

**REPORT TO SHEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL POLICY AND GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 1st 2018**

CHANGES TO THE RAIL TIMETABLE 2018-SOUTHPORT TO MANCHESTER

On the 11th January Network Rail announced that they will not deliver Manchester - Bolton - Preston electrification until December this year. **Given it is also certain Northern will not be getting their fleet of bi mode 769s by May there is now no reason for them to withdraw our Airport service before December. .**

Confirmation is still awaited that the May timetable has been finalised but inside sources indicate they are nowhere near reconciling Northern and Transpennine Express bids for routes and services with each other and the available train paths, particularly in Manchester and southern parts of the conurbation. Overlay this with the absence of a proven solution and plan for electrifying the difficult parts of Preston to Manchester then it seems highly probable that the May date slips or the timetable changes are radically altered. The industry as a whole seems incapable of managing large change programmes and has no one strong enough to make them confront the reality and manage the planning actively.

All of the affected MPs are in agreement. They are frustrated with the lack of real progress from Northern over recent weeks. Northern claim they cannot speak with us meaningfully until they know the finalised May plan.

Damien Moore, Southport's MP is working up a business case for direct Southport to Piccadilly (and Bolton) services through extension of the mooted Alderley Edge to Wigan North Western service. This will require up to three additional Class 769 bi-mode (electrical/diesel) trains to the small fleet Northern already plans to bring into service and it is now certain that the earliest date for having everything in place would be December 2018,

The business case makes an incontrovertible argument for this without giving up all of the improved Victoria services. A very high cost benefit ratio means the small investment will be well spent. The case draws heavily on the analysis of passenger numbers, survey results and passenger/ business comments about how important this service is. Backed by the other MPs, Damien Moore is going to push it at the top level of government seeking an early response.

January also saw the publication of the Northern Transport Strategy. This was published by Transport for the North a partnership of civic and business leaders from across the North of England. It divides the North into seven corridors. Our area is in the Central Pennine Corridor. The strategy is open for consultation until Mid April so a fuller report can be produced for a later committee.

Accompanying the strategy is a long term rail strategy. One of the options considered in this strategy is increasing the population within 60 minutes rail journey of one or more of the North's airports. It goes on to state that **" Manchester Airport is the key international gateway serving the North of England and whenever possible direct services should be provided to the airport from economic centres across the region."** It also defines desirable minimum standards. One of these is **"Direct**

Connectivity between economic centres and Manchester Airport” Economic centres defined in the report include **Wigan and Southport**.

CONCLUSION

- That the conflict between the Northern Rail Strategy and Northern's current timetable proposals are pointed out to Transport for the North and Northern
- That Northern are asked whether their May timetable change has been finalised or has it been deferred .until later in the year.
- That as a minimum the business case for direct Piccadilly trains is supported.

Barry King

January 25th 2018

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