

Railwatch

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Ski station opens in Yorkshire

Rail campaigners were delighted to see Britain's first new rail station for 21 months open for business on 21 February.

Trains began stopping at West Yorkshire Metro's £2.3m Glasshoughton station, near Castleford, providing a service for the Xscape ski slope and Freoport shopping centre.

There is a train every hour to Leeds City station, which is 25 minutes away.

"Glasshoughton station will provide a sustainable way of meeting the growing demand for transport in the area," said Wakefield Councillor Graham Phelps.

"It is fully accessible and has a 100-space car park which includes spaces for disabled people.

"Facilities will include cycle stands, digital CCTV, passenger help-points, a public address announcement system and timetable information displays, and an adjacent bus stop and shelter will provide excellent links to local bus services."

Stuart McLoughlin, the managing director of Waystone, commented: "The opening of this new station adds another chapter to the tremendous success story of Glasshoughton."

Metro has produced leaflets to tell people about the new station and train times are already in the latest rail timetable for the Leeds-Pontefract-Goole line. The opening of the station is the latest piece of the jigsaw in the regeneration of Glasshoughton. The 335-acre former colliery and coking site at Castleford has been transformed over the past seven years by developer Waystone's exciting £150million development which has created retail, sports and leisure facilities alongside housing and industrial units.

As well as a Freoport designer shopping outlet, Glasshoughton includes the spectacular Xscape snowdome, an indoor ski and toboggan centre with real snow, which opened in October 2003.

In West Yorkshire, investment by Metro and its industry partners has helped to deliver a 60% growth in peak patronage over the last 10 years.

On the Airedale/Wharfedale routes, where this investment has been most comprehensive, the growth has been at a rate of 19% per annum.

And research on three West Yorkshire lines has shown that rail is the clear preference for peak journeys to and from Leeds, with almost 90% of passengers on these journeys choosing the train over an available car. In its 20-year RailPlan Metro hopes to see 30 new stations.

Detailed design work is already well under way on Low Moor, between Bradford and Halifax while plans for stations at Kirkstall, Apperley Bridge and Horsforth Wood-



Skiers and snowboarders joined Northern rail managing director Heidi Mottram with Metro chairman Stanley King for the opening of Glasshoughton station Picture: Metro (WYPTE)

side, are dependent upon extra capacity in the form of new rolling stock for the network.

With the good news from West Yorkshire, rail campaigners were also cheered by comments by Transport secretary Alistair Darling.

At a conference organised by the Department for Transport on 3 February, Mr Darling told rail industry bosses that the Government wanted to take a longer term view.

"We need to look ahead at the capacity we will need in 20 to 30 years. We've reached the stage where we need to plan and one of the things we need to look at is whether we need a new north-south

tem had risen from £282million to £900million (Phase 3). He said integrated transport "had to happen" but congestion charging was not a requirement to fund light rail.

He promised his department would despatch the bid for £80million to upgrade the Bury and Altrincham lines "with alacrity". On the issue of the West Coast main line, he would be having "a little chat" with Alstom about the performance of the Pendolinos.

He said it was a good time to be a rail minister as the Government was intent on moving decision-making closer to the regional level. It was important to get the target and timing of the North West rail invest-

ment campaign right. The train operators could provide funding, as could Network Rail but he warned: "Let's lower our sights." He said we should look at single new stations, extra loops and platform extensions.

Earlier, former MEP Brian Simpson, who now leads the North West Rail Investment Campaign said the North West rail network carried 51 million passengers a year and 14 million tonnes of freight.

The network also had vast untapped potential but there was a two-track bottleneck between Piccadilly and Castlefield Junction, Deansgate. This caused knock-on delays around the country.

Roger Jones of Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority said the cost of providing extra capacity in that area could be £1billion.

Railfuture's Andrew Macfarlane cited the success of the 20-year franchise for Chiltern in generating investment and asked why the Northern franchise could not be for 20 years to provide more incentive for the franchise operator to invest. Mr McNulty failed to answer.

Two days before Mr Darling's announcement, his junior minister Tony McNulty, attended a sustainable communities conference in Manchester. He said the cost of extending the Metrolink tram sys-

Railfuture office closing

Railfuture is closing its London office on 1 April 2005 as a cost-cutting measure. For details of Railfuture contacts, please consult the panel on the left of this page. Members may consider making more use of the website to keep in touch with campaigning and other activities.