

FRIENDS OF DAVENPORT STATION

RESPONSE TO THE MAY 2018 TIMETABLE CONSULTATION

Compiled by Charlie Hulme (info@davenportstation.org.uk) May 2017. Final version

As a group dedicated to increasing the use of rail in our area, we are most disappointed, and indeed appalled, to see the proposed May 2018 timetable. Despite all the positive publicity for the new Northern Franchise and its many claimed improvements ("37% increase in peak time capacity") passengers using Davenport and Woodsmoor stations face a weekday train service which is inferior in almost all respects to that we have been accustomed to for many years. There are no peak-time extra services; there are irregular intervals between trains; skipping of stops destroys many journey opportunities; and all through workings beyond Manchester Piccadilly have been removed.

This is despite the fact that there will be three Northern trains per hour on our line instead of two. Missing the busy stations at Davenport and Woodsmoor to gain a few minutes of journey time from Buxton to Manchester is, in our view, very misguided. Many people have chosen to live and/or work in our area because of the good train service, and will be seriously inconvenienced by the proposed changes, in ways outlined below.

Andy Stobbie of Woodsmoor Friends Group has prepared an extract from the Consultation timetable showing our stations, which can be found at

<http://www.davenportstation.org.uk/Timetable-extract-WSR-DAV-170517.pdf>

We and our respondents believe strongly that most trains should serve all stations on the Stockport – Buxton line, which has many more uses than simply commuting to Manchester, and that additional stopping trains between Hazel Grove, Piccadilly, Deansgate and Salford Crescent are required in the peak periods. Any time savings that are considered necessary should follow infrastructure improvements.

Times quoted are for Davenport; station. For Woodsmoor add or subtract three minutes.

Peak-time service

The consultation timetable is based on a simple pattern of two trains per hour, with a one-hour gap at the end of the morning peak, reducing to hourly in the late evening. There are no additional trains for commuters to Manchester either in the morning or evening peaks ('peak' defined as times when off-peak tickets are not valid).

Currently there are nine trains before 09:30, at 06:40, 06:55, 07:04, 07:27, 07:33, 07:55, 08:06, 08:40, 09:08.

Proposed service has just six - 06:29, 07:15, 07:29, 08:15, 08:29, 09:29. The 07:15 and 08:15 originate from Buxton and are likely, even if formed of the maximum of four carriages allowed by station platforms, to be **too crowded to board** by the time Davenport is reached.

In the evening peak, the service is already inadequate, with only one train additional to the pattern – from Piccadilly at 16:21, 16:49, 16:58, 17:23, 17:40, 18:21.

The proposed service has 16:24, 16:46, 17:24, 17:46 and 18:24.

Irregular headways

Currently there is a pattern of train service from Davenport to Manchester of two trains per hour, with departures at approximately even intervals: xx.08 and xx.41. This is to be replaced by two trains less than 15 minutes apart at xx.15 and xx.29 followed by a long gap. This is clearly much less satisfactory than an even interval, especially if the xx.29 train is cancelled.

Northern have told us that this is due to pathing issues at Edgeley Junction; however it is noticeable that if the trains from Buxton were to call, the pattern at Woodsmoor and Davenport, would be much more satisfactory.

Skipping of stops

The Department for Transport's requirements for the franchise are specified by the number of trains arriving at Manchester from each station, and a requirement that some trains have shorter journey time for Buxton passengers. Northern's timetable planners have interpreted this in a manner which ignores the needs of people travelling between intermediate stations on the Buxton line or between intermediate stations and the market town the town of Buxton. What is proposed is an hourly service from Davenport to Buxton, but in the return direction only five trains from Buxton (06:33, 07:33, 16:36, 17:35 and 22:58), call at Davenport and Woodsmoor, with a very long connection time at Hazel Grove from others. For visitors to the rural attractions of Middlewood and Disley the situation is even worse. These stations are only accessible direct by the 07:07, 09:07, 18:07 (not Middlewood) and 19:07 trains from Davenport. A change at Hazel Grove on other trains enforces a 16-minute wait there.

This policy is turning away revenue on lightly-used off-peak services. More importantly, Davenport and Woodsmoor are destinations for people travelling from the High Peak. Many students attending Stockport Grammar School, Aquinas College, and Hillcrest School (which will be opening again in September as Hulme Hall School) use the train. A spot check at Davenport on 25 May found 20 people, mostly home-bound students, boarding the 15:49 Manchester – Buxton (Davenport 16:05). All these will, of course, have travelled down in the morning, and sometimes may wish to arrive and depart at other times of day.

Stepping Hill Hospital, served by Woodsmoor station and with chronic car parking problems, is the designated hospital for all the towns on the Buxton line; staff, visitors and outpatients use the trains.

Loss of through trains beyond Piccadilly

The consultation timetable shows all weekday trains from the Buxton and Hazel Grove area terminating at Manchester Piccadilly in contrast to the existing timetable, which offers direct links on about 50% of trains through Piccadilly to Manchester Oxford Road and beyond. Someone has decided to transfer this useful facility to the Macclesfield line, and arrange things so that a simple connection at Stockport is not possible, as the train from Macclesfield departs there a few minutes before the train from Davenport arrives. The many passengers who travel to the Universities on Oxford Road and at Salford Crescent, and those who take advantage of the easy connection at Deansgate with Metrolink, will be forced to make a time-wasting, and probably unreliable, change at Piccadilly involving the journey over the footbridge. As mentioned above, many people have chosen to live near the Buxton line because of its long-standing through link.

Some extracts from emails from respondents

"I object strongly to the reduced service. I often travel on the 07.53 or the 08.04, this will have a huge impact on my daily routine, it will also have a huge impact on my child care."

"I travel weekly from Woodsmoor to Oxford Road and would be greatly inconvenienced if the proposals are accurate and implemented. I currently catch the 06:52 from Woodsmoor to get to work. Although I occasionally catch the 06.38, it really is too early for me although a service which stops at Oxford Road. The two new proposed times of 06.26 and 07.12 are either too early or late. I have been travelling by train now for some years and have very recently seen a sharp increase to the number of commuters using both Woodsmoor and Davenport Stations, during this time period and in my experience there are good numbers using the three services that will change under the proposal. (06.38, 06.52 and 07.02)"

"I use the train to start work at 8.30 a.m. and travel daily from Woodsmoor to Manchester. I currently have the option of two trains 7.53 or 8.04 but the proposed 2018 timetable leaves me only one option at 7.27. This is almost half an hour earlier than I would wish to travel with no later option that would get me to work on time. This is a greatly reduced level of service provision for which I am sure there will be no corresponding reduction in fare."

"My wife and I often use the train, sometimes with our bikes, to visit the Middlewood Way and Lyme Park. This facility is one of the best things for us about Davenport, and the proposals make leisure journeys much more difficult."

"I am contacting you regarding the proposed changes in frequency of trains from Davenport to Manchester and also the change in route (not running to Oxford Road etc.). This will cause me a lot of problems as I work in Manchester and to be honest was one of the main reasons behind me buying my house where I have done. Do you have the detail/guidance of where I can escalate my concerns or are you aware of any petitions which I can sign?"

"I'm very concerned about this and would be severely affected, so want to voice my concerns directly as I want to know what surveys they have conducted about the use of both Davenport and Woodsmoor (they clearly haven't performed any and I don't feel that they've considered all users of the Buxton line). In addition personally it doesn't suit my working times, not all people can start work at 8am or 9am.....this isn't the 1950s!"

"Just to add my voice to the probably obvious dispute in relation to the reduced timetable at Davenport Station which is already poor. Also the trains are ancient and severely overcrowded, particularly at 7:55 / 8:06 every morning, so reducing the trains at morning commuter times will only make this even worse."

"Suffering from a rare type of chronic auto inflammatory arthritis I rely on the services of Stockport NHS Foundation Trust at Stepping Hill Hospital on a monthly basis. Due to a combination of being left unable to drive as a result of the condition and also car parking issues I have to rely on train service to Woodsmoor station sometimes at very short notice to attend the hospital just to meet my every day needs. These proposals genuinely concern me and could impact on my ability to maintain my everyday life."

"I deliberately bought a house in 2012 that was close to Woodsmoor Station precisely so that I could avoid adding to road congestion and driving in to Manchester. I work at the University so the ability to travel to Oxford Road is important to me. I see every day the numbers of people who use both Davenport and Woodsmoor stations (I vary the trains I get between the 0755 and

0806 and I rarely get a seat on either) and the same applies coming home in the evening on either the 1723 or 1749."

"Davenport is a very busy station in the morning and it is often hard to find seats on the peak trains. As such, any reduction to these services would be extremely disappointing, especially at a time when the government should be encouraging greater use of public transport due to concerns over vehicle emissions on the roads."

"I should like to express my dismay on hearing this news, as I travel into Manchester every day. This experience is not generally a good one, with overcrowded trains and frequent delays and cancellations. To cut the number of trains at peak times will only exacerbate these problems, and with fares rising year on year, consumers are not receiving value for money."

"To get to a city centre office for 9, the 7.55 and 8.06 services are essential. Given the 7.55 is usually full such that I often have to not get on and take the 8.06, I cannot believe there is any public service let alone commercial rationale for removing both and replacing them with a single, later train at 8.13 which will not allow me to get to the Spinningfields before 9am."

"It seems ridiculous that in the proposed timings the off-peak trains from Buxton, which miss Woodsmoor and Davenport, call at Hazel Grove *after* the all-stations stopping train from Hazel Grove to Manchester has left, and then catch it up, arriving at Piccadilly just two minutes after the stopping train has arrived there."

"Davenport station serves a number of educational establishments including Aquinas College and Stockport Grammar. Aquinas in particular provides catholic sixth form provision for the Buxton area so this rail line is an important transport route from its core catchment area to Davenport. Hulme Hall School is about to move into the old Hillcrest site on Beech Road. As private schools tend to draw their pupils from a wider area than state ones we need more public transport, not less. The Buxton to Manchester rail line follows the route of the A6 which is a very congested and polluted route which is totally unsuitable to take more traffic displaced from an inadequate train service."

"Why can't we keep the present timetable?"