

Lobbying

OPSTA is perhaps best known for its lobbying to get the 'Burscough Curves' open again. If you look at the map on the right, you will see that the two lines cross in Burscough. They used to be connected. There is a clear need to link Southport with Ormskirk and Preston again - it is not coincidental that we show the draft cover of a new marketing leaflet promoting Southport as a destination.

We are certain that a sound business case exists. Now Merseytravel are carrying out a Demand Study on a number of options, including extending the Merseyrail electric network north of Ormskirk.

But the Burscough Curves project is by no means our only goal. There are several other issues we are working on.

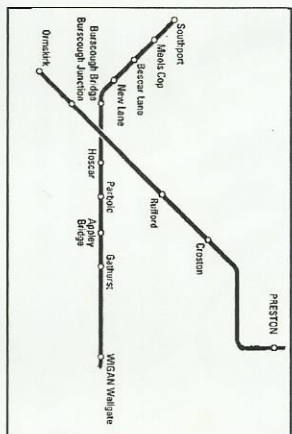
The Ormskirk - Preston line urgently needs a better timetable. Currently trains run on a strange pattern with gaps between trains of anything from 64 minutes to nearly two hours. Network Rail has proposed some track improvements that would enable a regular 'clock-face' hourly service. If this happens, OPSTA will launch a major marketing campaign (see the next page).

Burscough Bridge Interchange offers a great opportunity to develop links to the wider area, including tourist attractions, by better integration of trains and buses. We are working with Lancashire County Council to see how these opportunities can be developed.

Some of our trains are old and lacking in passenger comfort. The Government has announced that new trains are on the way, and we shall lobby to get at least some improvement in the quality of our trains.

We talk regularly with Northern Rail to get a more reliable service. While we are delighted to report that performance is now better than for many years, there are still a number of areas for improvement.

These are just some of the areas where OPSTA is trying to make a difference. With nearly 300 members, we get a lot of input. But we very much welcome your comments and complaints - and support!



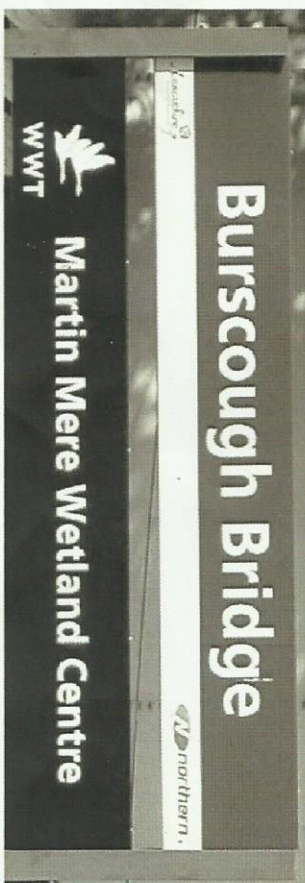
The Ormskirk to Preston line is now branded 'The West Lancashire Line', and is being proposed for formal designation as a Community Railway.

The Southport to Wigan line is the focus of a number of efforts to increase passenger levels. With the Manchester conurbation at the end of the line, the opportunity to grow traffic is considerable.

Promoting Our Railway

A big part of our work is promotion of our local train services. Every line has opportunities, and we see tourism as a key. Here are two examples.

Southport is a major resort destination. As part of Merseyside, it is well promoted by Merseyrail, but OPSTA is very involved in promoting the line from Manchester. The leaflet shown on the front cover is the first result. We are also helping to find funding to 'wrap a train' as an advert for Southport.



Martin Mere is part of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands area, one of Europe's most special places for wildlife. An average of 340,000 avian visitors per year make it one of the most important wetland places in Britain for migratory and breeding birds. The area's environmental significance together with its location between Merseyside and the Lake District resulted in its being recognised as a potential regional park for the North West and linking Burscough Bridge Station to Martin Mere is a key project outlined in the business plan for developing the Ribble Coast and Wetlands regional park.

WWT Martin Mere has received grants to improve the public transport routes from Burscough Bridge Station to the Martin Mere Centre along the main train route from Southport and Manchester. With these grants, we will see a well signposted trail from the station to utilise the existing public footpaths; promotion of the bus service; improved signage on Burscough Bridge Station; and the creation of a cycle hire facility from the village.

Our next project is to promote the Ormskirk - Preston line through the full involvement of each community on the line. Recently we heard Lord Adonis comment on the lack of information at some of the stations he visited. Well, we already are planning to remedy that. Since each community has something special to offer, we believe it will be a great project to get local people to develop a 'WELCOME TO...' information display at every station. At the same time we will be working with local people to develop a brochure advertising all the benefits of the train service. To put it simply, research tells us that lots of people don't even know how attractive an option to the car our trains can provide!