

End of the Line for the Pacer



*Retiring Pacer at Manchester Victoria:
(from left to right: Becky Styles, Northern's community and sustainability manager,
Nick Donovan, managing director, Jason Ward, driver
and Chris Jackson, regional director)*

Campaigners for the North of England have welcomed the news that rail operator Northern has bid a final farewell to its controversial fleet of Pacer trains after more than three decades' service. The antiquated Pacer trains - buses from the 1980s which were converted into makeshift trains - were initially introduced as a temporary stopgap solution to stock shortages and their continued use has been cited by many as a prime example of the North-South divide.

Northern eventually retired the first Pacer from service in August 2019 now the last remaining train has completed its swansong journey, from Kirkby to Manchester Victoria on Friday November 27.

Marcus Johns, research fellow at think-tank IPPR North, said, "Many northerners will celebrate the final retirement of Pacer trains from our railways. Their cold, leaky carriages, poor reliability, and familiar bounce won't be missed.

The National Railway Museum has accepted a donated Pacer - the first of the Class 142s to be produced - to add to the national collection. It is currently at their Locomotion site in Shildon, County Durham, where it will eventually run on a short test track, giving rides to visitors.

The Chasewater Railway heritage line in Staffordshire has also bought two Class 142 units for preservation.

Charities and community groups were invited to bid for Pacers, and among the competition winners were men's mental health charity Platform 1, who are based at Huddersfield Station and will convert the train into a kitchen to teach cooking classes.

Airedale NHS Trust was awarded a Pacer to use as a patient space and Fagley Primary School in Bradford will turn theirs into a science lab.