

# Stakeholder Newsletter



## Tricia's update



As we move towards the May timetable change, I want to share a short summary on progress at Northern since my last update in February, and reflect on what we achieved as we closed the railway year at the end of March.

Performance continued to stabilise through March, helping to build customer confidence and support growing demand across parts of the network. The final reporting period of the rail year marked a strong close, with cancellations remaining below target at 2.7% and punctuality continuing to improve. While challenges remain in some areas, the progress seen in recent months is extremely encouraging and is reflected in customer confidence.

Demand has continued to grow strongly over the past year. The opening of the remaining stations on the Northumberland Line has generated an additional one million journeys, and as a result, journey growth in the North-East has been particularly strong, rising by 23% compared with the previous year. Across major cities, this momentum has been reflected in continued increases in rail travel, with journeys into Liverpool up by 11% and into Manchester up by 6% over the last full year. Together, these figures underline the growing confidence customers have in rail and the role a reliable regional railway plays in supporting economic activity and connectivity across the North.

Alongside this in March we took a significant step forward with our major new trains programme - which is set to replace around two-thirds of our existing fleet - with tenders now received from manufacturers who pre-qualified for the project. The programme will be delivered in phases over the next decade and will introduce a mix of electric, multi-modal and battery electric trains to our network. We are around six months away from submitting our Final Business Case, which will set out how new, more reliable and digitally enabled trains, will help realise the benefits of significant investment across the north and support long-term growth in journeys

Improving accessibility remains a core priority. In March, more than 81% of customers received the help they needed, with passenger assistance satisfaction reaching a new high of 86.8%. While we know there is more to do, this reflects a sustained focus on staff capability, consistency and the wider use of digital tools, supported by close working with accessibility groups, local authorities and the Office of Rail and Road.

Alongside day-to-day performance, we continue to invest for the long term. Following our £100m investment in the new Shipley TrainCare Centre, due to open in 2028, we have now begun recruiting for the first five (of what will be in total 100) engineering roles based there. This first phase of recruitment marks an important milestone for both Northern and the Transpennine Route Upgrade programme.

Strong operational leadership continues to be central to sustaining progress. I'm pleased that Warrick Dent will shortly be joining Northern as Chief Operating Officer, bringing significant experience from across the rail system and strengthening our focus on resilience and day-to-day delivery. You can read more about Warrick later in this newsletter.

Looking ahead, we are now just weeks away from the industry-wide May timetable change on Sunday 17 May. Following the significant changes introduced in December, this update focuses on smaller adjustments designed to support punctuality and consistency.

There is still important work ahead, and we remain clear-eyed about the challenges that persist on parts of the network. As always, progress depends on strong partnership working, so thank you for your continued support and I look forward to continuing our engagement.



**Tricia Williams**  
*Managing Director*

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## **We're delighted to welcome Warwick Dent as Northern's new Chief Operating Officer**

Warwick brings a wealth of senior rail leadership experience from across the industry, most recently at the Department for Transport Operator and previously at LNER, where he led major service improvements, fleet introduction and timetable delivery on the East Coast Main Line. His track record of driving performance and leading complex change will be invaluable as Northern continues its journey of improvement. We're excited to have Warwick on board at such a pivotal time.

[Read more](#)

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## Northumberland Line is fully open!

The opening of Bedlington station marked the final major milestone in the long-anticipated Northumberland Line programme. Passenger services resumed in December 2024, reopening the route for the first time in around 60 years.

As part of the programme, around 18 miles of track have been renewed, the signalling system upgraded, and 24 level crossings modified to enhance safety.

Services now call at Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth Bebside, Newsham, Seaton Delaval, Manors and Newcastle. A journey along the full route takes around 35 minutes, with single fares costing no more than £3.

Customers can also use Pop Pay As You Go (PAYG) cards on Northumberland Line services and Tyne and Wear Metro. To ensure the correct fare is charged, customers must remember to tap in and out at each station.

[Read more](#)



## Women in Rail

Throughout March, colleagues across Northern delivered Go Do Her Thing Month, an annual internal programme focused on celebrating and supporting women working across the organisation. The initiative creates space to share experiences, build confidence and support colleagues to reach their full potential.

This year's activity placed a strong emphasis on confidence-building and personal development, alongside support sessions covering pregnancy and maternity. Colleagues also highlighted Northern's commitment to ending violence against women and girls, including our continued support for the White Ribbon campaign. In addition, reverse mentoring sessions were held, providing male directors with the opportunity to hear directly from female colleagues working in operational roles and to better understand their experiences.

This focus on inclusion and empowerment has been reflected in external recognition through the Women in Rail Awards, with Northern colleagues shortlisted across several categories. Our Social Value Programme has been recognised for its work empowering women, girls and disadvantaged communities across the North, and two colleagues have been shortlisted for the Rising Star award. Together, these nominations demonstrate the strength of talent across Northern and our continued commitment to driving meaningful change within the rail industry.

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## Your stakeholder contacts

As we continue to embed the more recent business changes, we wanted to take this opportunity to remind you of our fabulous stakeholder managers.



## Your stakeholder contacts



Director of Stakeholder and Community Engagement  
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## May timetable change

From Sunday 17 May 2026, our train timetables will be updated in line with timetable changes taking place across the rail industry. The new timetable is now available to view in journey planners, and we are reminding customers to check before travelling.

Following the major timetable changes we introduced in December, our May timetable is about consistency and fine-tuning. We're keeping most services the same, while making targeted adjustments to improve punctuality and reflect feedback from our customers.

What this means:

- No large-scale changes to regular journeys

- Small tweaks to departure times on some routes to help trains arrive on time
- Whitby, Middlesbrough and the Durham Coast - better Sunday connections
- All Northumberland Line stations will be open

Customers will continue to benefit from the major improvements we introduced in December, including more frequent trains, faster journeys and better connections on some key routes - such as the new Yorkshire Flyer between Leeds and Sheffield and improvements linked to the biggest timetable change in over a decade with the new East Coast Main Line timetable.

Find out what changes are happening in your region on our website:

[Read more](#)





## Community Rail Awards

On Thursday 19 March, the 21<sup>st</sup> Community Rail Awards were held in Derby. This was a brilliant day for us as we celebrated a series of wins across our network!

There were more than 300 entries reviewed by the judges, and the event welcomed a whopping 610 guests.

We are pleased to announce that Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership received the Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail Award, the evening's top honour.

Thanks to their collaboration with Ats2Heal, Community Rail Lancashire were awarded the Community Creative Projects and Station Arts Awards for large groups.

This wasn't the only award this group won, they also took home the Influencing Positive Change and Sustainability Award.

Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership was recognised in the Railway 200 Legacy Award for medium groups. With Friends of Hindley Station achieving Platinum in the prestigious 'It's Your Station' award. This is particularly amazing as Platinum is the highest tier of recognition for station volunteer groups. In addition to this brilliant news, Edale Station Friends achieved Silver in this category.

And finally, Friends of Brighthouse Station won the Photo Competition for their entry *Brighthouse Busy Lizzies*, which captured the essence of community rail.

[Read more](#)

## Education season tickets

We are encouraging parents to help their children travel to school by train, choosing it as a cost-effective option for independent journeys. Education Season Tickets offer a simpler and more affordable way to travel, with significant savings compared to buying individual daily tickets.

Travelling by train helps young people develop independence and valuable life skills, such as navigating journeys on their own, while avoiding the stress and congestion of road traffic. Education Season Tickets are available for students aged 11–15 travelling to and from school on our network, with discounts of up to 40%.

[Read more](#)



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## **Coco the station volunteer**

Keighley Station has a particularly *purrfect* presence in Coco, the station's much-loved feline friend, who helps create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for visitors and colleagues alike.

Over recent weekends, Northern's Stakeholder and Community Team have been visiting several stations to carry out accessibility assessments, supporting the work of the Accessibility Team. These visits have provided a valuable opportunity to see first-hand the commitment and hard work of station staff in keeping stations welcoming, safe and accessible.

Alongside enjoying the stations' beautiful flower displays in the sunshine, meeting Coco was a real highlight, an added reminder of the small touches that make a big difference to the customer experience.

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## Art2Heal

A special presentation took place at Arts2Heal for its success at the recent Community Rail Awards. The Clitheroe Line: A Picturesque Journey was awarded first place in the Community Creative Projects and Station Arts category.

As a celebration a special event took place in Blackburn where the Chair of Community Rail Lancashire presented the trophy and certificate to Ben. Richard Watts, Chair, thanked everyone involved with the amazing project!

The artwork was on tour and displayed in Blackburn's market and library, and in the Platform 5 Gallery at Bolton Station.

Why not take the chance to visit the artwork at further exhibitions that are being planned?

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## Super League 30 - Birthday Celebrations

We have named a train to celebrate Super League's 30th birthday and are offering fans the chance to travel anywhere across the North for just **£10 a day**. The newly named *Super League 30* train was unveiled at Leeds Station at a special event attended by rugby league legends Adrian Morley and Danny McGuire. The Class 195 unit will travel across the North of England over the coming months, seen by thousands of supporters as Super League marks 30 years since its launch in March 1996.

We have been an official partner of Super League for 10 years, and the £10 ticket offer marks both this milestone and the league's anniversary. Supporters of Super League clubs based in the North of England can apply for up to four unique ticket codes via their clubs, which can also be shared with friends and family.

This activity builds on our wider partnership with the sport, including a newly announced two-year deal covering the Super League, Women's Super League and Wheelchair

Super League. It follows last year's naming of a train in honour of Rob Burrow, created in collaboration with his family and the MND Association to celebrate his life and raise awareness of motor neurone disease.

[Read more](#)

## **Ticket extension saves families money!**

Just before Easter, we extended our popular 'Family Fare' offer to cover even more routes across our network. Families who travel together can now benefit from cheaper tickets on a range of routes across Teesside, Greater Manchester and more!

The deal offers cheap single tickets for up to two adults and four children under the age of 15 travelling together.

The expansion covers over 200 more routes. These include Liverpool Lime Street – Blackpool North: Walk-up price £72.90, Family Fare £10.00 – a saving of £62.90 (86%). No railcard is needed to access these deals, and customers can find them online, on the Northern app, at ticket machines, or the ticket office.

[Read more](#)