

Response to the NIC Rail Needs Assessment

These are the Railfuture East Midlands branch recommendations in response to the National Infrastructure Commission's [Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North](#).

Summary of Recommendations

1. Midland Mainline Electrification.
2. Birmingham to Nottingham via HS2.
3. Leicester to Coventry direct via Nuneaton
4. Higher speeds and greater capacity between the East Midlands and the North West.
5. Full completion of HS2 between Birmingham and Leeds.
6. Raise speeds between the slowest city pairs.
7. Effective levelling up needs more than the NIC 'Baseline + 50%.
8. Leicester area capacity increase.

The Recommendations in full

1. Given that decarbonisation is now vital, we welcome the support of the NIC for electrification of the Midland Main Line which should include full 125 mph operation from St. Pancras to Leeds and to York via Moorthorpe plus appropriate infill lines. This is important also to enable electric classic compatible trains to access HS2. Not only is electric traction most favoured by rail passengers, it reduces operating costs on busy lines and makes a very positive contribution to addressing climate change and a better customer experience.
2. We fully agree with the need to strengthen regional economies through local connectivity and thus welcome the proposal from the NIC for early completion of HS2 East from Birmingham as far as East Midlands Parkway as a means of enhancing regional economies sooner rather than later. That this will not only permit faster services between Nottingham and Birmingham much sooner than current HS2 plans, but also offers scope for HS2 services from London to serve both Derby and Nottingham as well as Sheffield which were not available from current HS2 plans. For this to have value to the regional economy, we suggest that the Birmingham to Nottingham HS2 connection is completed sooner, and not later than, Stage 1 from London to Birmingham.
3. We welcome in the Midlands Engine programme a "Quick Win" proposal that has strong local political support for a direct link between Leicester and Coventry under the WCML at Nuneaton, but we would also like to see a link directly to platforms at Nuneaton as well as the link that avoids Nuneaton. This would enable operators to offer direct services linking Nottingham, Loughborough and Nuneaton with Leamington Spa and Oxford as well as fast links between Leicester and Coventry. It would also facilitate direct rail services between East Midlands Airport and both Nuneaton and Coventry, a need previously identified by the airport. The added connectivity from Nuneaton would offer increased journey opportunities from elsewhere on the national rail network at a minimum cost of infrastructure and journey time.
4. We are concerned that the NIC lists 8 strategic rail routes between regions but not between the East Midlands and North West. Our experience of rail travel from the East Midlands to cities in the NW is that it is slower than to the other regions of the Midlands and North, and our detailed

study of journey times supports this. Whilst the NIC may not have considered this within their remit, we regard journey time improvements between the East Midlands and North West most essential to the Government's ambition of levelling the economies of the Midlands and North. We would like to ask that the NIC evaluates, compares and makes recommendations from all appropriate options including;

- speed and capacity increases on the Hope Valley and the Derby - Stoke - Crewe lines
 - current rail schemes being promoted such as MEMRAP and
 - any further new or enhanced strategic longer distance route the NIC may wish to consider including
 - routes that offer rail services to the Peak District National Park. To attract motorists to use rail in sufficient numbers to access the National Park, direct trains without change will be required from a wide catchment area.
5. We are aware of serious concern within the East Midlands that the early completion of strategic regional rail routes via both HS2 and classic lines may be viewed as an alternative to building the middle stage of HS2 Eastern leg. Cancellation of the HS2 East middle section would seriously undermine the value of business growth investment that is currently being planned within the East Midlands in advance of HS2. We would like the Government to confirm its plan to deliver a high speed railway continuously between Birmingham and Leeds within the promised timescale for completion of HS2 Stage 2 as part of a national continuous rolling programme of high speed rail extending to Scotland, South Wales and the West of England. The UK needs a full programme of levelling up and half levelling up will not instil confidence with investors.
 6. We do not see any evidence within the NIC report of attention being given to some of the slowest inter-city journeys (much slower than those for which the NIC is offering solutions) within the Midlands and North such as Nottingham to Liverpool, Hull and Bradford. Upgrading the slowest services will be one of the most effective means of unlocking the economic potential for growth within the Midlands and North and add credibility to the slogan that 'it's quicker by rail' that is very effective in promoting rail and cutting road congestion and pollution. We ask the NIC to address this as an immediate priority.
 7. Given the urgent needs to "Level Up" our local economies, we are concerned that even with the NIC 'Baseline plus 50%' expenditure plans, the urgent upgrades of 'less glamorous' routes mentioned in our items 4 and 6 are not included. We seriously recommend that the Government raises its overall rail budget to a level more comparable to that in London and the South East so as to include additional funding for these routes.
 8. We strongly support the Network Rail [Leicester Area Strategic Advice](#) proposal (July 2020), and in particular the recommendation to progress four tracking Wigston North Junction to Leicester Station to SOBC stage immediately and to deliver as soon as practicable. This is particularly welcome for its potential to enable local passenger services from Burton to access Leicester via the Campaign to Re-Open the Ivanhoe Line's 'Restore Your Railways' project - which we view as a vital local passenger service.

We would welcome consideration within the scope of this project increasing the through running speeds for freight services from the current slow 15mph due to the CO2 and local particulate emissions benefits that this would bring. The service specification considered accommodates 4 freight paths per hour, but 2043 freight forecasts indicate up to 7 will be required. We look forward to working with all stakeholders to achieve passenger services to Burton, ensuring that adequate freight capacity is accommodated in the Leicester area, and engaging in consultation on the options proposed for Leicester station.