

Friends of the Derwent Valley Line
Chairman's Annual Report - October 2016

The past twelve months has seen a reliable service on the Derwent Valley Line rewarded by a continuing rise in passenger numbers. F.D.V.L. intends that this trend shall continue, and has taken the opportunity, at a number of meetings, to press for improvements to the timetable.

Reflecting upon the past year, the positives far out-weigh the negatives. Of course, some are rather more vital than others! They are discussed as follows.

POSITIVES

1. The table below readily demonstrates that, with the exception of Whatstandwell, patronage is increasing along the line. This is leading to capacity problems, particularly on one of the commuter trains, as well as on summer Saturdays, when the current E.M.T. fleet is fully utilised.

Passenger Journeys to & from branch stations (in 1,000s)					
Station	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Ambergate	42	39	40	38	40
Belper	226	211	194	178	174
Cromford	43	41	36	33	35
Duffield	62	59	57	55	54
Matlock	215	208	187	176	178
Matlock Bath	71	64	59	55	56
Whatstandwell	24	25	24	27	28
All stations	681	646	596	562	564

2. Station awards. The efforts of station adopters are appreciated at all of our stations. It is good to be able to report that during 2015/16 Ambergate, Belper and Cromford have been amongst the awards. Ambergate in particular is worthy of special mention, given the scale of work that has produced terraced gardens above the approach road: thanks are due to EMT & the D.C.C. for providing both finance and some of the labour!

3. Last year's report discussed the shelving of plans to electrify the Midland Main Line to Sheffield. This action has been reversed (unshelved?) and we can now look forward to an electrified railway some time during the next decade. Perhaps the intervening years will enable the rumours of battery-powered trains for the D.V.L. to develop into a reality!

4. Ticket machines are now installed at all stations along the line.

5. From May 2016 through services between Matlock and Newark Castle have run on Saturdays, in addition to other weekdays. I have encountered people joining trains along the D.V.L. specifically to visit Newark, indicating that there is a potential market. However from my occasional observations, some of the stations East of Nottingham appear little used. An excellent ticket office has recently opened in the old station building at Newark Castle.

6. D.V.L. Illustrated route map : now installed in the platform 2/3 waiting room at Derby station. With thanks to member Stuart Smith for the idea & to E.M.T. for its installation.

NEGATIVES

1. The current issue of Derbyshire Train Times is the last edition that will appear in print, future editions will be available on-line. Derbyshire County Council are to be thanked for producing this excellent publication over so many years.
2. Access to and from Belper station is a problem awaiting resolution - for the motorist delivering or collecting travellers, and for late evening pedestrians along the ill-lit route to/from Kings Street.

F.D.V.L. Steering Group

In addition to the Group's own meetings, two members normally attend the quarterly meetings of the D.V.L. Community Rail Partnership, organised and chaired by the D.C.C.. These provide the opportunity to meet with other groups that have an active interest in the well-being of the line.

A welcome addition this year has been the first of E.M.T.'s occasional stakeholder meetings, held at their Pride Park office; this is in addition to the annual meeting at Nottingham.

Also welcome was the invitation to meet with the DfT (Department for Transport): see below.

Thanks

Regular travel along the D.V.L. allows for observation of the train conductors in their dealing with the passengers - the difficult ones and the not so difficult! My impression is generally good, and a number of them have an enthusiasm for their task which, I'm sure, is not lost on the passengers. So: my thanks to them - their endeavour perhaps contributory to the increasing ridership?

As Chair, I am always grateful to F.D.V.L. members for their participation at meetings, and to two members in particular for their work throughout the year - David Rayner for maintaining an excellent web-site and Chris Darrall, for his commitment as secretary. My thanks also go to Alastair Morley his contributions to our meetings, and for the many endeavours he pursues on behalf of the D.V.L. within his role at the D.C.C..

Finally, two members of E.M.T. who deserve mention: Matty Maternaghan - the upkeep of our stations being largely due to his efforts, and Paul Mobbs, for the enthusiasm he has for the D.V.L. and for being so readily approachable on Derby station.

The Future

Recently, F.D.V.L. were invited to meet a member of the Department for Transport specifically to discuss our aspirations for the line under the next Franchise Holder. In essence, the hope is to build upon what E.M.T. now provide, not only to cope with rising passenger numbers, but to encourage new flows. This can be achieved through a number of actions, including improvements to the timetable and (during the franchise) new stock more appropriate to the ridership. It is thought that the meeting went well.

John Weaver