

Northern Train Times at Davenport and Woodsmoor stations

Suggested timetable improvements for May 2020

Although the current timetable (May 2019) is an improvement over its immediate predecessors, there remain some ways in which it is inadequate from the Davenport and Woodsmoor passenger's point of view.

Some of the issues stem from the assumption made by the compilers of the franchise agreement that the (a) the commuter users of the Buxton line all work or study in Manchester and (b) Davenport and Woodsmoor are 'minor' stations. The fact is that both stations are also destinations for work, study, and in the case of Woodsmoor, hospital visits. Neither did they appreciate the value of Middlewood as a destination for walkers and cyclists. In addition, there are oddities in the timings which suggest un-edited computer output and serve to baffle users and bulk out the timetable leaflets/posters with versions differing by just one or two minutes.

Grateful as we are for three trains an hour for much of a weekday, it is unfortunate that their spacing cannot be more even, especially in the Manchester direction. We accept that this will be hard to alter in the current situation. However, we cannot accept that, at present, we have a worse service in the peak periods; this could easily be remedied by adopting a simpler timetable in which all trains to/from Buxton and Hazel Grove call at our stations.

The present non-stop running creates particular problems for the work and study commuters travelling from stations beyond Hazel Grove, who have a gap of one hour in service between the 07:40 and 08:40 weekday arrivals at Davenport from Buxton. We cannot understand why the 07:36 from Buxton cannot call; the only explanation we have seen is that it would be 'operationally impossible' but it would simply be following the pattern for the rest of the day. The passengers in question are surely a valuable source of revenue for Northern, and free up space on morning trains when they get off.

Nor can we fathom why the 06:00 Buxton – Manchester cannot all here, why the 08:08 Manchester – Buxton calls at Davenport but not Woodsmoor, or why the 17:08, 19:08 and 23:11 cannot call at both. The gap between 22:10 and 23:24 on Mondays to Fridays is unacceptable. The 21:24 Manchester – Hazel Grove on Saturdays waits for 8 minutes in Stockport station. An explanation of this would be welcome.

We would also ask for more calls at Middlewood especially (from our viewpoint) on Sundays when travel to the Middlewood Way would be more popular without the two-hour gaps. On Saturdays when there are two trains per hour to/from Buxton, surely the slower one of the two should call. We are not convinced that small (notional) improvements to journey time from Buxton should be the driver of the timetable.

On Sundays, we initially had two trains per hour between Hazel Grove and Manchester. We understand the extra trains were removed for staffing reasons; we would hope they can be reinstated by May 2020 at the latest.

Written by Charlie Hulme on behalf of Friends of Davenport and Woodsmoor
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