



Hope Valley Railway Users Group

Improving the quality and frequency
of our rail service

RESPONSE TO DECEMBER 2022 TIMETABLE – DELIVERING THE OUTPUTS OF THE MANCHESTER RECOVERY TASK FORCE

Overview

The Hope Valley Railway Users Group is working to increase the frequency and quality of rail services in the Hope Valley for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. We believe the Hope Valley Line has huge untapped potential to deliver modal shift for many visitors to the Peak District, boosting the local economy whilst helping to reduce the level of road traffic and parking problems.

An enhanced rail service at intermediate stations along the line would also deliver benefits to the population of the Hope Valley, in the form of improved employment, education and leisure opportunities in Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire and beyond.

Background

The Hope Valley Line passes through the Peak District National Park – Britain’s most-visited National Park. Pre-Covid footfall figures for intermediate stations on the Hope Valley line in 2019-20 were as follows (Source: Office of Rail and Road):

Grindleford	64,024
Hathersage	73,200
Bamford	43,746
Hope (Derbyshire)	75,922
Edale	99,808
(five stations in Peak District National Park cumulative)	356,700
Dore & Totley	219,236
Chinley	129,220

An hourly service is provided at the five stations within the Peak District National Park during the day, although skip-stopping gives rise to erratic two-hour gaps in service at all stations. Dore & Totley and Chinley are served by an hourly service most of the day, with additional services provided in the mornings and evenings.

DRAFT DECEMBER 2022 TIMETABLE

Manchester-Sheffield & v.v. Monday-Saturday

As proposed, the December 2022 timetable eliminates all skip-stopping in the Northern all-stations stopping service and delivers an approximately hourly service with departures between 05:46 and 21:48 from Manchester, and between 07:11 and 23:27 (SX) from Sheffield. The elimination of the skip-stopping will provide a more consistent service at all stations and is very much welcomed.

However, we are disappointed that the opportunity has not been taken to correct the imbalance of early morning/late evening services on the line. First arrival in Manchester (07:35) is not early enough for many commuters and compares unfavourably with the first Sheffield arrival of 06:59. Conversely, the last departure from Manchester at 22:28 is much too early to accommodate many leisure activities in Manchester and compares unfavourably with the last Sheffield departure of 23.27 (SX). The last Saturday departure from Sheffield at 22:24 is too early.

We understand this imbalance arises from the service being provisioned from the Manchester end of the line, and note that the first Westbound and last Eastbound services are provided by East Midlands Railway. In the short to medium term, we believe this imbalance should be addressed, potentially by resourcing earlier first departures and later last arrivals of Northern trains from the Sheffield end of the line.

Loss of 08:32 arrival in Sheffield

An unfortunate consequence of the proposed hourly timetable is the loss of the 08:32 arrival in Sheffield, a long-standing service that has operated at around this time for many years and is well used by Hope Valley residents. The new alternatives arrive at 08:05 or 09:06. The 08:32 arrival could be retained by extending the 07:16 Manchester Piccadilly-New Mills through to Sheffield (as it runs now). Provision of two trains per hour in the morning peak would make the service more attractive and raise service levels to those more appropriate to passenger footfall.

Performance Risks

We understand the primary objective of the Manchester Recovery Task Force has been to deliver a robust timetable, but we are concerned about potential performance risks arising from the decision to

re-route the TransPennine Express Cleethorpes service from Manchester Airport to Liverpool Lime Street.

Between Sheffield and Manchester in the Westbound direction, the TPE service immediately precedes Northern's all-stations service. If the TPE service is delayed between Cleethorpes and Sheffield, the Northern service may precede the TPE through the Hope Valley. There is no opportunity for the TPE to get past until New Mills South Junction, by which time it will be a minimum of 18 minutes late. The lack of passing opportunities will not be addressed by the Hope Valley Capacity Improvement Scheme.

TPE arrivals at Liverpool Lime Street are proposed generally at xx.00 and departures at xx.19, giving a 19-minute turnaround. Clearly a 19-minute turnaround at Lime Street will be difficult in these circumstances and will likely lead to consequent further disruption of Hope Valley services.

We also note that services have been recast on the Liverpool-Warrington Central-Manchester route, including reduction in service frequencies at some stations from 30-minutes to hourly, to accommodate the Cleethorpes-Liverpool Lime Street service. Clearly any disruption on this busy route is also likely to have an adverse consequential effect on Hope Valley services.

Manchester-Sheffield & v.v. Sundays

We are disappointed that the first trains of the day are considerably later than on other days of the week. Earliest arrivals in Sheffield and Manchester of 09:05 and 10:34 respectively are not adequate. Last departures of 22:16 and 22:13 respectively are similarly disappointing and too early to accommodate many leisure activities.

Infrastructure Solutions

A key objective of the Hope Valley RUG is for the hourly stopping service to be augmented by an hourly fast train to stop at a hub station in the Hope Valley (Hope), as well as at Dore & Topley and Chinley. In our response to initial proposals by the Manchester Recovery Task Force, we stressed the need to protect the third hourly fast Sheffield-Manchester train promised by the Hope Valley Capacity Improvement Scheme.

Subsequently, the DfT's Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) has been published, which contains no proposals for investment in the Hope Valley line beyond the ongoing Hope Valley Capacity Improvements Scheme, stating only that this scheme 'makes improved provision for freight trains and, in the longer term, *could* (our italics) help facilitate a 3rd fast Sheffield to Manchester service each hour.'

Clearly, additional services at Hope Valley Line stations will need to be provisioned within the infrastructure outcomes specified by the Capacity Improvement Scheme. We seek assurances that

future local and regional services on the Hope Valley Line will meet needs of the local community and those of the many visitors to Britain's most-visited National Park.

Previous requests for additional stops in fast services have been rejected on the grounds of increased journey times between Sheffield and Manchester. We note that diversion of the Cleethorpes-Manchester Airport service to Liverpool Lime Street will effectively add a minimum of five minutes to journey times, this being the minimum time it takes to get from Platforms 13/14 to the concourse at Manchester Piccadilly. Clearly, local and regional connectivity is of greater import than end-to-end journey times on this route and we trust greater emphasis will now be placed on providing the two-trains-per-hour service that the annual footfall at Hope Valley Line stations should command.

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