

The May 2018 timetable at Davenport station

Our response to the publication of the May 2018 Northern timetable, on behalf of Davenport passengers, is one of considerable disappointment. What we have is basically the 'consultation' timetable issued months ago, with the one concession that stops at Davenport and Woodsmoor are provided on most, but not all, services, at least enabling travel to stations beyond Hazel Grove. The proposed extra service to New Mills Newtown replaced by a service to Buxton, and there are more services late in the evening.

The result is that we have three trains per hour to and from Manchester for most of the day Monday to Friday, and two per hour to Manchester on Sundays. An improvement perhaps, but on closer study of the timings it seems less useful. The following points become clear on comparison with timetables of recent years:

- There are no additional services at weekday peak times, except a new, very early, service at 06:15 which some may appreciate. In fact there are fewer services in the main part of the peak than in the off-peak, due to the fact that the 07:36 Buxton to Manchester and the 17:11 Manchester to Buxton do not call at Davenport and Woodsmoor. Notably, we have no departures to Manchester between 07:40 and 08:25. In addition to inconveniencing travellers to Manchester, this also ignores the needs of those from towns beyond Hazel Grove who work, attend school, or visit hospital, at - Davenport and Woodsmoor. We urgently request that stops are provided on these services, which would not affect any other parts of the network.
- There are no longer any through services to points beyond Manchester Piccadilly, except one departure at 08:40 which runs to Manchester Victoria via Deansgate and arrives at Manchester too late to be of use for many commuters; it is clearly included as a convenient way for the operator to send a train to Newton Heath depot for servicing. This change is a major setback for many passengers: commuters to education facilities in Manchester, Salford and Bolton who, in some cases, have chosen to make their home here because of these through services, will suffer as well as many off-peak travellers to the Palace Theatre, Bridgewater Hall, etc. This is a significant reduction in the service provided at Davenport. The fastest time from Davenport to Salford Crescent, at Piccadilly via the busy footbridge to platform 14, will be 46 minutes, compared with 31 minutes direct by the current service. There will be a convenient cross-platform change at Stockport from the xx:15 train to an East Midlands train which calls at Oxford Road, but no viable connection from Stockport to Deansgate or Salford Crescent.
- The interval between the three weekday services per hour is irregular, especially in the Manchester direction at xx:15, xx:25 and xx:40. The xx:25 service is an electric train starting from Hazel Grove, and using the 'fast line' from Stockport which has no platforms at Heaton Chapel or Levenshulme; this gives an arrival in Piccadilly just four minutes after the xx:15 service. Effectively there are just two useful trains per hour to Manchester, no improvement over the current timetable.

Return services are more evenly spaced, but oddly, there is a later train from Manchester on Mondays to Fridays than on Saturdays.

Sunday services offer two trains per hour to Manchester at reasonable intervals, but only one per hour beyond Hazel Grove to Buxton for visitors to the Peak District. As now, trains stop at Middlewood only every two hours on Sundays (as on weekdays), despite the station's value to users of the Middlewood Way walking and cycling trail. All trains terminate at Piccadilly; the current services to Southport will no longer run.

The overall feeling that Davenport and Woodsmoor are not to participate in the great improvements promised by Northern, despite all our campaigning over the last few months which emphasised all the above points. We accept that some (perhaps all) of the problems are not of Northern's making, but the recently-announced delay to the Bolton electrification cannot be the cause of the above issues, as the Buxton line plan as published was made well before this was announced. Station users are encouraged to contact their local representatives with a view to (at least) inspiring improvements in future timetables.

Nor are we likely to see new trains on the Buxton line: second-, third-, and possibly fourth-hand Class 150 diesel units will remain in service for the foreseeable future, with refurbished interiors but still with the narrow and cramped seating we have suffered for 30 years. Disabled passengers will benefit from the new toilets and information displays, but Davenport station is inaccessible by disabled passengers and likely to remain so.

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Friends of Davenport Station

www.davenportstation.org.uk