

Welcome aboard!

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

First of all, can I apologise to all those who have tried to contact me by email in recent weeks. Railfuture nationally has migrated its email provision to a new system. I had problems with it for some time, though I admit that this was at least partly the result of things I was getting wrong! It now seems to be working well.

East Midlands Branch Meeting, 21st May, at East Midlands Parkway

Our first Branch meeting after the AGM took place at East Midlands Parkway on 21st May. This was also our first meeting with our new Branch Chair, Phil Thomas. We explored ideas for greater collaboration with our neighbours in Lincolnshire Branch, with whom we share many common issues, especially concerning EMR Regional services. The well-established Branch Portfolio system was also considered. We are looking to develop it further as we seek to strengthen the profile of the Branch, both among rail professionals and among the political and administrative leadership of public organisations, as well as in the community at large.

With all that in mind, Phil has this message for the Branch:

Steve has asked, as he should, if I wanted to add anything to this newsletter - part of the job of being the 'Chair' I hear you (and he) say. My initial response was to reply 'no, not yet', I guess hiding behind the fact that I have only been in the role for a few months, but my conscience kicked in and told me I ought to do better than that!

Both Steve and I have been quite busy over the last couple of months meeting with a number of members discussing key challenges including expanding the membership and the reviewing the impact the Branch has on important decisions concerning both the level of rail service we enjoy in the short term and looking forward to HS2 planning and the longer-term future.

All discussions, as you would expect, prompt further questions:

- *how do we involve more members?*
- *how frequently should we meet?*
- *do we meet virtually or face-to-face?*
- *how do we organise and share key information?*
- *how do we improve our contacts with the media and the key decision-makers?*

As Branch members you will no doubt have a view. I invite you to get in touch and let me know your thoughts. Either come along to our 'social' at the Victoria Hotel, Beeston on 16th August from 12 noon, or feel free to email me - phil.thomas@railfuture.org.uk. I look forward to hearing from you.

Our vision for Railfuture: An independent organisation whose views are respected by the rail industry, to which decision makers come for advice, and which rail users are proud to join and recommend.

Route options for HS2 East

Debate continues about the optimum routing for HS2 East now that the recommendation has been made to take it to East Midlands Parkway rather than Toton. In May, the Government announced that it is considering plans to connect the eastern leg of HS2 to the East Coast Main Line (ECML) at Newark, routed via an upgraded Nottingham – Newark line with new sections and bypasses where necessary and further such work north of Newark on the ECML. We considered this at our Branch meeting on 21st May and have since contributed to a national Railfuture discussion, in the following terms:

- General support for the recommendation to take HS2 to East Midlands Parkway and then by existing lines into Nottingham and Derby. That would require some enhancement at the Trent Junctions, which is a topic we shall return to as a Branch.
- As with Railfuture Lincolnshire Branch, a much faster route between Birmingham and Nottingham (and Lincoln) is a priority for us. Therefore, while welcoming the current proposed HS2 route to East Midlands Parkway, we are dismayed at the very long timescales envisaged and feel the project should be greatly accelerated.
- We sympathise with Railfuture Yorkshire Branch regarding the implications for Sheffield of HS2 East joining the ECML north of Newark.
- We still feel that an upgraded Erewash Valley line offers good potential for a more direct route to Sheffield, and want to see it upgraded anyway, even without HS2. We see merit in a station being built at Toton for conventional services, probably via a reopened ‘Maid Marian Line’ giving Mansfield direct connections to HS2 and the Midland Main Line via East Midlands Parkway. Toton would not be served by HS2, of course.

Branch colleague Dave Shaw sent me this link to *The Business Desk* website regarding the new East Midlands Development Company’s (‘EM DevCo’) intended strategy for making the best of HS2 in the East Midlands:

<https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/eastmidlands/news/2060441-east-mids-devco-to-draw-up-1m-hs2-strategy>

EM DevCo has been set up by the local authorities in the area to plan three major development zones, around Toton & Chetwynd, East Midlands Airport, and East Midlands Parkway + Ratcliffe power station. The related transport connections are part of the planning process; including the reopened Maid Marian Line to give Mansfield direct access via a conventional station at Toton and the Erewash Valley Line. We shall keep a close interest in all of this and will seek to meet EM DevCo at some point. If you have further information on this, perhaps you might share it with us?



*From an electric power station to an economic powerhouse at Ratcliffe? An EMR Meridian awaits departure from East Midlands Parkway to Nottingham on 21st May 2022.
Photo: Steve Jones*

Population Growth

My thanks to Branch colleague Graham Nalty for drawing this to my attention:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021>

This is the 2021 census for England and Wales. It identifies that the EM region has had population growth overall of 7.7% since the 2011 census, bringing the region's population to 4.9 million, against a national figure of 6.3% (59.6 million). High population growth has taken place along a number of our present or potential rail corridors, either within the EM region or on routes relevant to us for longer-distance passenger or freight services or inter-regional connections, such as:

- Along the Midland Main Line between Bedfordshire and Leicestershire;
- South Derbyshire, with significant albeit lower growth in the MML and Ivanhoe Line corridors through North West Leicestershire and Charnwood;
- The England's Economic Heartland 'northern arc' between Oxford and Peterborough via Bedford and the whole of Northamptonshire;
- A similar arc around the south side of Birmingham, linking Northamptonshire with Rugby, Stratford, and Bromsgrove. OK, this is not in our area, but it is adjacent, and it does suffer from the lack of an orbital rail route around Birmingham despite being traversed by major roads such as the A46 and M42.

As Graham quite rightly says, the census data could have some bearing on our approach to rail expansion and upgrades.

Leicestershire County Council – Net-Zero Carbon by 2045 consultation

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/have-your-say/current-engagement/net-zero-strategy-and-action-plan-2045>

Unfortunately, this came to my attention too late for us to submit a Branch response, especially as the online survey questionnaire is quite lengthy. However, it is worthy of mention, especially with the record heatwave reminding us that climate change is very real. All local authorities have a strong leadership role, both directly in their own activities, and in helping businesses and the public to adapt as we move towards 'net zero' carbon emissions. Public transport, particularly rail, has a major part to play.

The Strategy outlines Leicestershire County Council's approach to working with others to achieve the net zero target for Leicestershire and takes a long-term view to 2045. It sets out five goals, of which one is Decarbonising Transport, acknowledging quite rightly that *"The slow pace of transport decarbonisation is a trend seen nationally across the UK"*.

Under the **Decarbonising Transport** heading, the Strategy document notes that: *"Road transport emissions in Leicestershire, including A roads, minor roads and motorways, account for 46% of all Leicestershire's territorial emissions. This is a significant figure and is above average when compared with the UK, resulting from the key role of Leicestershire roads, through-routes and interchanges in national logistics and distribution networks due to its central location and excellent transport links"*. It is good to see the County Council recognising that the amount of traffic passing through the County on journeys beginning and ending elsewhere is a major contributor to local emissions. Getting more long-distance freight on rail would help!

The stated aim of this part of the Strategy is to “*Deliver sustainable, affordable transport choices for all that minimise carbon emissions*”, which is broken down into the following specific objectives:

1. Encourage changes to travel behaviours
2. Reduce the need to travel by car
3. Encourage and enable more cycling, walking and other active travel
4. Support people to choose public transport
5. Support the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles, for example, electric and hydrogen fuelled
6. Reduce the impact of freight movement within and across the county.

For rail, there are two Actions under **Decarbonising Transport** in the Action Plan:

ID	Objective	Action	Who may be involved	Timescales
T18	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	Support rail improvements	Leicester City Council LLEP Midlands Connect Transport for East Midlands Great British Railways HS2 Ltd	Medium term (2-5 years)
T20	5, 6	Investigate opportunities for reducing the impact of long-haul freight road mileage such as shift to rail freight	Midlands Zero Carbon Hub Districts LLEP	Medium / Long term (2-5 / > 5 years)

These are not very specific, but it is a long-term strategy, not a detailed list of projects. In broad terms, however, it is encouraging. As the consultation closed on 26th July, I did not have time to collate a Branch response. However, being a resident of Leicestershire, I have submitted my own personal response, with the need for rail and other transport improvements in mind.

Just passing through. Two container trains pass at Leicester station on a sunny 13th May 2022. Though diesel-hauled, these are doing their bit to reduce carbon emissions from long-distance freight crossing the county on journeys to and from the deep-sea port of Felixstowe.

Photo: Steve Jones



Future of Freight: a long-term plan

Still on freight, and as you may well have read elsewhere, the DfT published *Future of Freight: a long-term plan* on 15th June. It sets out the Government’s long-term vision for UK freight, including “A freight and logistics sector that is cost-efficient, reliable, resilient, environmentally sustainable and valued by society”. Environmental sustainability points to a net-zero-carbon freight sector by 2050. There is a recognition of the logistics ‘Golden Triangle’ in the East Midlands, as well as rail’s role in both high-value logistics traffic (containers) and lower-value bulk such as stone from quarries. Both are significant in our region, and we have been involved as a Branch in submitting comments on two rail freight interchange proposals. We need to make our Branch voice heard in such developments and, as noted above, we also have the Freeport area around East Midlands Airport to consider as we look at both freight and passenger connectivity and capacity in that part of the region.

Quite rightly, the *Future of Freight* plan recognises that much freight involves different transport modes at different stages of its journey, and states at paragraph 1.17 that “*This multi-modal integration of services underpins this plan’s approach to freight as a complex multi-modal system rather than as separate individual modes*”. It is important to get away from the traditional road v rail argument and recognise each as best at certain things. For most things, it will inevitably be ‘trunk by rail, distribute by road’.

The plan can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-freight-plan>

EMR bids for Access for All funding

The submission date for the next round of bids for *Access for All* (AfA) funding for station accessibility improvements is 16th September. We as a Branch had written to EMR on 30th March expressing support for their bids for Belper, Duffield and Kirkby-in-Ashfield stations. EMR have recently advised us that these will be among their priority stations for which bids will be made, along with Sleaford in Lincolnshire. They have undertaken to keep us informed of any developments.



Access only for some. A Class 158 on a service to Matlock pauses at Duffield on 18th July 2015. The station’s island platform can only be reached via the footbridge in the background, which only has steps. This station is on EMR’s list for bids under the next round of Access for All funding.

What this picture also demonstrates is that, even with better accessibility from the street onto the platform, there remains a need for better access from the platform onto the train.

Photo: Steve Jones

Great British Railways HQ

The shortlisted six locations bidding to accommodate the headquarters of GBR have been announced. They are Birmingham, Crewe, Derby, Doncaster, Newcastle and York. These were narrowed down from the 42 applications submitted and were judged on their alignment to the Government's 'levelling-up' objectives; being connected and easy to get to across the UK; the opportunities they present for GBR; railway heritage and links to the network; value for money; and public support. This last point includes a public vote.

We in East Midlands Branch would surely all want Derby to win it; after all, having the national railway HQ in the area can't do any harm for the region's rail connectivity! More information is available here: <https://www.derbygbr.co.uk/>

If you haven't already, you may like to cast your own vote: <https://consultations.gbtt.co.uk/great-british-railways/gbr-hq-vote/>

The vote closes on 15th August.



Best location for GBR? A Class 170 in EMR livery waits at Derby with the 10:33 to Matlock on 2nd April 2022, the day of our Branch AGM in the city. In its bid to be the headquarters of GBR, Derby states that it "is well connected to locations throughout the UK. We are at the heart of the national rail network, with fast regular trains to London, Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Bristol, York and Leeds and direct access to all five regions of the network". What a pity the train above couldn't add Manchester to that list!

Photo: Steve Jones

Seaside Specials to Skegness

I know there has been much comment already on EMR's welcome use of Class 180s to Skegness on summer Saturdays this year, but I really couldn't ignore it! My thanks to Railfuture colleague Owen O'Neill for this link, <https://railwayworld.net/2022/07/24/seaside-specials-return-to-skegness/>.

If you want to sample it yourself, these trains run on Saturdays through to 10th September. The times are:

07:58 and 09:23 Derby – Skegness

11:42 and 13:44 Skegness – Derby

Mind you, I suspect I am not the only one who remembers travelling to Skegness in the late 1970s on a long train of packed Mk1s hauled by a pair of Class 20s...

Railfuture Passenger Group - Minimum Service Standards questionnaire

The Railfuture Passenger Group (<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Passenger-Group>) asked all Branches to complete and return a questionnaire on the minimum acceptable service standards that we should expect from Great British Railways (GBR). This is part of the work the Passenger Group is doing in response to the Williams-Shapps *Plan for Rail*.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-british-railways-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail>)

The questionnaire covered the key areas we regard as having the greatest impact on the customer experience, namely: rolling stock; station facilities; information; buying a ticket; and timetables, Delay Repay and fares. We submitted our Branch response to the Passenger Group in late May for their consideration as they prepare their report to inform Railfuture policy and campaigning. In doing this, we endeavoured to bear in mind that ‘minimum standards’ are not the same as ‘desirable targets’!

Next EM Branch fixture

The next Branch fixture is our informal summer railway conversation, on **Tuesday 16th August from 12:00 noon at the Victoria Hotel, Beeston**. This large pub is right alongside the western end of the down platform at Beeston, and even has a gate straight from the platform into the pub garden!

Check the Branch webpage for final details: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East-Midlands-Branch>.

Agendas and minutes for past Branch meetings are available from me via the usual address: steve.jones@railfuture.org.uk.

That’s it for now. Don’t forget to keep an eye on the Branch webpage:

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East-Midlands-Branch>.

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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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>.
