

EXCLUSIVE! FIRST PICTURES: SIEMENS '185' TESTS

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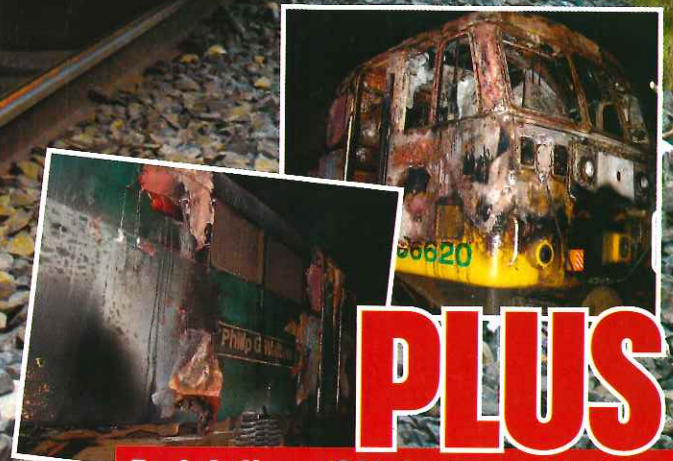


Ex-SRA boss Bowker:

What is a franchise FOR?

Fast start for Pennine DMU

- First train in UK by November
- ...and in service from March



PLUS
Freightliner '86' destroyed by fire

Siemens '185' - first impressions

RIDING on the Class 185 is, like most journeys on a Siemens-built product, a pleasurable experience, writes Chris Gilson.

The interior is airy, with good internal lighting and excellent natural light, thanks to the large windows. This is a complete contrast to the Class 158s, which are often dimly lit, with vision sometimes restricted depending on where you're seated.

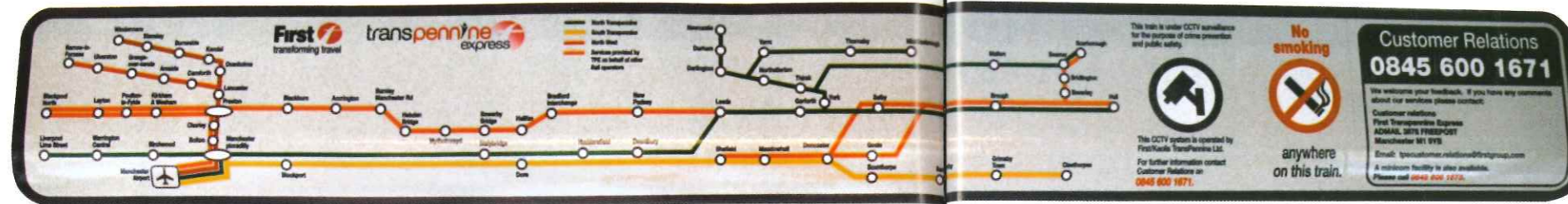
The interior is spacious with more than ample leg room - something that I tend to take notice of, being 6ft 5in. Internal decoration is a mixture of mauve, light green and grey, with the seat moquette mauve.

At speed, vibration is hardly noticeable, despite it having underfloor Cummins engines. This is a world away from the Class 153, 156 and 158, where long-distance journeys often become tiring from the continuous noise and vibration generated by the gearbox, engines and drive shaft.

Acceleration is rapid and smooth, with 90mph reached quickly and with apparently little effort. The ride is also smooth - you can't call a Class 185 a boneshaker!

Admittedly, the test track at Wildenrath is not the journey through the Pennines, but I was impressed by the Class 185, with no obvious flaws being readily apparent. I'm looking forward to travelling in one again soon...

On test at Wildenrath on September 12 is 185103 - the first of TPE's 51-strong order to carry its colours. CHRIS GILSON.



First '185' completed for TransPennine Express

EXCLUSIVE

By Chris Gilson in Germany

THE first Siemens Class 185 three-car Desiro multiple unit for First TransPennine Express (TPE) has been finished in full livery while undergoing testing at Wildenrath, Germany.

First to be completed is 185103 because 185101/102 are being used for internal equipment tests at Siemens' Krefeld factory, and have been fitted with balancing weights instead of seating.

Also at Wildenrath test track are 185104/105, although neither is

Painted in full livery, both being in blue base coat without vinyls or full yellow warning panels.

Each unit undergoes 7-8,000 miles of tests at Wildenrath before shipping to the UK, including brake, systems, vibration and engine testing. All units feature a GPS satellite-controlled passenger information system, and will contain on-train monitoring and recording equipment (OTMR) as standard.

185103 is fully equipped with all internal facilities and seating, and is scheduled to arrive in the UK from Germany in November for extensive testing across the First TPE network. This will include gauge

testing and driver familiarisation.

The Class 185 fleet is expected to enter traffic with TPE in March. The arrival of the 51 Class 185s is expected see the withdrawal of its '158' fleet (see story below). With the arrival of each HSBC Class 185, one '158' will return to Porterbrook for reuse. The fleet has cost £250m to build, with the option to build and maintain up to 56 new trains. The '185s' will be maintained at two new depots - Ardwick depot in Manchester and Leeman Road, York.

Ardwick is on time for completion in late October, whilst work has only just begun on Leeman Road, after planning problems

and resistance from local residents slowed the process.

First TPE currently has 44 Class 158s in its fleet, of which 21 are two-car units and 158798-814/158972-976 are three cars. The 100mph Class 185s will be superior in every way to the 90mph '158s', the newest of which was built 13 years ago.

Internally, the '185s' are more spacious, are quieter at speed, with reduced vibration, and have better provision for wheelchairs, with dedicated areas on the train. One wheelchair area is next to first class to show disabled passengers they are not thought of as 'second class citizens'.

The route map for TPE's services across the Pennines inside 185103. CHRIS GILSON.

The '185s' will be used throughout the TPE network and not restricted to set routes.

When in traffic, TPE will be the sixth TOC to use the Siemens Desiro design in the UK. South West Trains operates Class 444s and 450s, Anglian operator 'one' uses '360/1s' between London and parts of its network, Heathrow Connect has four-car '360/2s' with another car due during early 2006, and National Express franchisees Central Trains and Silverlink use dual-voltage Class 350s. chris.gilson@emap.com

TPE likely to keep '158s' for Northern's Blackpools

TRANSPENNINE Express is likely to retain Class 158s if it takes over running Blackpool North services from Northern (RAIL 521).

The Department for Transport is considering proposals from the operator to take over the services it currently runs on behalf of Northern.

However, TPE's new fleet of Class 185s is not large enough at 51 units (having been cut from 56) to cope with Blackpool, leading TPE Managing Director Vernon Barker to suggest cascaded Class 158s will be the answer.

There remains, however, a possibility that some of the three-car '185' fleet may be expanded to four cars to cope with growth on TPE's network. Customer Services Director Edith Rodgers told RAIL this

was one solution to providing more seats on a franchise that, Barker told stakeholders in Manchester on September 14, had grown 15% on its core Manchester-Leeds route over the past year.

Rodgers said the new depots at York and Manchester could cope with four-car trains.

Overall, TPE revenue has risen 11% over the year and Barker said he was predicting the same growth next year.

At the same time, he said, income from that route had grown 20%. "More people are travelling more often and more fares are being collected," he said.

Peak capacity was now a constraint with not many trains spare to further increase the number of seats, he added.

Leisure travel pushes up TPE income

INCREASING leisure travel and longer journeys have pushed TransPennine Express's average fare from £4.67 to £5.58, Managing Director Vernon Barker told a meeting of stakeholders in Manchester on September 14.

He explained this was being generated by the buoyant economy and increasing road congestion. However, the growth TPE is

seeing in passenger journeys - up 7% to 14.5 million over the year - is split equally between business and leisure, he revealed.

Further growth will come from serving Manchester Airport (a common point for all three of TPE's service groups) with only a third of current arrivals full. Currently 8% of passengers for the airport use rail compared with

20-25% at London Stansted, leading Barker to conclude that air travel remains a significant opportunity for TPE. Last year earnings from airport rail travel for TPE were £8m, 12% of TPE's total, and up 19%.

The operator now has ticket machines in the baggage reclaim areas of the airport and has advertising around the airport.



TPE's DMU fleet



11 Class 175s



44 Class 158s

51 Class 185s (on order)



TPE figures reach 80%

PERFORMANCE at TPE is improving, according to latest punctuality figures, with Managing Director Vernon Barker expecting Period 6 to report more than 80% of trains arriving within 10 minutes of timetable.

He aims to have lifted performance to 90% by the end of the franchise in 2012, having started last year at 74%. In recent weeks, he says the biggest cause of delay has been a 15% increase in security problems with 53 trains cancelled in one day at Manchester Piccadilly.

His team has a challenge ahead, with Barker only allowing a 'modest blip' this autumn in performance compared with large falls in previous years. Last autumn saw TPE delay minutes peak at 19,000 while this year Barker is forecasting just 12,000 (the last few four-weekly periods have seen 8,000 minutes' delay each).

"We'd better get our act together," he told RAIL.

Much of TPE's recent improvement has come from reliability modifications to its Class 158s, says Barker. So far, 16 of his 44 '158s' have been through the programme that corrects 15 common faults. The results have lifted its '158' fleet to the most reliable in Britain, he says.

The addition of extra units transferred from Central Trains - while "not the best in the land" - has helped give time for depot staff to improve maintenance of the others, he adds.

TPE also has 11 more modern Class 175s but these have recently seen reliability fall because of problems in warm weather.

TPE punctuality in 2005/06

Period 1	83.1%
Period 2	82.8%
Period 3	75.5%
Period 4	77.6%

In brief

Rail tickets on bus

● Bus passengers in York can buy a limited range of rail tickets as part of a trial between TransPennine Express and the local bus company, also owned by First Group. Manchester is to be the next test site.

TransPennine Express

- Operated by First/Keolis
- Started February 1 2004
- Runs for eight years
- Aims for 90% punctuality by franchise end
- Passenger income £75m
- Subsidy £96m