections of cash our national public transport systems would have collapsed. Never had buses and trains been so quiet, carrying only key workers on whom the country relied. There were many occasions throughout 2021 when a passenger could have a whole carriage or bus to themselves.

At the time of writing, Covid is in hiding and the nation is trying to get back to normal – but very slowly. In my local shop I still have to speak to the checkout staff through a Perspex screen. Public transport has recovered to a degree, maybe 75% of aggregated loadings across the industry (on a good day), but the type of passengers has changed significantly. No longer can train operators rely on the certainty of regular income from the 5-days a week commuters, most often holders of annual season tickets, as they have decided or been instructed in the first instance to work from home whenever possible. Speaking from personal experience teachers must always travel to their place of work, as is the case with many occupations, but the loss of reliable income from the historic commuters has hit the transport industry hard. The government seems less willing to step in financially as ‘the experts’ now believe that there is no longer a problem.

One problem subsides (but is lying low) and instantly another bomb drops – yes, literally. The appalling war in Ukraine (call it for what it is), initiated by a maniacal despot, has massively changed not just that independent country but the rest of Europe and, to some extent, the rest of the world. Russia has quite rightly been ‘sanctioned’ but the not immediately expected side-effect has been a colossal increase in the price of gas. If only Europe had taken heed of the 2014 invasion of Crimea and taken steps to distance itself from reliance on Russian gas. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Road fuel costs rose to dizzy heights and to some extent contributed to an increase in the use of public transport. People began to use trains and buses for leisure purposes whereas in the past they would have used the family car. Train operators have had to get used to dealing with *naïve* passengers who need guidance around stations and training in how to purchase the best value tickets. It would have been wonderful if, in a flash, coaching stock could have been reconfigured to accommodate family groups around tables rather than cram them into stock designed for commuter flows. The creation of family carriages, as used abroad, would have been ‘a good seller’.

The increase in the price of gas has impacted massively on the annual energy bill for everyone. This missive is being written soon after Ofgem announced what will be the first of many massive energy price rises. Millions of people will be unable to afford those costs, leading to the choice of eating or heating. Given those two crucial requirements of life any thought of discretionary expenditure

will disappear instantly. A trip out by car, by train, by bus – no chance. Sadly 2022/23 is going to be a winter/spring, even summer of despair and discontent.

An instant and understandable reaction to these expected price increases is that personnel across the employment spectrum firmly believe that they need higher pay. Strikes have already started and may well increase. Arriva bus drivers have achieved a resolution (an 11% increase) whilst RMT, ASLEF and TSSA battle on. Within TravelWatch NorthWest it is not our role to decide if the wage claims are justified but what we do have to consider is the effect on the travelling public who have already been seriously inconvenienced on strike days.

For any form of public transport to be taken seriously it has to be available, affordable and reliable. Experience during 2022, especially during the second half of the year, has shown that many intending passengers have little trust that each of these key criteria will always be achieved.

Rather than encourage their drivers to enjoy their rest days, Avanti West Coast expected them to offer to work (albeit with overtime pay) and cut the overall driver numbers accordingly. As a direct result of their drivers choosing to rest on their days off Avanti were forced to drastically reduce services. Three trains an hour from London to Manchester became one. Furthermore any chance of being able to buy an affordable cheap rate advance ticket immediately disappeared. The trains became the domain of the rich.

In many areas of train operation reliability has taken a hit in recent months. By way of example, I wished to travel back to Clitheroe from Irlam one day. I caught the on-time 'stopper', intending to change at Oxford Road. Our train was delayed at Castlefield Junction to allow the passage of a TransPennine Express train which had left Edinburgh late. I missed my connection to Salford Crescent so, to kill time (as the Clitheroe service is only hourly) I walked over to Victoria. We had a good journey until there was a rude awakening when we ended up in the bay at Blackburn. Our 40 year old train had decided to have a hissy-fit in the form of a wheel bearing problem. There was no apology to onward Ribble Valley bound passengers, the station supervisor was missing in action, so we had to wait on the not too comfy Blackburn station for another hour. I arrived home two hours later than expected. Oh, the joys of British train travel when the system falls apart.

On a far more positive note, on the days when the system is in good health it is a pleasure to travel in modern trains (but not yet on the Ribble Valley Line). The Class 333 and 195 trains are a great improvement on the hated Pacers, except that the suspension of the new ones feels sometimes to be akin to that of the Pacer. The spoken and visual announcements are an improvement, except that one quickly tires of the "Please mind the gap when leaving the train" repetition. Why is there a gap in the first place? We look forward to riding on the new Merseyrail electric fleet when 'the gap' will have been consigned to history.

TWNW also maintains an overview of trams and buses, the latter being an essential operation which seems to exist on a wing and a prayer in terms of funding for the future. In 2020 the government pledged £3 billion of funding for buses, which form a lifeline for many people. In early 2021 that funding was cut

to £1.2 billion. To avoid wholesale closure of bus routes across the country the government has more recently had to inject £150 million to protect local transport services. The Covid induced decline has not been fully reversed and many routes could still face the axe. For those who rely on the bus to get them to work or education, or just to get out of the house, that axe can force a serious lifestyle change, rarely for the better.

It has been pleasing to return to holding our popular conferences around the region, rather than utilising impersonal Zoom. We are grateful to our friends within the public transport industry and local government who have kindly given their time to contribute to worthwhile discussions at those conferences. By maintaining a continuing dialogue we all hope that ongoing problems will be solved so that public transport remains available, affordable and reliable.

On behalf of my colleagues on the TWNW board I offer thanks to our secretary John Moorhouse who continues to excel in organising conferences, responding to discussion documents, liaising face-to-face with transport operators and generally keeping his board members focussed on representing all users of public transport in the North West of England.

David J Butterworth
September 2022

1. Introduction & Background

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) originated as the North West Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF). The NWPTUF was formed in October 2003 and its public name became TravelWatch NorthWest in 2006. It is an independent organisation representing all users of public transport in the North West. Membership is open to any not for profit organisation representing the interests of users or potential users of public transport. TravelWatch holds regular conferences open to the public at various locations in the North West that debate issues of interest and concern to public transport users who have the opportunity to contribute and raise their concerns. TravelWatch groups have also been established in other parts of the country.

1.2 TWNW's chief purpose is to influence, by research and campaigning, public transport policy in the North West always with passengers' interests foremost.

1.3 TWNW's mission statement is: -

Facilitating an integrated and seamless quality public transport network for North West England.

1.4 The vision of TWNW is to champion the interests of public transport users in the North West so the network can become: -

- Accessible to everyone
- Affordable and socially inclusive
- Available where and when it is needed
- Acceptable to all
- Attractive to users

1.5 The key objectives of TWNW are to: -

- Give users a platform to express their concerns and needs
- Promote the use of public transport in the North West
- Contribute to the development of regional transport strategies
- Produce influential best practice reports based on evidence

1.6 TWNW has established a good relationship with a wide range of stakeholders and has addressed several key issues within the transport agenda in the region. It is increasingly being seen as an important sounding board for consultation on regional transport policies.

1.7 TravelWatch NorthWest was formally incorporated as a Community Interest Company in March 2007. The Company is made up of members who each agree to a liability of £1 and is run by a Board of Directors (***see Appendices A and C***).

2. Annual Review 2021/22

2.1 Covid 19

2.1.1 The coronavirus crisis continued to affect our activities. In the summer of 2021 the way out of the pandemic still looked unclear with home working still very much in the picture. Because of the restrictions on meeting in person, we held 3 condensed zoom conferences between March and June 2021, all focussed on the way back to normality after the pandemic.

2.1.2 Our conferences aim to debate issues of public transport concern in the North West, to promote best practice to operators and local authorities and to promote the development of forward-looking public transport policies across the region. As well as users, representatives of local transport authorities and public transport providers across the region attended the conferences.

2.1.3 The conference on 11th March 2021 - "How will rail recover from the pandemic" featured the following speakers, giving short presentations of 10 minutes or so –

- ***Chris Jackson, Regional Director, Northern Trains Limited,***
- ***Chris Nutton. Major Projects Director, Trans Pennine Express***
- ***Richard Scott, Partnership & Strategy Director, West Coast Partnership***

2.1.4 On 15th April we moved the focus to buses – "How will bus services recover from the pandemic". Speakers were –

- ***Matt Goggins, Assistant Director Bus, Merseytravel***
- ***Alex Hornby, CEO TransDev, Blazefield***
- ***John Carr, Association of Transport Co-ordinating Authorities***

2.1.5 On 17th June we held to a similar theme for public transport as a whole – "The way back to normality for public transport". Our three well informed speakers were –

- ***RT Hon. Norman Baker, Adviser, Campaign for Better Transport***
- ***Phil Haigh, Specialist Writer on Railways***
- ***Mark Hodgkiss, Scheduled Bus Services Officer, Cumbria Country Council***

2.2 Live conferences

2.2.1 With the gradual return to some kind of normality TWNW held two conferences in October 2021 and March 2022, both at the Mechanics Centre in Manchester.

2.2.2. The conference on October 2021, kindly supported by Northern Rail and Transport Focus, focussed on "Getting Back to Public Transport",. Speakers were -

- ***Cllr Roger Jones Greater Manchester Transport Committee***
- ***Joe Munro, Project Manager, Transpennine Express***

- **Craig Harrop, Head of Trains and Stations, Northern Rail**
- **Mark Mageean, Operations Manager, Stagecoach Manchester**
- **Salim Patel, Programme Manager (Rail) Transport for the North**

A Q&A session featuring all the speakers and also Yvonne Fox-Burmby from Transport Focus rounded off the morning.

2.2.3 The conference in March 2022, sponsored by Avanti West Coast, concentrated on rail investment in the north west following the government's announcement to scale back expenditure on HS2. Speakers were –

- **Russell Evans, Train Services Director, West Coast Partnership**
- **Carew Satchwell, Head of Strategic Planning NW & Central, Network Rail.**
- **Trevor Bishop, Railfuture North West**
- **Robert Fickling, Rail Strategy Advisor, Transport for Greater Manchester**

2.2.4 In June 2022 we met in Blackpool to consider Bus, Light Rail and Integration issues. Kind support was received from Blackpool Transport and Blackpool Council. Speakers were –

- **David Simper, Transport Projects Leader, Blackpool Council**
- **Jane Cole, Managing Director, Blackpool Transport Services**
- **Councillor Charlie Edwards, Lancashire County Council**
- **David Butterworth, Chairman TWW**

2.3 Buses

National Bus Strategy

2.3.1 Back in February 2020 we had welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement of a 5 year funding package worth £5 billion for bus services, recommending that much of this should be used to fund reinstating bus routes which had vanished in recent years due to cuts in Local Council funding.

2.3.2 We stressed that these routes included vital links in rural areas giving people access to jobs, education, healthcare and shops as well as early morning, evening and weekend services in all areas, essential for all those people in low paid jobs whose working hours are 9 to 5. ***We said that achieving this would require the funding to be paid as revenue grants to Local Authorities and it should be ring fenced so it could only be spent on providing bus services***

2.3.3 In March 2021, as a follow up to the Prime Minister's announcement in Feb 2020, the government launched the National Bus Strategy ("Bus Back Better"). Although the total funding package appeared to have fallen from £5 billion to £3 billion, we gave a cautious welcome to the strategy. We emphasised again that rural areas must benefit following the many bus routes which have vanished in recent years due to cuts in Local Council funding.

2.3.4 It became clearer that under the strategy Local Transport Authorities (LAs) were being directed to produce a timescale to commit to greater involvement in buses, as per the following -

- A requirement to commit to an Enhanced Partnership with all bus operators by the end of June 2021 or begin the statutory process of franchising services. All operators will be required to co-operate with this.
- By the end of October 2021 each LA must publish a Bus Improvement Plan (BSIP) to be updated annually.
- By April 2022 each LA will need to have an Enhanced Partnership in place, or be following the statutory process to decide whether to implement a franchising scheme, to access the new discretionary streams of bus funding.

2.3.5 We could not find any reference in the strategy document to consultation on its roll-out with passengers or their representatives. We did though welcome the comments in the document on passenger representation and on complaints procedures, including a passengers charter and “mechanisms for redress at a local level and means to ensure these standards are met, which could include forums such as Bus Advisory Boards being set up”. Transport Focus is currently the statutory body representing bus passengers but unresolved complaints are dealt with by the Bus Appeals Body, run by Bus Users UK.

2.3.6 For many years we have found the arrangements for dealing with passengers’ complaints through the Bus Appeals Body to be unsatisfactory. There has recently been an improvement with the designation of BUUK as an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) body for the bus and coach industry. Just how the suggested Bus Advisory Boards would fit into this process remains to be seen. TWNW would be very happy to contribute its experience in passenger representation and advise on complaints and redress matters. One simple step would be to provide “how to comment/ complain” information on board buses and at bus stations.

2.3.7 All in all we supported the thrust of the strategy. However funding has now been significantly watered down. In March 2022 we responded to the HOCTC’s enquiry into the “National Bus Strategy One Year On.” We commented on slow progress with little to be seen on the ground. In spite of much time and effort being expended by LAs to produce the BSIPs by 31st October 2021 a disappointingly partial pausing of the scheme was announced, halting the implementation date of 1st April 2022.

2.3.8 We also commented on our support for Transport for Greater Manchester’s bid to franchise bus services within its sphere of control and for general support of wider enhanced public control of buses. Privatisation of buses has not always worked in favour of the passenger and even before the pandemic services have gradually declined and fares in some areas are high. We would hope that a new LA led regime can bring improvements.

2.3.9 In June 2022 allocations to local transport authorities under the BSIP transformation funding were revealed. None had received the amounts asked for and there were worrying disparities e.g Lancashire including Blackburn with

Darwen received 75% but Liverpool City Region only 2% of the ask! Cumbria supports no bus services at all and this is reflected in no BSIP funding for that LA. We are concerned over the future split of Cumbria into two Unitary Authorities splitting the county between West and East., particularly the effect on transport planning.

Future of Transport Rural Strategy

2.3.10 In February 2021 we had responded to a DfT consultation on this subject, making a number of suggestions which could give practical help to improving the current situation –

- Use of school transport in between school trips
- More co-operation/ co-ordination amongst the various public service (e.g. health associated) and goods delivery vehicles, etc.
- Open Community Transport services to all users and ensure their existence is well publicised nationally as well as locally to ensure maximum awareness.
- Improve publicity and information (e.g. fares) for existing services
- Improve integration amongst operators.

2.3.11 In October 2021 the DfT produced a summary of the issues raised by the consultation. Unsurprisingly the most frequently raised issue was that the current level of car dependence is too high in rural areas and a large number of respondents identified the lack of transport options in rural villages and towns as being an important cause of social isolation. Effective journey integration was identified as one of the main barriers to innovation, as was the high cost of development of demand responsive transport.

2.3.12 In February 2022 we reacted to a threat to cease Covid recovery funding for the bus industry at the end of March. It was thus reassuring to hear that the funding would be extended until the Autumn.

2.4 Rail Matters

Operational issues

2.4.1 We gave a general welcome to new trains for TPE and Northern, though Northern is still operating trains well over 30 years old. We have, however, expressed concerns about the propensity for low ratio of toilets to seats in many new trains e.g. Northern 3 car 195s and 3/4 car 331s, all of which have just one toilet. Performance appears to have been good and the new trains have generally good information systems and an airy ambience. However, the “ironing board” seats, that many new and refurbished trains have, are not particularly comfortable.

2.4.2 Rumours, principally from Northern, to close ticket offices at some stations are worrying. We do see the need for face to face staff especially taking into account the needs of inexperienced travellers and those with restricted access to internet, which cannot always give comprehensive help for many

journeys. Ticket machines at stations are very limited in journey options available.

2.4.3 Announcements about the cessation of printed timetables are worrying. Various train companies have decided to stop displaying timetable panels at stations and to cease production of printed timetable leaflets. Although there is an increasing number of on line users, there still remains a significant number of users/potential users who require access to printed timetables. They can of course be used for marketing purposes – as in the case of many Cumbria services. This timetable was in fact only achieved by the injection of significant funding and distribution resource by Cumbria CRP with the aid of the local Rail User Groups.

2.4.4 The summer of 2022 has seen very poor rail service provision. TPE has endured months of short term cancellation, with weekend travel disrupted by a union dispute, drivers not working rest days and sickness issues. The Operator's Anglo Scottish services have been completely unreliable. In August Avanti WC announced swingeing service reductions to help alleviate the number of cancellations caused by industrial action, greatly reduced rest day working and sickness levels. A particular example is Manchester to London – reduced from 3 trains an hour to just one! Added to all of this is the incidence of one day strikes, all adding up to a very poor deal for passengers.

2.4.5 At least, as a consequence of the cancellations, we have seen more co-operation amongst train operators with regard to stopping patterns, inserting extra stops, etc. This has helped to mitigate the hardship.

Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail

2.4.6 We had responded to the Williams review of the structure of the rail industry back in May 2019. Our key view was that the rail industry needed to be restructured into a more co-ordinated entity, in particular bringing infrastructure control and operations much closer together. We welcomed the view of the Rail Delivery Group that there was a need for a new strategic body in charge of the whole industry.

2.4.7 We were concerned that, despite the review purporting to put passengers' interests first, there appeared to be no mention of independent passenger representation in the consultation document. We advocated the restoration of the regional statutory bodies representing passengers which would be in line with a greater emphasis on an increasing role for local stakeholders as outlined above and such bodies as Transport for the North. We argued that TOWN would be well placed to fill this role.

2.4.8 In May 2021 the government at last published its resultant white paper, the Williams – Shapps Plan for Rail, the creation of "Great British Railways". We gave a broad welcome to the following elements of the plan –

- The restructuring of the rail industry into a more co-ordinated entity, in particular bringing infrastructure control and operations much closer together, bringing better integration and passenger benefits.

- Fares – simplification, pay as you go, flexible season tickets and continuing regulation.
- More local control and input from local stakeholders including Community Rail Partnerships.
- The commitment to strengthened passenger representation with an increased regional presence (something we had recommended).

2.4.9 We were disappointed with the failure to subsume train fleet provision into Great British Railways (GBR), leaving this key role and its strategic implications in the hands of the private sector.

2.4.10 The introduction of flexible season tickets during the year appeared to be good news. However the actual product does not always give good value for money. Take for example the Settle & Carlisle line. The Appleby to Carlisle flexi season (8 days travel out of 28 days is priced at £85.40 or £10.68 a day. The ordinary return is £12.20 so this is not a very big saving. Changes of the validity of the Dales railcard on this route have also affected the relatively small numbers of people including college students travelling to Carlisle. The train involved in the morning has plenty of spare seats so some form of more effective incentive pricing would be desirable

2.4.11 Co-ordination of the passenger network, given that private operators will continue to run service groups under contract arrangements rather than a franchise as formally, will be vital. Operationally there is a danger that this will not look very different to franchising and proper co-ordination and other organisational issues will not follow but still be exacerbated by fragmentation.

2.4.12 In February 2022 we responded to follow up consultation on the Whole Industry Strategic Plan which dealt with transition to the GBR set up. We reiterated points already made to the Williams Shapps plan and stressed the need for more co-ordination amongst/ between all transport modes with a key driver being persuading private car users to migrate to public transport.

(Response available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

2.4.13 In July 2022 we responded to consultation on Legislative Changes to be brought about as a result of the Williams – Shapps Plan. One positive measure (an answer to the point in paragraph 2.4.7) would be the continuation of the role of Transport Focus as the independent passenger champion. We reiterated our argument about the need for regional representation as outlined also in paragraph 2.4.7.

2.4.14 One element we were uneasy about was the continuing need for the involvement of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) in the new organisation. Given the quasi-regulatory role of GBR and the Department of Transport in the new regime, to say nothing of the roles of Transport Focus and the Ombudsman, how will the ORR fit into the scheme of things without duplication? There is a danger of more bureaucracy rather than less!

(Response available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

Manchester Recovery Task Force (MRTF)

2.4.15 In December 2021 we responded to consultation by Northern and TPE on the December 2022 timetable, specifically concerning the delivery of the outputs of the Manchester Recovery Task Force . We had responded in March 2021 to a consultation from the MRTF, a group set up by the DfT in conjunction with Network Rail and Transport for the North, to seek ways of easing the congestion by reassessing the complex rail service patterns in and out of and across Manchester.

2.4.16 We had emphasised that the crux of the matter was the crying need for investment on the Castlefield corridor and whilst the paper was overwhelmingly directed at optimising service patterns operationally, there was some reference to developing infrastructure interventions, but none would be available by 2022.

2.4.17 The changes will have connotations for rail services much wider than in the Manchester area itself. We commented on individual routes in some detail but summarised that the proposals exhibited a set-back for passengers who had been led to expect that travel by train would incrementally provide a viable alternative to the car. Longer journey times involving long connectional periods at interchange stations were hardly likely to present train travel as an attractive proposition.

2.4.18 We believe that at least one change for the better has been made following our input. The proposals brought forward the last train of the day from Manchester Piccadilly to Barrow and other points north of Preston by 35 minutes to 2129 (Airport) and 2150 (Piccadilly), very inconvenient for those attending evening events and breaking a connection at Preston out of a London-Preston service. We supported a campaign led by CRP Cumbria and other organisations for the 2150 (2129 ex-Airport) to be retimed so as to maintain the connection, which is well used. It is therefore pleasing that, as we understand it, the Barrow service will now run somewhat later

(Response available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

Engineering work disruption

2.4.19 One area that does cry out for greater co-ordination is the arrangements for passenger journeys when disruption resulting from engineering work takes place. We have previously drawn attention to fragmented arrangements for the management of rail replacement services, with each TOC organising its own coaches, leading to sub-optimal use of the coaches and duplication of personnel. We would hope that the creation of GBR will pave the way for one overall organisation to provide the coordinating staff and manage the whole rail replacement operation.

2.4.20 We have long campaigned for leisure travel to take a higher priority when rail engineering work and associated disruption to passengers' journeys is planned. In the North West we have what is probably the foremost area of scenic beauty in England – the Lake District National Park recently given

international recognition, quite rightly, as a world heritage site. Its main rail link between Oxenholme and Windermere sadly does not cater well for the crowds of tourists visiting the Park, in spite of the best efforts of the local user group and community rail partnership.

2.4.21 This part of the world has and is bedevilled by engineering work on the WCML especially at holiday times. Given that most passengers on feeder WCML and other local services are primarily leisure travellers this can hit very hard. Bank Holiday weekends are a favourite target and the scale of disruption for passengers visiting the Lake District can be shocking.

2.4.22 We have been given to understand in the past that Network Rail is committed to opening up the network in future to try to avoid the predilection of disrupting the important leisure business at holiday times. However, this current year (2022) has not seen any moves to fulfilling that undertaking.

2.4.23 In June 2022, along with Cumbria CRPs and the Lakes Line Rail Users Group, we attended a meeting with rail operators and Network Rail on WCML engineering possessions in 2023. It appears that there could be some amelioration next year with just the Sunday of Bank Holiday weekends taking the hit at least for the northern section of the WCML. However the picture for the southern end of the WCML is less clear. We would be concerned if the total shutdown of the line between Euston and Milton Keynes for the 4 full days of the entire Easter weekend in 2022 were to be repeated next year.

2.4.24 We cannot stress too much the importance of accurate timely and comprehensive information in advance of disruption. Failures in the past have included a seeming lack of co-operation between/ amongst operators on the same route e.g. TPE and Avanti on the West Coast Main Line. One outcome of GBR must be much closer co-operation amongst operators especially at times of disruption. We have said that GBR should have power to issue directions to its contracted operators to collaborate on these issues.

2.4.25 Another area that GBR should give direction on is the long-standing concerns about keeping passengers on trains as much as possible during disruption. We have in the past emphasised and reiterated that research by Transport Focus has shown that wherever possible passengers are prepared to accept a longer journey time by staying on a train to avoid using a replacement bus or coach. In recent times, TOCs have seemed reluctant to use diversionary rail routes to circumvent line blockages.

2.4.26 In our part of the world, for example, we have for many years decried the lack of use of the Settle to Carlisle line when the West Coast main line is blocked between Preston and Carlisle. Years of engagement with train operators and government ministers on the subject has been well documented in our previous reports. Suffice to say that cost considerations have been a fundamental part of the reluctance to divert trains. One note of optimism – we understand that TPE is reappraising S&C diversion possibilities. So why not Avanti?

Investment and Electrification

2.4.27 The Northern Sparks report of 2015 recommended a programme of electrification priorities. Oxenholme to Windermere should have been electrified years ago, and indeed it was assumed it would be completed in that 2015 report. However there has been typical obfuscation and no progress made.

2.4.28 In September 2021 a welcome announcement promised rail electrification between Wigan and Bolton. This is essentially good news and hopefully a step towards the electrification of the lines from Salford Crescent to Hindley via Atherton and indeed beyond Wigan to Southport and Kirkby, the third priority in the Northern Sparks report. We do have some concerns about the price tag of £78 million and have argued elsewhere about the need for more cost effective methods of implementing schemes, following the grossly over expensive Great Western electrification.

High Speed Rail/ Northern Powerhouse Rail

2.4.29 We have always supported the concept of High Speed Rail, though with reservations about its sub-optimal effects on our region and integration with conventional services. In January 2022 we responded to the HOCTCs Inquiry into the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the North (IRP). This followed a government announcement curtailing HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail ambitions.

2.4.30 In the North West the implications of the government announcement were less profound than in Yorkshire. We commented on lack of detail in the revised plans e.g. the routing of the High Speed route between Liverpool and Marsden though we did welcome the commitment to electrification of the whole Transpennine route together with infrastructure enhancements.

2.4.31 Timescales are a cause for concern. Here in the North West and wider North we have waited long for radical improvements to our rail infrastructure. Now it would appear time horizons are alarmingly stretched to 2042 for Liverpool – Manchester and 2045 for Manchester – Leeds! These timescales are lamentable and seem to indicate a lack of urgency for what are vital projects benefiting local economies and the environment.

2.4.32 In terms of the interaction with HS2, we have concerns about the terminating HS2 station in Manchester. The IRP referred to several cities on the High-Speed network in Europe which operate on the turnback principle. However, this is now an outdated concept as we understand that there are plans to convert at least some of these to through stations to give greater flexibility.

(Response available on our website www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk)

2.4.33 In April 2022 we became aware of a threat to drop the HS2 link line from the Manchester HS line to the WCML north of Warrington (the Golborne Link). This link line would enable Scottish bound HS trains to avoid 2 track section of the WCML north of Winsford and would help the provision of through services between WCML stations north of Preston (e.g. Oxenholme) and London.

2.4.34 A rather nebulous response from the Department of Transport commented that in November 2021, Sir Peter Hendy's independent Union Connectivity Review had stated that the Golborne link would not resolve all the current constraints between Crewe and Preston and recommended that the UK Government review alternative options. The Government's intention was to deliver the right infrastructure for long term benefits to the rail network, North West, and to Scotland and would respond to the recommendation in due course.

2.4.35 In June 2022 the link was indeed removed from the High Speed Rail Crewe – Manchester Bill, with the government pledging to look at alternatives. Hendy's report had recommended upgrading the WCML north of Crewe and we certainly see a pressing need for bottlenecks such as Winsford – Warrington and Lancaster – Carnforth to be dealt with. It is crucially important that, to cater for the huge leisure market that is the Lake District, through HS2 links with London are provided. Changing trains is not acceptable.

Restoring lost rail links

2.4.36 Back in January 2020, the Government pledged £500million for the Restoring Your Railway (RYR) Fund as a kick start to reopening lines and stations formerly on the rail network.

2.4.37 In our region, one scheme to introduce regular services between Clitheroe and Hellifield, possibly extending to the Settle-Carlisle railway, appeared to be making good headway. However, in June 2022 a government update on the fund programme announced, disappointingly, that this scheme would not be progressed to delivery. However a welcome part of the update was that the scheme to restore the line to Fleetwood had been selected to progress beyond the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC).

Cheshire Best Kept Stations (CBKS)

2.4.38 TWNW was asked to carry out the judging of large stations in Cheshire as part of the CBKS exercise in the summer of 2021 and again in 2022. It is pleasing to note that the Large Station Award has been renamed the "Chris Dale TravelWatch Award" in memory of our late Chairman. TWNW members have assisted in the process by carrying out the judging of the 11 large stations in Cheshire.

Integration

2.4.39 TWNW recognises the Importance of multi modal integration - essential to encourage shift from cars and we have continually emphasised our approach over the years. There should be a commitment to integration with other modes, both in timetable planning and ticketing, as on the continent, but in this country this is not a funding priority. In the absence of a proper policy on integration car owners should be encouraged to use park and ride or rail for the majority of their journeys.

2.4.40 Williams – Shapps promised better integration with other transport services with links to the National Bus Strategy. We understood that the GBR website and app would become a means of accessing all public transport services, showing bus and light rail information and able to sell integrated tickets across different services to support easy journeys. However as noted earlier, there appeared to be little reference to integration in the consultation on the Whole Industry Strategic Plan.

2.5 Light Rail

2.5.1 We are generally supportive of Light Rail and, undoubtedly, Manchester Metrolink is a success story. There are further possibilities of expansion. We would counsel that in that event better cognisance is taken of maintaining the advantages of the national rail network as far as possible

2.5.2 On the aspect of integration with Metrolink there are inadequacies with through ticketing between the light rail system and other public transport modes which have been in existence ever since the system opened in the 1990s and have been exacerbated as the system grows.

2.6 Consultations

- *Rail Penalty Fare Value Reform (DfT 03.06.21)* – We emphasised the importance of accurate legal wording on information notices regarding penalty fare schemes, noting instances of a lack of clarity in the past. Passengers must be well informed in advance of the risks they take by not complying with the regulations.
- *Buses back better in Cumbria (Cumbria CC 22.07.21)* – we commented on lack of any subsidy at all in the County and high fares particularly in rural areas.
- *Draft Decarbonisation Strategy (Transport for the North 27.08.21)* – we stressed that public transport needed to be far more attractive so that it can compete effectively with the car. Rail electrification is paramount in decarbonisation.
- *Carlisle Station Gateway Project (Cumbria CC 01.11.21)* – we generally welcomed the proposals which included moving the main vehicle access to the west side of the station, We also commented on the need for improved integration with buses, including related information, and platform capacity - especially looking towards HS2 services.
- *Manchester Recovery Task Force December timetable (TPE & Northern 31.12.21)* – see paras 2.4.14 – 2.4.17 above.
- *Fuelling the Future (House of Commons Transport Committee – (HOCTC) 21.01.22)* – we emphasised our overriding view that fuel policy must incentivise public transport, the big hurdle being to attract private car users to public transport. Freezing fuel duty and encouraging internal flights does not help.
- *Integrated Rail Plan (HOCTC 27.01.22)* – see paras 2.4.28 – 2.4.31 above.
- *Whole Industry Strategic Plan (Great British Railways Transition Team 04.02.22)* – see para 2.4.11 above

- *National Bus Strategy One Year On (HOCTC 29.03.22)* - see paras 2.3.7 - 2.3.8 above.

3. Plans for 2022/24

3.1 We are planning two further conferences in the current financial year – Liverpool in October and possibly Manchester in March. As customary we intend to feature presentations and discussion on relevant transport issues and of course opportunities will be presented for users to make representations on any public transport issue.

3.2 As well as planning to resurrect working with other TravelWatches on interregional issues, TWNW is committed to work in partnership with other user bodies including Transport Focus, Bus Users UK, the Campaign for Better Transport, Railfuture, Community Rail Partnerships and passenger users' groups.

3.3 The following areas of work are being considered for 2023/2024 -

- Bus services - information and quality, accessibility including bus stops.
- Monitoring of the rail passenger experience including on train, station facilities and modal integration, engineering disruption (including the quality of replacement road services) and connections at interchanges.
- Continued liaison with all rail operators and Network Rail, including specific monitoring of changes/improvements to rail services.
- The passenger experience at airports including public transport connectivity and the delays caused by check in and security.
- The availability and accuracy of journey planning and multi modal information on websites and on the ground.
- Community Transport

3.4 TWNW will respond to consultation on public transport developments on behalf of users. In determining its responses TWNW has the capacity to conduct independent passenger-based research as appropriate.

3.5 TWNW will continue to be well placed to feed user input into consultations on regional and local government planning issues. TWNW will continue to strive to bring forward passenger concerns to the attention of the appropriate providers and procurers and to achieve improvements on their behalf

Appendix A Administration

TWNW is managed by a Board of Directors. The Board considers topical issues for debate at conferences and manages actions arising from each conference. It also considers and determines the issues that the company should consider.

TravelWatch NorthWest is chaired by **David Butterworth**. David is a retired senior teacher in secondary education, living in Clitheroe. He was secretary of Ribble Valley Rail, which successfully campaigned over a period of eight years for the re-introduction in 1994 of a passenger service on the Ribble Valley Line. For many years he was a member of the North West TUCC, later the Rail Passengers Committee. For a while David was national treasurer for the Railway Development Society (now RailFuture) and a board member of the Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company. From its inception he has been an active director of TWNW.

The Company Secretary is **John Moorhouse**. John was Secretary of the Rail Passengers Committee for North West England from 1985 until 2004. He is also Chairman of the Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company.

Roy Chapman acts as Advisory Assistant. Having spent some 37 (stet) years in the railway and tramway industries, including 15 years with Transport for Greater Manchester, he has considerable experience with transport management, customer service, community rail initiatives and consultancy.

Directors who served on the Board during 2021/22 –

David Butterworth
Malcolm Conway
David Culshaw
John Hart
Chris Holmes
Colin Kennington

John Owen
Richard Rollins
Robert Talbot
Roma Patten
Tim Young

TravelWatch NorthWest is most grateful for the generous support it has received and receives from various sponsors as follows-

- Arriva NW, Avanti West Coast, Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council, Blackpool Transport Services Ltd., First TransPennine Express, First UK Bus, Lancashire County Council, Merseytravel, Preston Bus, Stagecoach NW, Manchester & Merseyside, Northern Rail, TransDev Blazefield Ltd., Transport Focus, Transport for Greater Manchester.

Website – www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk

Email - admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk

Or - johnamoorhouse@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1408838502725860/>

Appendix B Accounts 2021/22

DETAILED PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	2022	2021
	£	£
TURNOVER	2450	1100
COST OF SALES		
Administration fees	0	150
Totals	<u>0</u>	<u>150</u>
GROSS PROFIT	2450	950
OVERHEADS		
Travel and subsistence	29	0
Conferences & Meetings	2653	0
Office costs	37	238
Accommodation	2520	2520
Insurance	236	236
C Dale Bench	864	
Website/ web hosting	770	104
Publicity	0	29
Totals	7109	3127
	-4659	-2177
OTHER OPERATING INCOME		
Members income	805	1010
C Dale Memorial donations	1290	
Sundry donations	1598	470
Totals	3693	1480
OPERATING PROFIT/LOSS	-966	-697
Interest receivable	2	5
PROFIT/(LOSS) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	-964	-692

Appendix C Membership (at July 2022)

Organisation/Name

Blackburn & District CTC
Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association (RUA)
Bus Users UK
Campaign for Better Transport Lancashire
Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group
Cumbria Coast Rail Users Group (RUG)
Friends of Eccles Station
Friends of Hindley Station
Friends of Reddish South Station
Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line
Goyt Valley RUA
Kendal & District Bus Users Group
Lakes Line RUG
Lancaster & District Bus Users Group
Lancaster & Skipton RUG
Merseytravel
Mid Cheshire RUG
North Cheshire RUG
NW Transport Activists RoundTable
Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association
Railfuture NW
Ribble Valley Rail
Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership
Support the East Lancashire Line Association
Support the Oldham Rochdale Line Association
Wirral Transport Users Association
Wrexham Bidston RUA
Mr JF Aaron
David Butterworth
Malcolm Conway
Adrian Dunning
Philip Harrison
John Hart
Alan Hurst
Colin Kennington
Geoff Kerr
Andrew MacFarlane
Brendan O'Friel
John Owen
Roma Patten
Malcolm Richardson
Ian Stuart
Ian Watson
Keith Whitmore
Tim Young
Tony Young