

LAKES LINE RAIL USER GROUP

Representation on Outside Body: Cllr Doug Rathbone **2021/22 Annual Report to Council**

The year divided into two sets of activities, celebrations and publicity for the 175th anniversary of the Lakes Line and continued work on campaigning and attempting to improve the service on the line.

Events to celebrate the opening of the line centred on each end of the Windermere to Oxenholme route with events at both stations. These involved representatives from all of the relevant train operating companies, music, publicity for the public and each event was opened by the respective Mayor, of Kendal and of Windermere.

In addition there were exhibitions at Kendal Museum, for some months, and the Ladyholme Centre in Windermere for 2 days to show the continuing history of the line from its origins in context. Two celebratory days were also organised by the Group at Burneside and Staveley stations.

Alongside this was campaigning and liaison work on the line. This is continuing and these matters will be at the forefront of the group's activities in the future. They are campaigning for a passing loop to increase the possible number of trains per hour and so enable, in addition, more through trains to/from Manchester Airport. This is crucial to the economic viability of the line and to the great benefit of the local hospitality industry. They have also worked to mitigate the problems of cancelled trains and of industrial action on various train operating routes which all affect the Lakes Line. These also cause problems with rail replacement busses, which are sometimes not adequately laid on. However dialogue with Northern has increased and improved in the last 2 years. The last main item of campaigning to take forward is to achieve funding for disabled access for Staveley station where the platform is currently only accessed by long, steep steps.

In all the Group's work over the year I worked closely with them as the Council's representative, to the mutual benefit of both sides. All of these activities were made possible by the large amount of volunteer time and experience given by members of the group. Given the continuing aims of the Group and the line's importance to the economy and to lives of residents it is a relationship that is valuable and should be continued both by SLDC and the new unitary council.