



» ON RIGHT LINES Rob Sawyer on Styal station. He is campaigning for an increase in train services from the village. He discovered the lack of provision when he went in search of a morning train but found the platform deserted. Photograph Emma Williams

Rail station that's short of . . . trains

■ Few stop at village ghost destination

■ Now battle is on for more services

DEBORAH HAILE

THEY remember the good old days at the pretty little Cheshire railway station – trains actually used to stop there then.

There are still plenty to be seen. . . it's just that most of them whistle through Styal, near Wilmslow.

Now it's virtually a ghost station.

There is a Manchester-bound train at 18.07. But although trains pass through the village throughout the day, the early evening service is one of

the very few that actually stops to take on passengers.

Villagers say the single city train – with no return service – makes it impossible to use the railway service.

Rob Sawyer discovered the lack of provision when he went in search of a morning train but found the platform deserted. He is now spearheading a campaign to get a fuller service restored.

He is calling on Northern Rail to re-instate a morning commuter service to Manchester, an afternoon service from Styal to Wilmslow and Alderley Edge to cater for schoolchildren, and an increase in services for visitors to Quarry Bank Mill and Styal prison. Rob said: "Over the past 10 years the station has changed from being regularly used to

virtually a ghost station, with just one train a day to Manchester, and two other trains going in the opposite direction. It's impossible to make a return journey.

"It makes the station untenable and we are trying to reverse that decline and to show that there is demand there – not just from the local community but from people visiting Quarry Bank Mill and Styal prison.

"Rail operators could say that there's clearly no demand but that's because the trains aren't regular.

"The first train of the day to Manchester doesn't leave until after 6pm. That's just nonsensical scheduling. It's the minimal contractual service operators are obliged to provide." Mr Sawyer, who lives in nearby

Handforth, believes that an improvement in the service to and from Styal would also cut traffic through and around the village.

Michael Fairley, of Styal Village Association, said: "In the good old days there used to be something like a half-hourly train service through Styal."

A spokesman for Northern Rail said they took on the existing services when they got the franchise in 2004. He said the company is already looking at changes to services.

He said: "These services were withdrawn back in 1996. We weren't in existence then."

More information about the campaign's petition is at www.styal-station.org.uk

'In the good old days there used to be half-hourly service'

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