

Stakeholder Newsletter



17 March 2026

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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**.

We'll do further customer communications in April which will include messages on posters, digital screens, announcements and more. Find out what changes are happening in your region on our website:

[Read more](#)

Stakeholder survey

Our annual stakeholder survey took place over December 2025 – January 2026, so thank you to everyone who took part. We received responses from 1 in 3 stakeholders and 68% of participants have had a relationship with Northern for at least six years.

Feedback through the survey indicates that over the past year Northern has been good at maintaining strong stakeholder relationships, communicating and engaging with stakeholders.

Similarly to last year, stakeholders indicate that operational performance and cancellations are our areas for improvement and should be our top priority. The survey also highlighted we should be focusing on staffing issues and rolling stock closely too. If you have any questions about the survey please contact us: stakeholder@northernrailway.co.uk

In the News



Conductor sets up art gallery at Yorkshire station

Knaresborough station has a brand-new creative touch thanks to Northern conductor, Paul Mirfin, who set up his own gallery in the station earlier this year. Alongside this, Paul also has a studio where he paints and teaches art classes.

It was during Covid-19 that Paul began painting and in 2023, he was commissioned to produce a painting for King Charles as a gift for his Majesty's 75th birthday. The painting is of a tree planted by the King outside Bettys Café Tea Rooms in Harrogate in 2005 and it now takes pride of place in the Clarence House residence.

Paul's vibrant gallery is one of many thriving local businesses now operating from Northern stations as part of our wider ambition to develop stations as community destinations.

[Read more](#)



Northumberland Park station opens on the Northumberland Line

Northumberland Park is now open, marking the fifth new station delivered as part of the Northumberland Line's historic reopening in December 2024.

The line has already seen over one million journeys and the new station is set to boost that even further by offering:

- Rapid 10-minute journeys to Newcastle
- Off-peak singles from just £1.70
- A smooth interchange with the Tyne and Wear Metro
- Pop PAYG compatibility – with tap in and out at each station

Regional Partners highlighted wider benefits too from improved commuter access to Cobalt Business Park to stronger links with local bus and ferry services.

Northumberland Park is the latest milestone in the partnership between Northumberland County Council, the Department for Transport, Network Rail, and Northern.

The final station on the line, Bedlington, is due to open to customers on 29 March marking the completion of the project that has brought transformative rail connections back to communities across the area.

[Read more](#)



Northern heritage railway line service raises thousands for charity

Northern has marked a major milestone by running a special passenger service along the historic Weardale Railway for the very first time. It was a sell-out success, raising more than £3,400 for two local charities.

The special service set off from Darlington station and completed a return journey along the 16-mile route calling at Newton Aycliffe, Shildon, Bishop Auckland West and Stanhope. More than 120 passengers took part, enjoying a guided tour of the line, live music, and an on-board charity raffle.

Originally opened in 1847, the Weardale Railway was saved from administration by The Auckland Project, which has since invested in essential repairs and infrastructure upgrades.

The success of Northern's service highlights the strong community support for celebrating the region's railway heritage.

[Read more](#)



Nearly 1 million journeys on scenic railway route

One of Europe's most scenic railway lines is on track to exceed one million journeys in its landmark 150th anniversary year.

Northern recorded around 995,000 journeys on the Leeds–Settle–Carlisle line in 2025, and demand is expected to grow again throughout 2026 as celebrations take place to mark a century and a half since the route first opened to passengers.

Linking Leeds, Settle and Carlisle, the line is renowned for its dramatic views across the Pennine Hills, Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria's Eden Valley. It also features one of Britain's most recognisable pieces of railway architecture - the 24-arch Ribbleshead Viaduct, which stands 104 feet high and stretches a quarter of a mile across the landscape.

To celebrate the anniversary, the Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company has planned a full year of events. Highlights include a special chartered steam service running between Carlisle and York on Monday 25 May, offering passengers the chance to experience the historic route in traditional style.

With its combination of heritage, engineering and spectacular scenery, the Settle–Carlisle line continues to be a major draw for both local communities and visitors from across the UK, and this milestone year is set to be its busiest yet!

[Read more](#)



Yorkshire Dales Explorer Celebrates 10,000th Journey Milestone

The Yorkshire Dales Explorer marked a major milestone earlier this month, surpassing 10,000 journeys since its launch. The achievement reflects the growing popularity of the dedicated Saturday service, which has quickly become a favourite for walkers, day-trippers and rail enthusiasts.

Operating twice a day, all year round, the Yorkshire Dales Explorer connects Rochdale, Manchester, Bolton, Blackburn and the Ribble Valley with the Yorkshire Dales, offering connections onto the Settle–Carlisle Railway. Since beginning in June 2024, the service has seen steady and enthusiastic uptake from customers looking to explore some of the region's best landscapes.

The route has proved especially popular with passengers taking part in guided walks organised by groups such as the Lancashire Rail Ramblers and the Friends of the Settle–Carlisle Line. Many others use the service for self-guided hikes or simply for the pleasure of riding one of the most scenic stretches of railway in the country.



Government freezes rail fares

For the first time in 30 years, rail fares across the industry have been frozen, helping ease cost of living pressures and making rail a more accessible option. This freeze covers regulated fares across England until March 2027, including Standard class Season tickets, Anytime tickets and Off-Peak tickets.

[Read more](#)



Ticket refunds are changing from 1 April

Change to Ticket terms and conditions have changed - from April 1 passengers will only be able to claim refunds for unused tickets ahead of travel. These changes apply across the rail industry, not just at Northern.

[Read more](#)

Get involved!



Northern launches grassroots giveaway

Northern has officially launched this year's Grassroots Rugby Competition and we're giving clubs across the North the chance to win top-tier kit, training gear and tickets to the Super League Grand Final!

Prizes include:

- Main prize: Full squad playing and training kit, extensive training equipment and 30 tickets to both Magic Weekend and the Grand Final
- Five runners-up: Training kit bundles, equipment, and 30 tickets to each major event

[Entries are open](#) until Friday 20 March. Clubs simply submit their details and a photo of their team in action to be entered into the prize draw.

[Read more](#)