

## Welcome aboard!

And a belated welcome to 2022. It will no doubt be a momentous year for the railways, not least as we try again to rebuild after the pandemic. I have decided to use the title *East Midlands Update* for these newsletters, as this seems more meaningful than simply 'Update'. The fact that the initials are 'EMU' is accidental, but it does give me an excuse to slip in a couple of pictures of an EMU, EMR Connect unit 360104, in its old and new liveries. The pictures do not quite do justice to the way a revised livery scheme, including the different treatment of the yellow on the cab fronts, can transform the appearance of a train. Mind you, the interiors of these units are yet to be refurbished.



*Before.* EMR unit 360104 at Corby on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021. It is in the former Greater Anglia blue livery.

*Photos: Steve Jones*



*After:* 360104 at Kettering on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022, now re-liveried in EMR style, complete with wrap-around yellow cab front. This gives the unit a much more modern appearance.

OK, having got that out of the way, let's get on with the latest round-up of bits and pieces for Railfuture East Midlands Branch (Rf EM).

### New Rail Minister

Admittedly not fresh news, as it is several weeks ago now, but on 19<sup>th</sup> December the Government announced that the previous Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, MP for Daventry, is to move from the DfT to become Minister of State for Europe in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Wendy Morton, MP for Aldridge-Brownhills in the West Midlands, will replace him as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Transport. Pleasingly, she has been involved in the campaign to reopen Aldridge station, on the Sutton Park line east of Walsall.

<http://wendymorton.co.uk/aldridge-station-an-update/>

<https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/plans-to-give-aldridge-its-own-railway-station-move-forward-with-400k-land-deal/>

Let's hope she makes a good appointment!

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Britain's railway and rail users***

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#### EMR Timetable reductions – and meeting with EMR

With increased staff shortages because of Covid, EMR announced a roughly 4% reduction in timetabled services. This took effect from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January, and details can be found here:

<https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/amended-timetable>

EMR advised that this was being done to reduce the risk of ad hoc cancellations day by day. Their timetabling team are keeping the situation under weekly review.

Branch Committee member Ian Clark and I accompanied the Chair and Secretary of the Friends of the Derwent Valley Line at a meeting with EMR at their new headquarters building in Derby on 1<sup>st</sup> February. This was to convey our shared concerns to EMR about the curtailment of the Derwent Valley Line service such that it runs between Matlock and Derby only, instead of the intended through service to Nottingham. Moreover, connections at Derby between the Matlock trains and other EMR or CrossCountry services to or from Nottingham are not ideal. Shortage of rolling stock, primarily because of late transfers of cascaded Class 170 Turbostars from other operators, is the main reason, though not the only one. EMR have advised that through-running to Nottingham will not be restored in the May timetable. We have therefore asked for mitigations in the form of better connections at Derby, and we await developments. Meanwhile, we hope the reduced Intercity service on the MML can soon be restored, once staff availability improves; EMR are this keeping under weekly review.

#### Integrated Rail Plan

There has been much comment about the IRP, so there is no need to go into detail here, beyond noting on the mixed implications for the East Midlands. The plan to take the eastern leg of HS2 from Birmingham Interchange to East Midlands Parkway is broadly welcomed, allowing HS2 trains to run right through to Nottingham station, with options for onward projection perhaps via Newark to the East Coast Main Line. An alternative is via the Toton regeneration site and along an upgraded Erewash Valley Line. The announcement (again!) of electrification of the Midland Main Line (MML) is also welcomed. This would allow HS2 trains to run via the MML to Derby and Sheffield, though there has been comment about adding HS2 trains to a crowded MML between East Midlands Parkway, Derby, and Ambergate South Junction. Options for HS2 East are explored in the recently published Mott MacDonald review, which gives the background to the HS2 East decisions under the IRP proposals. It can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-alternatives-to-the-hs2-eastern-leg>. The Newark option is the cheapest and, with electrification to Lincoln, would also greatly speed up journeys between Lincoln and Birmingham.

Andrew Pritchard, Director of Policy & Infrastructure for Transport for the East Midlands (TfEM), has also commented on the IRP in this article in *Rail Technology Magazine*:

<https://mag.railtechnologymagazine.com/publication/?i=732143&p=6>. Andrew sounds a pragmatic note of caution in his article, about making sure the *'forever railway...works for us'*. As Branch Committee colleague Graham Nalty put it to me in sending me the link, *'Diamonds are forever, but railways exist to meet transport needs. Not necessarily forever, as we found with the Great Central! But it is a forward-looking article'*. Further consideration of the IRP by TfEM can be seen from the agenda papers for their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021:

[https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/Agenda\\_and\\_Papers\\_updated\\_06.12.21.pdf](https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/Agenda_and_Papers_updated_06.12.21.pdf)

#### Joint meeting between East and West Midlands Branches, 18<sup>th</sup> January, Derby

Several members of the Railfuture East Midlands and West Midlands Branches met on 18<sup>th</sup> January at The Brunswick Inn, near Derby station. This explored in an informal setting the various existing and potential rail links across the greater Midlands region. Railfuture Lincolnshire were also represented. Among a wide range of topics, including the IRP, we looked at the existing east – west routes across the Midlands, such as Birmingham – Leicester and Nottingham – Derby – Crewe. Though HS2 East will improve journeys between Birmingham and Nottingham, it is still about 20 years away and there is a need for enhancements well before then. The freight-only line through Castle Donington is the obvious way of achieving a short-term acceleration. Other routes including the planned Coventry – Leicester (and perhaps on to Nottingham and Lincoln) service, and Lichfield – Burton, were discussed. This inaugural meeting was informal in nature, but the intention is to strengthen liaison between the Branches, along with our contact with Midlands Connect.

#### MML Electrification – making progress

Three bits of recent good news to add to the start of substantive work on electrification from Kettering to Market Harborough:

1. There is an indication that wires could be extended soon to Wigston South Junction, under what is labelled ‘Key Output 1a+’. We await an update of the DfT’s *Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline* for more on that; this is already very late but is expected soon. One consideration, of course, is the need for track remodelling between Wigston and Leicester, as was studied by Network Rail in their July 2020 *Leicester Area Strategic Advice* document.
2. Authority has now been given to upgrade the existing electrification south from Bedford for 125mph operation. There will be seven weekend all-line blockades during 2022 to do this, with the timing of these planned to optimise with the Market Harborough works.
3. The Network Rail Board have approved funding for completion of the outline business case for electrifying the rest of the MML to Nottingham and Sheffield. This is apparently based on unit cost reductions that have been achieved in recent UK electrification projects.

We in Railfuture have been seeking electrification of the MML for a long time!



*Up a gantry. Overhead support masts and cantilevers installed at Braybrooke, just south of Market Harborough, over the Christmas break. Good progress is being made with the electrification from Kettering.*

*This is the same location as the photograph on page 5 of EM Branch Update Issue No. 5, which was taken on 11<sup>th</sup> December.*

*Photo: Steve Jones, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2021.*



#### Bennerley Viaduct

While we are on the subject of metalwork in the sky, I am grateful to David Harby for letting me know that the disused but preserved Bennerley Viaduct is now open for walkers. It was part of the ‘Friargate Line’, built by the Great Northern Railway to cross the Erewash Valley (and line) in pursuit of coal traffic on a route around the north side of Derby and Nottingham via Ilkeston and Kimberley. It is about a mile north of the present Ilkeston station. The viaduct is the largest wrought iron structure in the British Isles. The only other wrought iron viaduct in Britain is Meldon Viaduct in Devon – which is also now a public cycle track and footpath. Bennerley Viaduct’s other claim to fame is that it still bears some shrapnel marks from an air raid by Zeppelins on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1916!

More details at <https://www.bennerleyviaduct.org.uk/>

#### More Ironwork – this time on the Great Central

Another overhead iron structure in need of help is the A60 Nottingham Road bridge on the outskirts of Loughborough. This carries the northern portion of the Great Central Railway and is doubly significant as it is also crucial to the link between the GCR and the Midland Main Line, used until fairly recently for British Gypsum freight traffic. However, the bridge is in an unsafe condition and needs major work. You may have heard that the GCR is fundraising toward this, with a target of £110,000. You can find out more here:

<https://www.gcrailway.co.uk/2022/01/2022-year-of-the-a60-bridge/>

Given that repairing this bridge effectively links the Ruddington part of the GCR to the MML, here is a chance to contribute directly to expansion of the national network!

Several EM Branch members made their way to the GCR’s Winter Steam Gala event over the last weekend of January. This was a very good show and was well supported, which was great to see. As well as six steam locomotives and a DMU from the home fleet, there were two visitors. One of these was BR Standard Class 4 tank No 80080, accurately described as ‘a tidy bit of kit’ by a familiar EM Branch member who was on duty at the GCR on the Saturday.

One might not normally think of heritage railways as properly fitting within ‘rail future’, but I think an exception can be made for the Great Central, especially given its other life as an industry test track. Reconnecting it to the network gives the potential for freight traffic and through excursions to resume.



*Tidy bit of kit. BR Class 4 Standard 2-6-4 tank locomotive No. 80080 stands at Loughborough Central on 29<sup>th</sup> January, awaiting departure with the 14:30 to Leicester North.*

*Photo: Steve Jones*

#### Railfuture 'Easy Stations' surveys

Thank you again to all those who have completed Easy Stations surveys for your local stations. This joint exercise between the EM and Lincolnshire Branches is part of Railfuture's national campaign to put passengers first, and we have been looking at what makes a station easy to use. Surveys at all our stations are now either done or promised, with the possible exception of the tranquil Elton & Orston\*. Further information on what we have been doing, including the checklist we have been using, is available on the Branch webpage: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East-Midlands-Branch>. Jointly with Lincolnshire, we are going to maintain all the survey returns as a stocktake of the facilities available at, and ease of use of, all the stations in the two Branch areas.



A forthcoming change to one of our stations is the application by EMR for planning permission to install ticket gates at Kettering, which is currently an 'open' station. A decision is expected in March.

Work is also under way on ticket gates at Corby. I am indebted to Branch member David Fursdon for this picture, taken there on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

\* If you want to know a little more about Elton & Orston, have a look at this video by the amiable Geoff Marshall. Apart from the fact that things may have changed since he visited it nearly four years ago, Geoff has almost done an Easy Stations survey for us!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbRZhURUYsg&list=PLt4q5oaptyI9U2zddss8dm8srzuJ6nRz&index=31>

#### Recent EM Branch responses to Consultations

An important part of the work of Railfuture and its Branches is responding to consultations by the Government, local authorities and other agencies, on things that affect the railways. The EM Branch has submitted responses directly to two, and contributed to a national Railfuture response to a third:

- **New Stanton Park.** This is the industrial and logistics project for the former Stanton Ironworks site near Toton. We supported the planning application for this, as it includes two rail freight terminals, though we called for the development to make provision to extend the logistics sidings from the planned 650m length to 775m, to accommodate the trend towards longer intermodal trains.
- **Toton and Chetwynd Strategic Masterplan.** This major redevelopment of the redundant Toton marshalling yards and nearby Chetwynd Barracks is the subject of a 'strategic masterplan'. Unfortunately, this was prepared before the IRP's rejection of the Toton Hub HS2 station! Despite that, the consultation by Broxtowe Borough Council continued, and we submitted a Branch response: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2925>



*Blue-sky thinking? A Nottingham Express Transit tram calls at Nottingham station on its way from Toton Lane to Phoenix Park on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2021. This route, extended, would be the main connection between the Toton & Chetwynd Strategic Masterplan area and the city centre, as well as providing a transport artery through the major regeneration area. Photo: Steve Jones*

- **Whole Industry Strategic Plan, call for evidence by the Great British Railways Transition Team.** This major consultation sought views on the development of Great British Railways and its recommended 30-year strategy ‘to determine how best our railways can support the public good of our country in the future’. In preparing its national response, Railfuture sought the views of all Branches, and we contributed to that. The Railfuture response can be viewed at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2939>

#### **‘Mind the Gap’**

Thank you to those who let me have their thoughts and contributions for the Rf *Mind the Gap* assessment of pandemic-related cuts in services. Though railway finances are going to be very tight for some time to come, we do not want temporary reductions becoming permanent, except where they perhaps thinned out excessive provision that caused congestion and delays.

Compared with some Branch areas, we have not had too many serious reductions for ‘key flows’. The main one for us has been between Derby and Nottingham, including loss of connectivity for the Matlock service, as noted above. This was included in our submission to the Railfuture analysis. The Robin Hood Line lost its hourly Nottingham – Mansfield Woodhouse service, and we have also lost one train per hour between Derby and Birmingham on the long-distance CrossCountry service between the northeast and the south coast.

Given our common interest in EMR Regional services, we liaised closely with Railfuture Lincolnshire Branch, who sent a combined submission.



#### Catch Points

An occasional item where curiosities arise, or people put me straight when particular points catch me out.

- **Unusual features at stations**

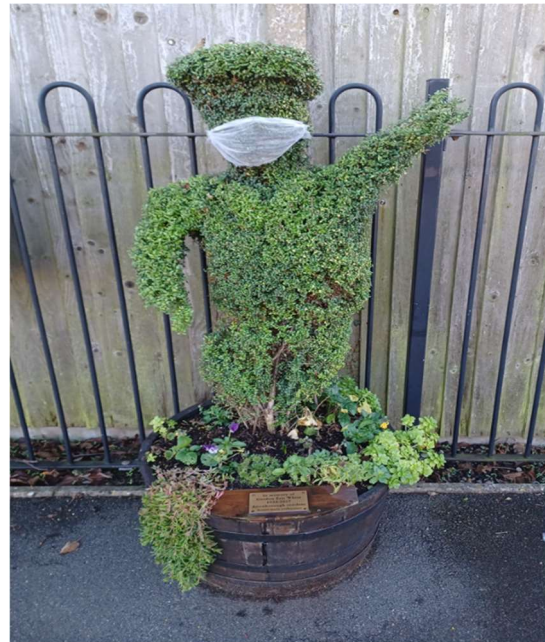
You may recall the free-range eggs machine at Oakham in the last *Update*? Attenborough station, on the MML on the outskirts of Nottingham, lacks some basic facilities, such as passenger information screens, or car parking of any kind. However, it is lovingly looked after by the charmingly named Attenborough Elderflowers. They maintain planting on the platforms, and there are interesting display boards giving the history of the station and its surroundings. Two of its unusual community-minded amenities are shown below:



*'Minibeast Hotel' in corporate BR (and GBR?) style, Platform 1, Attenborough, on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022.*

*Surely there should be one of these just along the line at Beeston? (Oh, for Goodness' sake! - Ed)*

*Photos: Steve Jones*



*Wonderful send-off: Topiary memorial to late Attenborough resident Gordon Eric White, 1934 – 2017. Platform 2, Attenborough. Note the face-mask!*

- **A possible trip out by train?**

My thanks to MEMRAP's Stephen Chaytow for this:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@skratchworld/video/7042207334080318726? t=8OvZrUO4aL0& r=1>

At 18,000km, it may appeal to those seeking a real rail adventure but for whom the idea of getting from Matlock to Buxton by train is just a little too daunting?

#### Branch AGM: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022

Branch AGM: Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022; from 12:30 to 13:15; Midland Hotel, Derby. Followed at 14:00 by an Open Meeting with a guest speaker. The AGM is for members of East Midlands Branch only. Members of other Branches, members' guests and prospective members are welcome at the Open Meeting.

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

#### And finally...

I was minding my own business on LinkedIn recently when I came across this. I thought it makes the point rather well.



Image: UITP (Union Internationale des Transports Publics), the International Association of Public Transport

Elsewhere, I found this comment, illustrated by an adapted cargo-bike:

*"Our cities really do not need driverless cars. What they urgently need are more carless drivers!"*

*Marco Te Brömmelstroet, Professor in Urban Mobility Futures, Amsterdam*



### **EM Branch Communications – what do you think?**

These *Update* bulletins have been running for a little while now, and I am grateful for the comments and other feedback I have had in response. However, the EM Branch Committee are keen to communicate with all Branch members in a way that is useful, interesting and helpful. Do you feel you know what is going on? Do you feel you are sufficiently involved?

That is not the same as putting pressure on members to do more. We are all volunteers, and Railfuture East Midlands is not interested in putting members under any pressure; we value your membership no matter how much or how little you directly want to get involved. If you feel you don't hear enough from us, or do not know what is going on, or whatever, *please* do get in touch. You can do so easily by email to [eastmidlands@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:eastmidlands@railfuture.org.uk), or to me at [steve.jones@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:steve.jones@railfuture.org.uk). We can promise you that any responses will be considered carefully, and will be treated in confidence if you so wish.

That's it for now. Take care, everyone,

Steve J.

**Steve Jones**

**Secretary – East Midlands Branch**

**Railfuture – Campaigning for better services over a bigger rail network**

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