

Annual Report 2018

Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership





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Foreword by Chair



How time flies! Here I am again putting down my thoughts for the 2018 Annual Report. This one however will be my last as I am stepping down as Chair in 2019 as I indicated at the last AGM. I do however hope to continue in some capacity to support the Bishop Line into the future.

I am as usual indebted to all who have contributed to making the partnership a success this year - you know who you are. I am particularly grateful for all the hard work done by our Community Rail Officer, Bob Whitehouse, not only this last year but throughout his many years in the job. Again, Bob is also leaving his post in 2019 and I am sure that you will all join with me in wishing him well in whatever he pursues next. I'm sure we've not heard the last from Bob.....

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Stuart Woods our Secretary for his help, support and friendship.

Whilst the rail industry generally and the Northern franchise in particular have gone through turbulent times in 2018 which has been challenging for customers, stakeholders and employees alike, the Bishop Line has been relatively unaffected by the troubles on the rest of the rail network. Notably, since the introduction of the hourly service a year ago we've experienced a creditable 22% increase in passengers using the line. Long may this encouraging trend continue.

As I have said many times, the line is blessed with many tourist attractions along its modest length, any one of which would be a useful marketing tool for a community rail partnership. Perhaps this is our unique selling point? In any event, the growing interest in Kynren and the Auckland Project bode well for our terminus and we all look forward to the implementation of the bold master plan for the rejuvenation of Locomotion at Shildon in the next couple of years. And let us not forget the various developments around North Road Station in Darlington leading up to the 2025 bicentenary of the world famous Stockton and Darlington Railway.

Bishop Trains continue to prosper providing an excellent ticketing service, organising an increasing number of special charter trains as well as selling tickets for the Weardale Railway. Speaking of which, we can look forward to their services linking in better with our service trains through their new ambitious timetable. The introduction of their new two car DMU in 2019 is to be welcomed too adding to the tourist appeal of this very attractive preserved railway.

I also pay tribute to the work of our other station adoption groups creating a good impression of the line for locals and visitors alike.

We still have lots to do in terms of promotion and marketing working with the likes of Locomotion but our campaigns around the hourly timetable have certainly born fruit this year and remind us of our overriding aim to get more people to use the train service more often. The final removal of the dreaded Pacer trains will be another important milestone for the partnership; Class 156 sets are already more common along the line which provide a much needed boost to our image.

In short, I think the new Community Rail Officer, Felicity Machnicki will be inheriting a Partnership in good fettle with lots of exciting developments to look forward to along the line. She has already worked for the Partnership as our marketing officer so is familiar with our aims and aspirations and our eagerness to engage more with the local community. I wish her well in all her endeavours.

Charlie Walton

Chair, Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership

Partnership Objectives



The partnership's overall aim is to raise awareness of the Bishop Line – locally, regionally and nationally. Over the last year, a number of initiatives have been delivered to help sustain patronage along the line. Many objectives are ongoing and will continue to be delivered in the short, medium and long term.

Short-term

- Continue to build the business case for a regular interval half-hourly service, in partnership with the train operator and Network Rail
- Further develop the range of guided and self-guided walks along the line
- Continue to work with key attractions and local businesses to develop joint promotion initiatives
- Continue to roll out small-scale improvements at each station, including signage, CCTV and horticulture
- Continue to work with schools to promote rail safety and travel awareness
- Provide cycle facilities and associated signage at all stations along the line

Medium-term

- Introduce a half-hourly service, based on an extension of the Saltburn to Darlington service
- Introduce a later evening service (train or bus service)
- Introduce improved rolling stock (ideally an all-class 156 operation)

Long-term

- Construct a new station at North Road and extend the Head of Steam Museum
- Introduce a half-hourly tram train operation
- Devise a plan to maximise the legacy of Stockton and Darlington railway's 200th anniversary in 2025.

In November 2018 the Department for Transport published 'Connecting communities with the railways: The community rail development strategy'. Over the coming months the partnership will align its priorities to the priorities of the DfT strategy and these will be published in the next Annual Report.

Results



Patronage

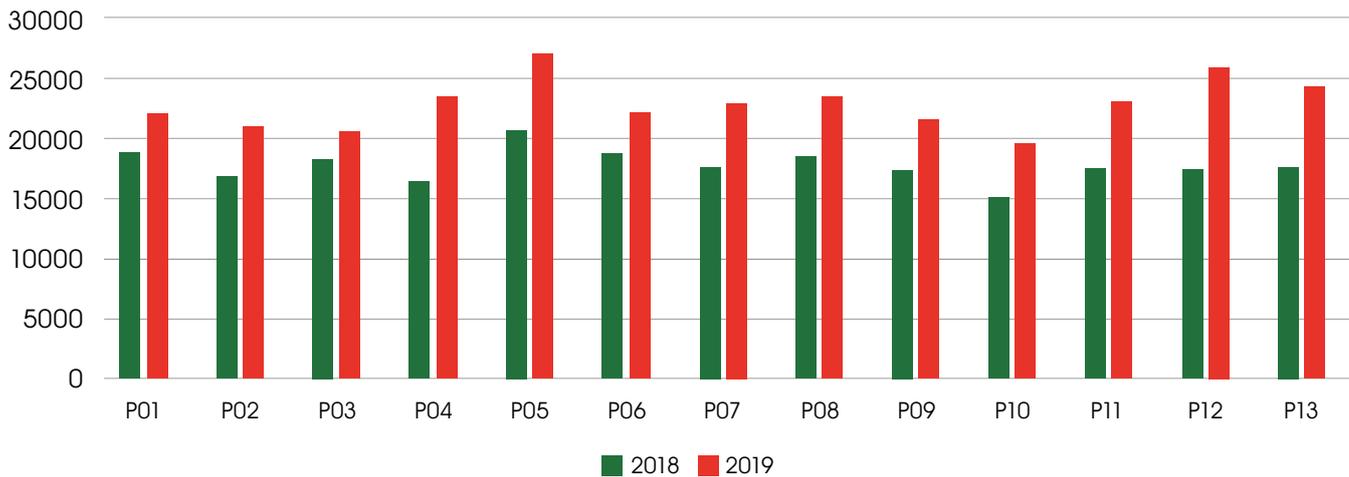
We are pleased to now report on the first 21 months of patronage on the new franchise.

Patronage is the number of passengers travelling between any of the stations along the Bishop Line.

The patronage figures include passengers joining the Bishop Line at Darlington from a journey starting outside of the Bishop Line e.g. Middlesbrough/Newcastle/York and leaving the train at one of the Bishop Line stations.

The figures also include passengers starting their journey at one of the Bishop Line stations and continuing their journey further than Darlington to a station outside of the Bishop Line e.g. Middlesbrough/Newcastle/York.

Patronage 2018 vs 2019



Performance

Due to the change in franchise, performance data is no longer reported on.



All stations

Ticket machines have been installed at all stations along the Bishop Line. They are card only which means that Passengers can only purchase tickets by cash on the train.

Bank Top - Darlington Main Station

Indicator boards now show 'Bishop Auckland via the Railway Museum'. The Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen is supporting a plan to improve Bank Top station. The franchise has changed from Virgin East Coast to LNER.

North Road

The partnership is investigating whether the lease can be extended to the area under the canopy, thus providing shelter for inclement weather.

The John Street walking and cycling route is now open linking John Street to Albert Road, under Skerne Bridge. The route is signposted from North Road and includes interpretation relating to the historic sites in the close vicinity.

Heighington

Locomotion No.1 at Heighington station is the oldest station building at an operational station. Locomotion was hauled here from Newcastle, re-assembled and steamed prior to the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway on 27th September 1825. In September 2017 it was recognised with a Transport Trust Red Wheel Plaque to coincide with the unveiling of the Skerne Bridge Red Wheel Plaque.

The partnership are investigating whether UTC South Durham would be interested in providing artwork for the station.

A new shelter has been installed on platform 1 (Bishop Auckland bound).

Newton Aycliffe

Remedial work has been undertaken on the platform.

Shildon

The partnership is in discussion with a local school to provide artwork on the footbridge.

Bishop Auckland

The partnership is pleased to report that plans are progressing to create a path connecting the Bishop Auckland station platform to the Weardale Railway platform.

King James academy are interested in becoming station adopters and have been working on a project to accompany young travellers on rail journeys.

Plans are progressing to create artwork on the bank opposite the platform.

Station adoption - Bishop Line

All stations along the line have been adopted by Community Groups and we are hoping to get more involvement at Heighington and Newton Aycliffe stations - details of the station adoption groups can be found on the Bishop Line website <https://www.bishopline.org/station-adoption>

Station adoption - Tees Valley Line

Northern Rail stations along the line between Darlington and Saltburn have been adopted. However the privately leased stations of British Steel, Redcar and Teesside Airport which have a 'Parliamentary' service are not.

Extension of the service designation

Northern Rail, Local Authorities and Station Adopters wish for a new Bishop Line and Tees Valley Community Rail Partnership. This is being progressed by Northern Rail and further development of an agreed partnership name and identity will follow.

Weardale railway

The structural problems of line at Broken Banks have now been resolved and Weardale Railway train services are able to enter Bishop Auckland West station. It is hoped that a pathway can now be constructed between this station and Bishop Auckland station. A regular summer service took place in 2018 which was highly supported by locals and visitors.



Hourly service

The hourly service has been a resounding success with substantial increases in patronage, despite strike action by the RMT union. If this continues into the New Year then a half hourly service may be sought by the partnership. Currently half hourly trains from, and to the Tees Valley stop at Darlington with only an hourly service up the line to Bishop Auckland.

Timetable overhaul

Whilst the rest of the country seemed to have substantial difficulties with the new timetable in May, the Bishop Line timetable seems to have escaped unscathed, with a regular hourly service. We hope that this becomes 'clock-face' next year making it easy for users to know train times.

Strike action

Regular strike action by members of the RMT union have caused some of the latter trains on Saturdays to be cancelled, other trains are being staffed by Management staff.

Northern

Northern have been very supportive of the partnership with local staff being exceptionally helpful both in terms of helping with community projects and marketing.

Trans-Pennine Express

Trans-Pennine Express have a fund for projects which, until the new timetable, we have been unable to access, the Northern trains not connecting well with their services at Darlington. It is to be hoped that bids can be made now the new service is in operation.

LNER

LNER has appointed Community Rail staff and have held a Community Rail conference in York for the lines adjacent to the East Coast Main Line.

CrossCountry Trains

We have been supported well by CrossCountry trains with them producing a short film about the partnership available to view on their XC Community Hub app. They have also provided media training for the officer.

Connecting services

The hourly service has allowed a greater interchange to take place with Main line services at Darlington. We have seen a change in patronage up and down the East Coast main line from the Bishop Line. Hopefully this will continue to improve once collaborative marketing by different train operating companies takes place.

Community Rail News

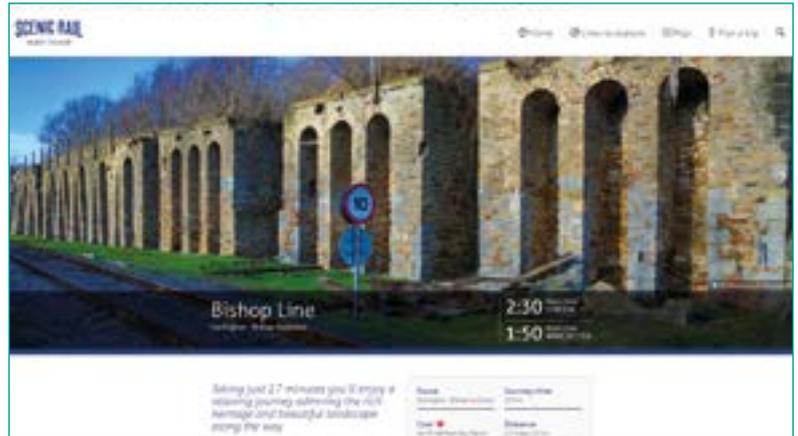


Designated Lines Seminar

The Department for Transport (DfT) in conjunction with the Association of Community Rail Partnerships held a seminar in Milton Keynes for Community Rail which was attended by the officer. This conference is useful to obtain ideas and new information for the partnership.

Scenic Rail Britain

The partnership continues to have a presence on the Scenic Rail Britain website. This website is aimed at tourists particularly from abroad and has been created to showcase community rail lines across the country, of which the Bishop Line is one www.scenicrailbritain.com.



LNER

LNER has taken over the franchise for Darlington Bank Top Station from Virgin Trains East Coast.

CrossCountry Trains Community Rail seminar

CrossCountry Trains had a very informative one day seminar in York which was attended by the officer. Topics included rail safety, tackling rail trespass and the Scouts proficiency badge.

COMREG

The Community Rail Executive Group (COMREG) was set up to ensure that Arriva Rail North's franchise commitments in respect of Community Rail have been met. The meetings, initially quarterly have been increased and require partnerships to comment on the franchise and its workings.

Personnel

The Community Rail Officer has expressed an interest in retiring and will finish work at the end of March 2019.

The New Community Rail Officer, Felicity Machnicki takes up the post on 18th March with a useful 2 week handover period.

Marketing Collateral & Events



The message:

In summer 2017 the partnership commissioned research to gather opinions about the Bishop Line service from users and non-users. 61% of train users surveyed said that they would be more likely to use the service more often if the service were more frequent during the day. Following the research, discussions took place with Northern to put an hourly service into place and in December 2017 the hourly service was launched.

As a result the partnership wanted to shout about this success. So from December 2017 the 'Hourly Service' campaign began with the aim of increasing awareness of the improvements and ultimately get more people travelling on the Bishop Line.

The priorities of the campaign were:

1. Increase passenger numbers on a medium term basis, within the first 6 months of the timetable improvements.
2. Increase awareness of the hourly service and clock-face service within both the business and residential community.
3. Change the perception of the Bishop Line service from unreliable and inconvenient to reliable and convenient.
4. Increase Bishop Line brand awareness in the local community.
5. Create a campaign that could be used across both digital and traditional print platforms.

Hourly Service Campaign

A main campaign message was created along with 2 supporting messages to inform the public of the benefits of the timetable change:

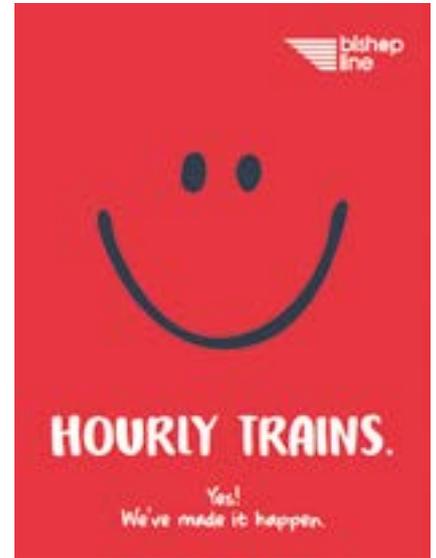
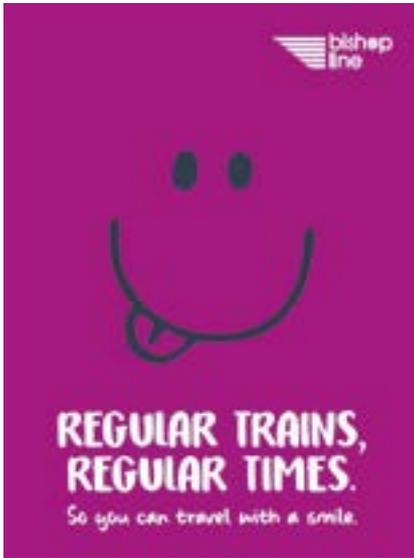
- 1. New Timetable**
- 2. Hourly Trains**
- 3. Regular Trains, Regular Times.**

Along with the campaign messages a temporary strapline was created to help build brand advocacy.

A better Bishop Line. Loving our community.

The execution of the campaign was as follows:

1. **December 2017** - 2 weeks of targeted social media advertising (facebook and Google+) to age 16+ within a 5 mile radius of each of the Bishop Line stations showing a carousel of the following graphics:



Posters installed at all stations with Bishop Line poster cases (Shildon, Newton Aycliffe and Heighington) and additional posters will be placed at the remaining stations when cases have been installed.



2. **May 2018** - A further 2 week social media boost took place to publicise the clock-face timetable using the same graphics.

3. **August & September 2018** - ITV Hub Advertising (**On demand TV**) was utilised to show the Bishop Line advert 30,000 times during shows such as Coronation Street, Emmerdale, X Factor and Vera and resulted in 55 clicks to the Bishop Line Website which is a click through rate of 0.175%. This is considered a good rate in digital advertising.



The advert is available to watch on the Home page of the Bishop Line website – www.bishopline.org

4. **August 2018 – Radio advertising** was used to share the Hourly Service advert on TFM and Bishop FM. To coincide with this a promotions team hand delivered 20,000 beer mats across 52 pubs in Darlington, Heighington, Newton Aycliffe, Shildon and Bishop Auckland, with approx 350-400 mats per venue.



5. **August and November 2018** - 500 Hourly Service **reusable Coffee cups** and cookies were handed out to travellers both on train between Bishop Auckland and Saltburn and at Darlington Bank Top Station.



Christmas mini campaign

The reusable coffee cups were very well received so the partnership took advantage of the upcoming Christmas period and produced and distributed 500 Christmas themed 'Hourly Service' cups. They were handed out to visitors at the major tourist attractions along the Bishop Line during Christmas events.

The Auckland Project
– Auckland Castle's
Christmas Market,

Darlington Railways
Museum - Head of
Steam 'Meet Santa'
events,

Locomotion's Christmas
event,

Darlington Hippodrome
and

The Dolphin Centre
Horsemarket café.



Images of the Christmas themed coffee cups at Auckland Tower, Head of Steam - Darlington Railway Museum, Locomotion, Darlington Hippodrome, and Horsemarket Café.

Christmas themed posters were displayed at the Bishop Line stations with poster cases and social media posts were shown in December.



Cross Country Trains film

The partnership was approached in late 2017 to collaborate on a project with Cross Country Trains to provide a film about the Bishop Line. The film would then be incorporated into their XC Community Hub app.

The film is now available to view on the Bishop Line website <https://www.bishopline.org/about>

Market research

The partnership recently commissioned research to gather opinions about the Bishop Line service from users and non-users. The results can be found on the bishop Line website www.bishopline.org/stakeholders/users-research and highlights are as follows:

- 76% of rail passengers said that the change in frequency of the service made it more likely that they would use the Bishop Line
- 19% of bus passengers travelling along the route of the Bishop Line said they the change in frequency of the service made it more likely that they would use the Bishop Line
- 42% of rail users said that they had seen the Bishop Line logo/adverts prior to the survey
- 10% of bus and car users recalled seeing the logo/ adverts prior to the survey
- 66% of rail users were aware of the Hourly Service

Schools transition programme

The partnership is willing to undertake work with schools regarding railway safety in conjunction with the local museums, Northern Rail and Network Rail. This is particularly relevant for those leaving primary school and travelling to senior schools. Schools near to the line have been contacted and a presentation has been made to head teachers of Primary Schools in Darlington.

Media Releases



22/01/2018	Community tells passengers the story of the Bishop Line www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/community-news-feed/january-2019/bishop-line-audio
23/03/2018	Digital pop-up theatre on the world's first passenger train line www.letsgoteesvalley.co.uk/news/news-item/?id=764
29/03/2018	The play now leaving Platform 4 www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/opinion/16127038.the-play-now-leaving-platform-4/

Social Media Posts

	<i>All social media posts can be seen by visiting www.facebook.com/BishoplineCRP/</i>
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Please note: If any of these links do not work, copy and paste them into your web browser.

The Coming Year



New Community Rail Officer

We are pleased that a new Community Rail Officer will start work on 18th March 2019. Felicity Machnicki, who previously undertook marketing work for the line has now been appointed to replace Bob Whitehouse who is retiring. Felicity already has a considerable knowledge of the partnership and has some exciting ideas to take the partnership forward to its next stage in line with the priorities of the Department for Transport's new Community Rail Strategy.

Preparation for 2025

We are pleased to see that Local Authorities and other organisations have come together to plan for what will be an international celebration for the 200th Anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway on 27th September 2025. A planning board meets quarterly and the partnership is represented on the steering group.

Heritage Campus

This project is based around the Darlington (North Road) station and hopes to improve the area for leisure and economic activity. Whilst the project has been in existence for some time, little has happened during the year. It was hoped that the A1 Locomotive Steam Trust would move its premises within the area however funding is still awaited.

Station Adoption

Whilst Station Adoption is not the responsibility of the partnership, together with Northern we wish to see more adoption activity on the stations at Heighington and Newton Aycliffe. Northern are working with us to progress this.

New CRP

It is disappointing that the proposed partnership for the Tees Valley has not yet come to fruition. The proposal is that this would encompass all of the stations within the Tees Valley which are not currently covered by a partnership together with the stations of Seaham and Horden within County Durham. This will be taken forward by Northern Rail in the New Year.

Pedestrian/Cycle route from Witton Park to Stockton

It is now seven years since the partnership proposed a Walking and/or Cycling route along the 26 mile length of the original Stockton and Darlington Railway route in preparation for the 2025 celebrations. We are pleased to see that during the year this has been taken up by local authorities as part of their planning.

Partnership Members



Local authorities

Department for Transport
North East Rail Management Unit
(Transport for the North)
Darlington Borough Council
Durham County Council
Great Aycliffe Town Council
Shildon Town Council

Rail organisations

A1 Locomotive Trust
Bishop Trains
Friends of Darlington Railway Museum
Friends of the National Railway Museum
(North East Branch)
Locomotion, the National Railway Museum
at Shildon
Railway Heritage Committee
Weardale Railways Limited
Weardale Railway Trust
Weardale Railway Heritage Services Ltd
G5 Group

Rail industry

Association of Community Rail Partnerships
British Transport Police
CrossCountry Trains
Grand Central Trains
LNER
Network Rail
Northern Rail
TransPennine Express
Transport Focus
Rail Trade Unions

Community and voluntary based groups

Bishop Auckland Town Team
New Shildon Residents Association
Xcel Centre Newton Aycliffe
Greenfield Community College

Membership

Membership of the partnership is open to organisations that have an interest in rail, the Bishop Line, or improving sustainable transport in the local area. To find out more, or to become a member, please contact the partnership. Contact details can be found overleaf.

Funders



Special thanks to TransPennine Express and CrossCountry for their support to the Partnership and its members.

This report is produced by the Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership.
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