

Stakeholder Newsletter



24 February 2026

Tricia's update



As we move further into 2026, I want to share some of the positive progress we're seeing across Northern and reflect on the recent challenges we've navigated.

Stable performance continues, with encouraging improvements across several measures. Cancellations fell to 2.9% in January, ahead of target and a significant improvement on last year. We remain mindful that we are operating a reduced timetable in the North West, but this is helping deliver greater stability and giving customers more certainty.

Our punctuality measure, trains arriving within three minutes (T-3), is also showing improvement, with five of the last six reporting periods performing better than the same periods last year. T-3 in January was impacted by Storm Goretti and the Standedge Tunnel fire at either end of the month. Cross-industry work continues to keep customers moving against the backdrop of essential engineering that supports future investment in the north.

While performance is stabilising, we do want to acknowledge the challenges we've had around availability of our diesel trains and the impact that is having for customers on some routes, as it

means we've been having to run some services with fewer carriages than we would normally plan to. Our engineering team are working around the clock to have as many trains available as possible.

The December timetable change has allowed us to make some small adjustments to help support performance. It's also enabled us to launch the Yorkshire Flyer, which is providing 30,000 extra seats every week between Leeds and Sheffield. We've also been able to increase capacity on the Durham Coast Line between Middlesbrough and Newcastle. The Northumberland Line continues to perform well, and we're really pleased that the penultimate station, Northumberland Park, will open on Sunday 22 February.

Stabilising performance is helping build customer confidence, evidenced in improving customer satisfaction and demand. We're seeing steady growth in journeys, with underlying demand at 6%. This builds on a strong end to 2025, when we recorded our highest December for customer journeys and customer satisfaction since the pandemic.

January has been more challenging across the industry due to the wider economic picture, lower retail footfall and significant engineering work, but we remain focused on encouraging more people to choose rail. Our commuter campaign is helping travellers switch from car to train, and our extended partnership with the Super League is supporting communities across the North and helping connect fans with the game.

Looking ahead, our "30 by 30" plan sets out how we aim to increase annual journeys by 30 million by 2030 through better performance and targeted interventions.

We've also had a strong period of stakeholder engagement. Neville Hill TrainCare Centre in Leeds was chosen for the government's major announcement on Northern Powerhouse Rail, giving us the chance to welcome the Chancellor, Ministers, Mayors and Council Leaders and showcase the work of our engineering teams and apprentices. We also attended a positive Westminster reception hosted by the Department for Transport Operator (DfTO), where we and other DfTO operators engaged with several Northern MPs and their teams.

Thank you to those who took part in our annual stakeholder survey, it's always hugely useful insight and we will be sharing our findings on our website soon. We have important work ahead, and I look forward to keeping you updated as we continue to strengthen our railway and the service it provides across the region.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tricia". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'T'.

Tricia Williams

Managing Director

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In the News



The Yorkshire Flyer debuts – faster journeys and boosted capacity

We have launched a new fast service running between Leeds and Sheffield.

The Yorkshire Flyer completes the journey between the two stations in 47 minutes, with just one stop along the way: Wakefield Westgate. The service will run once every hour, in both directions, running alongside the similar CrossCountry service.

It aims to cut journey times and provides more than 30,000 extra seats a week. It provides a quick and convenient service linking the two cities. It helps to connect people to work and offer new opportunities, helping economic growth in the North.

The current four stopping services per hour will continue to run, ensuring that smaller communities along the line are still connected.

[Read more](#)



Northern Powerhouse Rail plans revealed!

The Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, chose Neville Hill TrainCare Centre as her location for the Northern Powerhouse Rail announcement.

The plans set out the government's ambitions for growth in the North, with the programme **expected to generate around £40 billion a year for the UK economy**. The proposals include faster commutes, better connections, more jobs and increased investment across the region.

The main aim of these plans is to reverse the underinvestment that took place over the past few years in the North. The first phase of Northern Powerhouse Rail focuses on upgrading and electrifying existing lines across Yorkshire to deliver early benefits for passengers. This includes improvements on routes between Sheffield and Leeds, Leeds and York, and Leeds and Bradford, tackling long-standing issues such as slow journey times and overcrowding.

These enhancements will deliver electrification, increased capacity and more frequent fast services, alongside early development work to support a future tram-train expansion in Sheffield. *Watch this space!*

[Read more](#)



Strongest year for passenger demand since COVID

2025 saw a total of 98.6 million journeys on our network. This is a significant increase of 10% compared to the previous year.

With customers travelling to major cities, it's no wonder this area had the strongest growth. Liverpool and Manchester had increases of 19% and 12% respectively. More than eight million journeys were made during December 2025! This is the highest December total since COVID.

Commuting has been a major driving force of growth with just under 1 million journeys taken using season tickets. This reflects a confidence growth in using rail as a reliable way to travel to work.

[Read more](#)



Northumberland line hits record number of journeys

More than a million journeys have been made on the Northumberland Line, just over a year since its opening.

The line was reopened in December 2024, after 60 years since its closure. The entire route takes 35 minutes to travel and costs up to £3.

Most of the services along this line run on two carriages. However, we are looking to run four carriage trains during busy periods.

Northumberland Park station is due to open Sunday 22 February. Bedlington station is due to be opened in the next few months as work is currently being undertaken.

[Read more](#)



New Director appointed to lead our largest ever fleet investment programme

James Howard is the Director of New Rolling Stock Programmes here at Northern. He is now in charge of our plan to introduce hundreds of new trains.

The hundreds of trains are designed to provide more comfort and reliability, transforming train travel in the North for our customers. The aim is to have the new trains delivered in 2030.

Over the next 10 years, approximately 66% of the current fleet will be replaced. The new trains are helping move us towards environmental goals, as they will be either fully electric, battery powered or multi modal.

The trains are going to be introduced in phases. The idea is to replace the oldest trains in the fleet, most of which have been in service since the 80s and 90s.

The team have said they will be highly selective, to ensure there is still uniformity between the types of trains in our fleet. Having multiple types of trains can cause some issues for traincrew and engineers. They need rigorous training on each different type of train.

[Read more](#)



Sunderland station bustling with new market

On Fridays, Sunderland station hosts a highly popular market. In December 2023, the station redevelopment was complete, allowing the space for the market to prevail.

Local traders come to sell a range of handmade items. Jewellery, cards, and food are on offer, including some from other countries! The market serves the community but also helps to make the space more welcoming.

A kiosk within the station was set up by Caribe Coffee last year. Numerous other businesses have expressed interest in filling the retail units.

With locals being concerned about anti-social behaviour, we are working with Northumbria Police, BTP and Sunderland City Council, as well as introducing more security.

[Read more](#)



Golden ticket: journey along the heritage railway line

To raise money for charity, we are running a service along the heritage link for the first time. There were a limited number of tickets for the journey which have now sold out.

Tickets are being sold for £25. The money is being given to two local charities: The Angel Trust, and 123help4familys.

In 1847, the railway opened and is now a tourist attraction, allowing visitors to travel on heritage trains. The service will leave Darlington station on Sunday 22 February. It will complete a return trip along Weardale Railway.

Part of the route travelled by the world's first passenger train will be followed by the service.

[Read more](#)



New apprentices, on track for a gratifying career

We are encouraging hopeful engineers to apply for apprenticeships with us.

A recruitment drive has launched to hire up to 18 new apprentices who are looking to board a career in rail. The apprenticeship is three years and contains classroom learning and hands-on learning.

Around 90% of those who complete this apprenticeship are offered permanent positions with us.

Applicants must be at least 15 years of age upon application, and at least 16 by 1 September 2026.

For [National Apprenticeship Week 2026 \(9 – 15 February\)](#), Gina Edge, our Employer Brand Manager, has been working with Apprentices to share a series of videos talking about their experiences with the course.

[Read more](#)

[Watch the video here](#)

