

Welcome aboard!

The latest round-up of bits and pieces for Railfuture East Midlands Branch (Rf EM).

First, my apologies to all those who have emailed me and not had a prompt reply. One reason for that is the general busy-ness of life; I will get back to you – eventually! Another is that I have been away, on my narrowboat, part of the very attraction of which is to get away from sophisticated technology for a time, including computers and the interweb!

My canal journey took me to the ‘Oxford Summit’, which is not a gathering of world leaders; rather, it is the ‘summit’ section of the Oxford Canal that lies between, at one end, the locks down towards the Avon Valley in Warwickshire and, at the other, the Thames at Oxford. It is a lovely tranquil and rather remote stretch; one of those few areas in lowland England where, in the evening, one can moor up and not hear road traffic and not see many, if any, electric lights. Wonderful!

However, it is also where HS2 is crossing the canal, which is why I am banging on about it. The picture shows signs of HS2 construction work (which, I also noticed elsewhere on the site, rather charmingly included men pushing wheelbarrows!)

Now, please don’t misunderstand, I am not arguing against HS2. However, in a country so beset by motorways and other forms of noisome pestilence, there is something in me that feels a bit wistful about building a major new railway (‘Yippee!’ in every other respect) through such a previously tranquil and secluded stretch of countryside.



Progress disturbing the peace? The narrowboat Delphinus heads south along the Oxford Canal summit near Wormleighton in Warwickshire on 7th September 2021. The mounds of earth indicate where HS2 Phase 1 will cross the canal at this hitherto very secluded location.

Photo: Steve Jones

CrossCountry presentation to East Midlands Branch AGM Open meeting - 25th September

Those who were able to join us on Zoom on 25th September will have heard an interesting and useful presentation by David Jones, Stakeholder Liaison Manager - East Midlands & Anglia, CrossCountry Trains. He illustrated the presentation with a set of PowerPoint slides. If you would like a copy of the slides, please email me at steve.jones@railfuture.org.uk.

Economic Value of Rail

You may be interested in two recent rail industry publications on the economic value of rail:

1. From the **Railway Industry Association**, *The Economic Contribution of UK Rail*, a large and fact-laden publication with sections relevant to the various regions of the UK. There is a one-page regional summary for the East Midlands on page 59; for us, rail is reckoned to be worth £2.4bn

GVA* in economic contribution, with 45,300 jobs. The report should be available for download from <https://www.riagb.org.uk/theraileconomy>.

2. **Rail Delivery Group: *More than a Journey***, a 17-page document (1.4MB) available for download at: <https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/uk-rail-industry/value-of-rail.html>. This identifies the value rail can bring to a 'fair, clean recovery for communities across Britain'. OK, it is written by the railway industry ('they would say that, wouldn't they?!' etc), but it is good to see the railway positioning itself in this way and making the case.

* *Gross Value Added (GVA): a measure of the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector. Simplistically, it is the value of the amount of goods and services that have been produced, less the cost of all inputs and raw materials that are directly attributable to that production. The Government's Office for National Statistics states that 'GVA per head is a useful way of comparing regions of different sizes'.*

Paris speed limit: City slams on the brakes with 30 kph rule for roads

Ian Brown, Rf's Director of Policy, recently emailed Branches about this, saying: '*You may be interested to read this change affecting Paris, in the context of the upcoming COP summit in Glasgow. Note that this is seen also in the context of affecting modal shift as well as reducing pollution.*' <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/31/europe/paris-speed-limit-climate-change-intl/index.html>.

It will be interesting to see how it works.

It is topical in the context of the Leicester Local Transport Plan (LTP) consultation, to which I have now responded on behalf of the Branch. The draft LTP talks about managing demand for car travel, though not with a city-wide reduction in speed limits. Our response is available on the Rf website at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2792>.



Reflections on Leicester's local transport. A preserved Leicester Corporation bus is seen reflected in the windows of St Margaret's Bus Station in the city. Though Leicester's public transport is a little more up to date than this, a rapid transit system does not appear to be on the agenda for the city.

Photo: Steve Jones

Could Great British Railways' national headquarters be in the East Midlands?

The Government has announced a competition for the location of the national HQ of GBR. According to Transport Secretary Grant Shapps: '*The competition will recognise towns and cities with a rich railway history that are strongly linked to the network ensuring the first headquarters will take pride of place at the heart of a new era for Britain's railways.*'

I am sure none of us in EM Branch would argue that Derby would make an excellent choice!

More here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-competition-to-find-first-hq-of-great-british-railways>.

EMR Regional Services

I know from various communications that there is widespread and very real concern across the region about the poor performance of EMR's Regional services. There are numerous causes, including shortage of staff (e.g. because of drivers retiring) and rolling stock (delayed cascade of Turbostar Class 170 units from other operators, and increasing unreliability of the ex-BR Sprinter fleet). The level of cancellations, part-cancellations and short-formed trains is seriously eroding public confidence in the rail services, however, and this is on the agenda for our next Branch open meeting, on 6th November (see below).

EMR Intercity fleet

You may have seen in the October edition of *Modern Railways* magazine a major feature article on EMR. This mentions that EMR are planning to re-form the Meridian fleet by transferring two cars each from two of the 7-car units to enable the four 4-cars sets to be strengthened to 5-cars. The 27-strong Meridian fleet would thus change from 4 x 4-car, 17 x 5-car and 6 x 7-car to 23 x 5-car and 4 x 7-car. I see, however, that at least one of the four Class 180 Adelante units (ex-Hull Trains) has been shortened to 4-cars by removing the buffet vehicle.



EMR Intercity. Class 180 (foreground) and 222 units pass at Market Harborough on 6th October 2021 on workings to St Pancras and Nottingham respectively.

Photo: Steve Jones

Transport for the East Midlands (TfEM)(part of East Midlands Councils) rail strategy refresh

You may have heard that TfEM has published a refresh of its *Rail Strategic Statement in the East Midlands*. This recognises that the EM region does not have an extensive rail network, and that much of the rolling stock is 'old and slow'. See this, <https://news.railbusinessdaily.com/transport-for-east-midlands>, for the press release. The actual document can be found here https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/TfEM_Rail_Strategic_Statement_Refresh_September_2021.pdf.

It echoes many of the things we have been advocating for rail improvements in the region, including higher speeds; better timetabling; better inter-regional connectivity such as between the East Midlands and the north-west; electrification; and 'genuine consideration of initial or improved rail connectivity' to such places as Coalville, Ollerton, Staveley Town and Daventry.

Harry on BBC Look East

Speaking of Daventry, youthful Branch member Harry Burr continues to raise the profile of the campaign for a Daventry Parkway station on the WCML at Weedon, with an appearance on BBC *Look East* regional TV news: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jrQIBAA_Yg. As noted on <https://twitter.com/RailfutureEMids> back in March, he is becoming the Greta Thunberg of rail!

MEMRAP (The Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership)

My thanks to EM Branch Committee member Stephen Chaytow for these links to a recent article on the Peaks & Dales Line reopening plans in the *Buxton Advertiser* and *Matlock Mercury* newspapers: <https://www.buxtonadvertiser.co.uk/news/transport/plans-to-reopen-train-line-between-buxton-and-matlock-gain-traction-3395854>
<https://www.matlockmercury.co.uk/news/transport/plans-to-reopen-train-line-between-buxton-and-matlock-gain-traction-3395854>

So, that's both ends of the route covered! Now just need to lay the track between them...

An announcement is awaited on MEMRAP's bid under the Government's *Restoring Your Railway* scheme. In the meantime, much activity is taking place to engender support for the line among the various relevant organisations as well as local opinion. This line is much more than the usual branch line reopening, of course, as it is a former inter-regional main line and offers great potential for freight as well as passenger traffic. Serious challenges remain, however. The *Big Issue North* magazine also carried a piece on MEMRAP: <https://www.bigissuenorth.com/features/2021/09/on-track-for-a-comeback/#close>.

Stephen Chaytow tells me that the journalists are now coming to MEMRAP, rather than the other way round. There is an important message here, with media organisations increasingly taking seriously what we in Railfuture and our affiliated campaign groups are saying. This is echoed by the increasing tendency of rail industry and public policy organisations to approach us with consultations and other requests for participation in their activities. It all reflects well on our credibility and gives us a potential influence that perhaps we may only have dreamed of a few years ago.

EMR Station Masterplans

You may recall from other communications that EMR are drawing up 'Masterplans' for improvements needed at their stations. Starting with Nottingham and Lincoln, they intend to cover all their stations eventually. They are seeking stakeholder views, including ours in Railfuture. As well as identifying



Offers scope for further improvement. EMR Regional and Northern units meet at Nottingham on 5th May 2021, forming services to Sleaford and Leeds respectively. Much of the activity at Nottingham takes place at the eastern end of the station; the opposite end from the main entrance and a long way from the footbridges linking the platforms. Better access, and better shelter and seating, are needed at this end of the station.

Photo: Steve Jones

what we think should be done, we need to say why it is needed and how it would benefit the railway. This does not replace our Easy Stations Awards survey, of course, though that is complementary, and covers all the stations in the combined EM and Lincolnshire Branch areas.

Our first one is Nottingham. My thanks again to the many Branch members who sent me their contributions; there has been a very good response to the request for help with this one. I have now sent the Branch submission to EMR; the main things we would like to see are a footbridge linking all platforms at the eastern end of the station, along with better access from London Road. We await both the outcome for Nottingham and consultations on the other stations in due course.

Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) – campaign against January rail fare rise

As you may be aware, the CBT is running a campaign to get the Government to think again about the prospect of a rise in fares in January. Clearly, rail finances have taken a huge battering during the pandemic and the industry certainly needs to raise more income. However, there is a strong case for *freezing* fares, to encourage more usage and thereby higher revenue during this recovery phase, rather than simply raising fares in the usual way. If you want to help in this campaign, go to <https://mailchi.mp/bettertransport.org.uk/how-would-higher-rail-fares-affect-you-9zvb9ht15?e=e819488412> and complete the online form.

Next EM Branch meeting – Saturday 6th November

All members and prospective members welcome: **Saturday 6th November 2021**; from 14:30 to 17:00, with a break from 15:30 to 16:00. This, the first in-person meeting for many months, is due to be held in the **First Class Lounge** at **East Midlands Parkway**, by kind permission of EMR. Preceded by Committee Meeting from 13:00 to 14:00.

For details of future EM Branch events, keep an eye on the Branch webpage: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East-Midlands-Branch>.

Steve J.

Steve Jones

Secretary – East Midlands Branch

Railfuture – Campaigning for better services over a bigger rail network

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These Updates are sent by email to all current members of Railfuture who have identified East Midlands ('EMI') as their preferred or secondary Branch and have given a valid email address plus GDPR consent to receiving email communications from Railfuture. These preferences can be amended at any time via the Members' area of the Railfuture website: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/member/index.php?action=login>.