

North West

LOCAL ACTION

By Trevor Bishop
trevor.bishop0@btinternet.com

■ Campaign successes in new timetable

The December timetable will bring some welcome changes to the North West network. Some of these are clearly in response to local campaigning.

1 Wilmslow and Chester get new hourly services to Euston, Wilmslow as part of the new three trains per hour Manchester Piccadilly to Euston service.

2 Congleton and Kids Grove get an hourly service to and from Manchester, through extension of the existing Manchester to Macclesfield service to Stoke-on-Trent.

3 The new third platform at Manchester Airport station is brought into use and new dedicated half-hourly all stations local service to Piccadilly and hourly to Crewe.

4 New hourly Manchester Victoria-Blackpool North service using class 180s (Northern has three of these units).

5 Hindley station is to be served by the hourly Southport to Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport service in the off-peak. Friends of Hindley Station have been pressing for a service between Hindley and Piccadilly for many years.

6 A new two-hourly Sunday service is introduced between Southport, Manchester Piccadilly, Stockport, Altrincham, Northwich and Chester. This provides an all year round Sunday train service between the mid-Cheshire line and Manchester for the first time since October 1992. Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association has consistently pressed for an improved Sunday service on the line.

7 Styal station gains three additional daily calls after a local campaign.

■ But there is also bad news

1 The service between Stockport and Birmingham is reduced to hourly because the Arriva CrossCountry's Manchester to Bristol service will not stop there despite a petition to 10 Downing Street and political lobbying. Macclesfield will also only be served hourly by CrossCountry.

2 On Mondays to Fridays, two morning peak commuter services from Morecambe to Lancaster will be cut to one. Lancaster, Morecambe and District is warning of serious overcrowding.

3 Peak hour services on several South Manchester lines are being reduced to provide paths for the additional Virgin services and this could well lead to overcrowding on the remaining services.

4 Both Glasgow/Preston to London Euston and Liverpool to Euston services will no longer stop at Crewe, losing connections.

5 The only direct services between Crewe and North Wales will be the occasional Virgin services to Holyhead. Otherwise passengers will have to change again at Chester.

■ STORM raises concerns over Metrolink conversion

STORM, the local rail users group for the Manchester-Oldham-Rochdale line, has raised concerns over the impending conversion of the line to Metrolink which, at the moment at least, do not seem to be taken on board.

With the announcement that the line will close completely in October 2009 for conversion to Metrolink and that services will resume on the Shaw-Rochdale section 30 months later, New Hey and Milnrow will be without services for that time. The lengthy period of closure changes what might have been limited potential problems into serious concerns. STORM thinks rail replacement buses taking well over an hour will not be an acceptable answer in some cases and a complete non-starter in others.

There will also be a serious lack of car parking near Rochdale station for a considerable period.



CREAM PROTEST These are the activists who are fighting £500million plans to move Crewe station to a new site at Basford. CREAM is obviously having an effect because Virgin Trains have banned them from handing out leaflets on trains. Included in the picture are Steve Bratt, Joyce West, Barbara Francis, Graham Roberts, Frank Jones and Ben Wye. A public meeting is planned for 10 January at the Royal Hotel, Nantwich Road, Crewe at 11.00. More info: roy.cartlidge49@googlemail.com,

Farewell Douglas

By Donald MacPhee

donaldmacphee@blueyonder.co.uk

Douglas Smart, a former secretary of Railfuture Scotland, who has died aged 66, was an indomitable transport campaigner who for 45 years energetically promoted and lobbied for rail development and the environment.

It was not just the vigour of his campaigning that made Douglas stand out. He possessed a sniper-like ability to identify a transport target, eschewing blunderbuss tactics. Douglas ceaselessly collared Scotland's councils and transport bodies on public transport issues, fired off endless well-informed letters to newspapers from his Musselburgh home, was a regular voice on radio phone-ins and both

gave evidence and submitted petitions to committees of the Scottish Parliament.

Douglas George Smart was born in Falkirk. A son of the manse – his father had a charge in Dunipace – the young Douglas began a life-long association with the Church of Scotland, as elder, delegate at the General Assembly, and latterly professionally as a solicitor.

After graduating in law, he held legal posts in local government in Stirling.

He was also involved in the Green Party, long before it was fashionable, and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland. He was a follower of Falkirk Football Club.

HAMBURG

6 nights in Germany

Visit by high-speed trains

11-17 May

RDS Group Travel

For details, send an SAE to

Trevor Garrod

15 Clapham Road South

Lowestoft

NR32 1RQ