

# SixShiresRail

Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland

Newsletter for Railfuture East Midlands  
& Lincolnshire branches

**railfuture**

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## ***Campaigning for Rail in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland***

### **Railfuture meeting in Derby with Catherine Atkinson MP and Baggy Shanker MP**

Railfuture East Midlands organised a meeting at the Aston Court Hotel in Derby on 31 January with Catherine Atkinson MP (Derby North) as guest speaker. Ms Atkinson was a member of the Transport Select Committee (TSC) until she was appointed as a Parliamentary Private Secretary last October, and she was joined later in the meeting by Baggy Shanker MP (Derby South), who is currently a member of the TSC. The focus of the meeting was the future of rail nationally rather than local issues, and invitations were sent to representatives of the rail industry, local government and stakeholders including rail user groups and transport campaign groups, as well as Railfuture members.

Ms Atkinson started by saying that rail is important for both the Government's agendas of growth and decarbonisation. She said that the Government is fully committed to rail, as shown by the legislation for the railways to be brought into public ownership being one of its first acts following the last general election. She is concerned that there needs to be a continuous pipeline of railway development work, rather than the boom and bust of recent years, so that a workforce with railway skills can be maintained and enlarged.

More locally, Ms Atkinson is proud of Derby's continuing major role in the railway industry, and that it has been chosen as the HQ location for Great British Railways; indeed, she wants GBR to be located in the city centre. However, she also mentioned that transport investment per capita in the East Midlands was only half the national average in 2023-24, although the new East Midlands Mayor has secured £2bn to spend on transport over the next five years.

In the next part of the meeting, the two MPs answered questions submitted in advance by participants. The first questions concerned the work of the Transport Select Committee and the system of government, given the "churn" of ministers. Ms Atkinson reassured us that Lord Hendy, the Rail Minister since the last General Election, is highly knowledgeable about the railways.

Responding to a question about decarbonisation, Ms Atkinson said that she supported complete electrification of the Midland Main Line, but that bi-mode trains and battery power do have a role, in particular where certain stretches of a line would be too difficult and expensive to electrify. Infrastructure and rolling stock strategies therefore need to be ►

formulated together. She pointed out that whereas new railway lines have obvious benefits in the growth agenda, it can be more difficult to justify electrification of an existing line in terms of growth. A rolling stock strategy is due to be published this year, and it is important to maximise compatibility of rolling stock types to improve efficiency. The Government does want to develop transport strategies over a much longer term than the five years between elections. There is also a need for much better connectivity between all the non-car transport modes.

It was pointed out that the average speed of freight on the railways is 25mph. Given that putting freight on rail makes a major contribution to decarbonisation (even with diesel traction) and to reducing road congestion, it is important to make rail more effective for freight. There are capacity issues, but innovations such as in signalling can help mitigate these.

Railfuture and other stakeholders were encouraged to engage with their MPs and with the East Midlands Mayor. The success of GBR would be measured by improvements in the passenger experience, particularly on reliability and punctuality, and also by a clearly understood long-term strategy.

The MPs had to leave the meeting after 70 minutes, and there then followed a wide-ranging discussion, with Carew Satchwell, the Rail Strategy Lead for the East Midlands Combined County Authority, joining a panel of Railfuture committee members. Topics covered included:

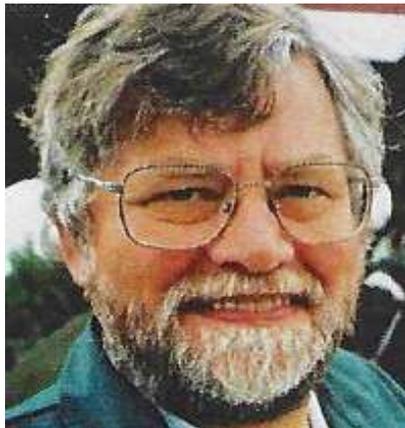
- Enthusiasm for decarbonisation appears to be waning nationally, so we need to emphasise the other advantages of electrification, e.g. efficiency and economy;
- The balance between long-distance and

local services, particularly on the East Coast Main Line, but also more generally both between larger cities and into them from intermediate localities;

- The observation that electrified lines seem to have greater passenger capacity (i.e. longer trains) than lines operated by diesel trains;
- Tram networks, particularly the LRTA proposal for Derby and the need for further extensions of the Nottingham network. More widely, local authorities should design schemes in advance, so that if and when funding becomes available, the design is ready to be implemented;
- There is still much rolling stock that is over 30 years old, while manufacturers have a dearth of orders for new vehicles;
- Discontinuous electrification often appears the best economic choice in the short term, but will be more expensive than continuous electrification over the longer term. For example, discontinuous electrification of East-West Rail would prevent purely electric trains being used on, say, a Birmingham-Cambridge service via Milton Keynes. Battery technology should only be used when there is really no alternative.
- Tempsford needs to be a major interchange station between the ECML and East-West Rail.

The meeting was chaired by Peter Small, with other Railfuture East Midlands committee members having a major input to organising it (including meeting the technical challenges of making it available online as well as in person) being Richard Bradford, Stephen Chaytow, Steve Jones and Ian Clark.

## Inspired rail campaigner



Terry Holt CEng IMech E

It was very sad news for members of Railfuture East Midlands to learn that colleague and friend Terry Holt passed away, aged 82, after a short illness in early December.

He was seeking to reverse the Beeching cuts long before it became fashionable to do so and as a Rushcliffe Borough councillor for many years, he developed his proposals which led to the building of East Midlands Parkway station.

He became Railfuture East Midlands branch chair in 2006. Terry was a long-term wheelchair user and lobbied extensively for improvements in disability access at various locations including the eventual £8 million upgrade of Loughborough station which met the requests Terry had instigated.

(An extended obituary will be in *Railwatch* 17 in April).

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## The Pain Train

Remember, remember... *The Pain Train*\* (British Transport Films, 1969), is a story of how relatively minor individual operational hiccups accumulate to inflict misery on the passenger. I was reminded of the film as I travelled on the 19:02 from St Pancras to Chesterfield on 5 November.

### *Ticket gates*

As is common at termini, the platform was displayed only 10 minutes before the scheduled departure time, leading to a surge of passengers towards the ticket gates which then 'decided' not to read my QR-coded ticket. I was not alone: after making my way through the crowd to the staffed gate, I joined the throng waving tickets on their phones at the bemused staff member who wisely just opened the gate to let everyone through. No need to rush, though, as the train doors had not been released to open.

### *Two units together*

While waiting to be allowed onto the platform, I had noted that the display showed that the carriage (B) with my reserved seat (34) was second from the front in the leading unit. This was just as

well since (unlike its partner in the rear) the bodyside displays showed 'Not in service' (were the units coupled?) No surprise, then, that carriage B was unmarked but at least the doors were now open and passengers queuing while waiting for those with luggage put bags on the racks. No surprise, either, that 'NOT RESERVED' was displayed above the seats, though thankfully they have fixed numbers and today no-one had got to 34 before me: I have lost count of the squabbles between those with a reserved seat and others occupying it because 'NOT RESERVED' is shown.

### *On the run*

The train is allowed 65 minutes for the 99 miles to Leicester, but as we slowed near Kettering the 4 minutes of timing allowances slipped away and led to 1-minute late arrival, and similarly arrived at Derby just over a minute down. So far, so normal but, just over 4 minutes ahead was a Matlock service running 7 minutes late. This is allowed 14½ minutes to Ambergate Junction whereas mine has 7½ minutes, so inevitably we had to slow near Belper and passed the junction 6 ▶

◀ minutes late.

A quirk of the 19:02 from St Pancras is that it uses platform 3 at Chesterfield and thence takes the 'Old Road' via Barrow Hill to Sheffield. To do so entails crossing from the Down Fast to the Down Erewash at Clay Cross North Junction, scheduled at 20:47½, but today we were running late. Meanwhile, the 20:37 from Sheffield to Derby had departed on time and was due on the Up Fast at Clay Cross North at 20:53. Now, this may sound like an extract from Rolt's *Red for Danger* but I am writing this so nothing catastrophic happened, just adverse signals to slow us down even more as the 20:37 had priority. We passed it just north of Clay Cross Tunnel, but arrived in Chesterfield 9 minutes late.

### *Home and dry?*

Like most passengers, I do not live near the station. One reason for choosing the 19:02 is that it allows a comfortable walk up to the town centre for the 21:04 bus. According to Google, this takes 7 minutes, so even without having to use the stairs and subway from platform 3 my late arrival meant I would miss the bus. The alternative is a 30-minute uphill walk

to my front door, along a path poorly-lit in places. But this would still be quicker than waiting for the next bus half an hour later, and luckily the weather was largely dry.

### *Control*

Nowadays one should not impute that those deciding how to resolve operational hiccups on the railway are 'fat', and hindsight can be wonderfully clear. Nevertheless, EMR now had 2 trainloads of late-arriving passengers, although neither case was sufficient for Delay Repay to offer compensation. Nevertheless, the inconvenience caused was real and such irritations tarnish the image of the railway which staff strive to run smoothly. So although over 50 years have passed since *The Pain Train* departed, along with the uniforms, rolling stock and liveries, its tale is just as relevant today.

\*Enjoy the nostalgia on YouTube:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AbK\\_zqauzU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AbK_zqauzU)

*Richard Bradford  
December 2025*

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## **Access for All disappointment for the East Midlands**

In January, we heard that Sleaford, Stamford and Sileby stations had all failed to get Access for All funding to improve disabled access. Out of 50 stations initially selected for feasibility studies, all three of our stations were among the nineteen which the DfT decided to progress no further. The notification letter makes it clear that the main criterion for selection was the availability of third-party funding and that in future this will again be important. All stations that are going to the next stage had this third-party funding available. From recent comments in

social media many locals clearly thought that when the Access for All decision was announced, the schemes were going ahead, when in reality all the announcement in 2024 actually said was that feasibility studies would be done for the stations listed. The blame for this confusion must partly be placed on the DfT. The headline of their announcement was "*Railway stations awarded Access for All accessibility funding*" so, quite naturally, the local media used those words in their headlines and by doing so inadvertently(?) misled readers.

*David Harby, Steve Jones*

# Railfuture Lincolnshire Branch

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 21 March 2026 at St. Mary le Wigford Church Hall, Lincoln LN5 7EQ  
*adjacent to Lincoln station*  
commencing at 12:30

*Timetable:*

- 12:00 Assemble  
12:30 AGM (Agenda below)  
14:00 Break  
14:30 **Thoughts on railway station design** - Nick Dibben will be sharing some thoughts on railway station design based on his experience with Railfuture and working in the construction industry on a number of major station projects. Stations covered will range from the single track Soham Station in Cambridgeshire to the half-billion pound stations on the Elizabeth Line in London.  
16:00 Meeting Closes

### BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Dear Member,

The Annual General Meeting of the branch will take place on Saturday, 21 March 2026 at St. Mary le Wigford Church Hall, St. Mary's Street, Lincoln LN5 7EQ

**AGM AGENDA**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2025 meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report by David Harby
5. Hon. Secretary's Report by Dr Don Peacock
6. Financial Report – Branch Income & Expenditure Account
7. Election of Officers:
  - a) Chairman
  - b) Vice Chairman
  - c) Hon Secretary
  - d) other committee members
8. Any other urgent business (notice of items appreciated by Hon Secretary before meeting commences or telephone 01652 688549)

Yours sincerely, Don Peacock, Hon Secretary  
1 Queens Road, Barnetby le Wold DN38 6JH. Tel: 01652 688549

*No members contacted the Hon Secretary to stand for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary and therefore there will be no candidates' statements published and no voting carried out at the AGM. Branch full members can volunteer to join the committee at the AGM.*

*Dr Don Peacock, Hon Secretary*

## Lincoln Train Crew Accommodation



To accommodate its growing number of staff, East Midlands Railway and Transport UK has opened new accommodation for its train crew and drivers based at Lincoln.

The new accommodation is in Station House, opposite the station, and has modern facilities including changing areas, storage, break spaces, meeting rooms, and training suites. Solar panels and energy-efficient systems will ensure the building is fit for the future and is sustainable. Currently, the building houses 113 staff members, but it has a capacity for up to 150.

*Photo: EMR*

# Lincolnshire Branch Chair Report for 2026 AGM

Welcome to your chair report on Lincolnshire branch activities during 2025.

The most important item to report on is new timetables from East Midlands Railway (EMR) and LNER. We have been asking for a better connected timetable in Lincolnshire for all of the 47 years I've lived in Lincoln and been a member of this branch, so to hear nearly 2 years ago that EMR were planning a complete overhaul of their regional timetable, including a doubling of the frequency between Lincoln and Nottingham, was most welcome news.

Throughout the process EMR kept us informed and we were given the opportunity to comment on the draft version. We did raise some queries and request changes and I'm pleased to say EMR did implement some and explained why the others couldn't be done. The final version introduced in December 2025 has so far worked well with improved connections at Lincoln and Sleaford. It is a pity DfT weren't prepared to fund hourly services from Lincoln to Cleethorpes and Doncaster, so that's our next campaigning target.

The same positive news cannot be said for the new LNER timetable which has destroyed local connectivity between Doncaster, Retford, Newark Northgate and Grantham. All our representations were ignored and when I went to an LNER session at Retford, all the LNER staff present were interested in was telling me how much better the long distance services would be.

Another campaign issue that we have been active with during the year is that of fares reform. Whilst we are keen to see some reforms and would like to see single fares at half the return fare we are totally opposed to the LNER version where they are gradually abolishing all off peak fares so the only options are one way advance fares or extortionately priced anytime fares.

The branch had a stand at Caistor Model Rail show again in 2025. As in previous years we were kept busy answering queries about rail services but didn't manage to recruit any new members. Some branch members assisted East Midlands branch members in organising a stand at the EMR station adopters conference and helped with the organisation of joint Railfuture branch events at Peterborough and Nottingham.

We were pleased to see a start being made on refurbishment of the EMR Class 158 and 170 units and introduction of the new build Class 810 Aurora fleet. All originally promised when the EMR franchise was awarded back in 2019 and running late, but better late than never. Personally I'm impressed with the refurbished units.

More refurbishment that is looking impressive is the improvement work at Boston and Skegness stations. Both suffered delays due to contractor issues but at the time of writing, work is proceeding again. EMR have also taken over a new building opposite Lincoln station for some of their operations. This will hopefully free up some space on Lincoln station to allow passenger facilities to be improved. I say hopefully because as we all know the fabric of Lincoln station has been in poor condition for many years, so any improvement work is going to be expensive and with the rail network perennially short of funds, getting funding will not be quick. How long have we already been waiting for the not fit for purpose station footbridge to be replaced and how many times have our hopes for action been dashed?

Whilst on the subject of stations: the news that Sleaford, Stamford and Sileby have all failed to get Access for All funding is disappointing. The notification letter makes it clear that the main criteria for selection was the availability of third party funding and that in future this will again be important. All stations that are going to the next stage had this third party funding available. From recent comments in social media many locals clearly thought that when the Access for All was announced the schemes were going ahead when in reality all the announcement in 2024 actually said was that feasibility studies would be done for the stations listed. In part I must say I place the blame for this confusion on DfT. The headline of their announcement was "*Railway stations awarded Access for All accessibility funding*" so quite naturally the local media used those words in their headlines.

Myself and others have continued to press Network Rail to ensure that the rebuilding of Lincoln platform 1 goes ahead as planned in this control period.

We are also still waiting to hear that the resignalling between Hykeham and Lincoln is going 

ahead. To recap, this work was originally supposed to have been finished by now but wasn't even started due to a shortage of skilled engineers to plan and carry out the work.

Finally can I finish my report by thanking the branch officers and committee for their support during the past year and adding my usual plea for some new blood on the committee. Members will have noticed that more and more activity is carried out jointly with East Midlands branch. Active supporters in Lincolnshire have dwindled to such a low level that there may well soon come a time when a merger will have to be considered.

*David Harby*

## Hon. Secretary's Report for the 2026 AGM

From David's report you will have seen that it has been another busy year.

I have had no response to the request for nominations and so there will be no elections at the AGM, the officers, committee members and corresponding members will be elected "en bloc". However, if any member would like to volunteer for the committee at the meeting they can do so. It is very disappointing to keep reporting this lack of offers of taking part.

Two of our committee members have decided not to be re-elected this year, Anthony Berridge who was the Friends of the Barton Line and we welcome John Edwards as his replacement, and Graham Lilley who has provided some interesting topics for discussion during his time with us. So as the number of people reduces and the workload if anything increases, I make no apologies for repeating the invitation I made for more members to join us.

We have continued to respond to various consultations.

I hope to see many of you at the AGM on 21 March in Lincoln. At St Mary's Hall by the station.

The speaker at the AGM this year will be Neil Dibben former Chairman of the East Anglia Branch.

Last but not least many thanks to the committee for all the time and effort that they have put in under rather testing times.

Finally, a repeat of David's request for more members to join the committee to help spread the load.

I hope that you are all well and will enjoy an improving 2026.

Dr Don Peacock, Hon Secretary, 29 January 2026

*(Happy Chinese New Year, the Year of the Horse starts 17 February 2026)*

<b>Railfuture Lincolnshire Branch</b>					
<b>Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ending 31 December 2025</b>					
	Income			Expenditure	
	2024	2025		2024	2025
	£	£		£	£
Opening balance at 1 <sup>st</sup> January	650.90	214.10	Newsletter printing and distribution*	630.50	651.15
Funding from national funds*	500.00	780.00	AGM costs	55.90	40.00
Sales	20.00	0.00	Room hire	0.00	30.00
Donations	0.00	0.00	Campaigns:		
			Stand at Caistorrail	30.00	20.00
			Membership of BCCRP	5.00	0.00
			East Midlands rail priorities leaflet*	235.40	0.00
			Peterborough area leaflet	0.00	173.00
			Closing balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> December	214.10	79.95
	1,170.90	994.10		1,170.90	994.10

Notes:

*Funding available from national funds is agreed in advance but not credited to the branch account until (if) it is needed.*

*\* Newsletter and leaflets were produced jointly with East Midlands branch. Paid for by Lincolnshire branch with appropriate joint funding from national funds paid to Lincolnshire branch.*

## A look at station footfall in 2024-25

The annual station usage figures were released in December. These are for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. They are compiled for the Office of Rail and Road and there is a link to their data portal at the end of this article. Not only can you see the current statistical release but also a table of usage for each station going back as far as 1997.

In general, the picture is very mixed. Some stations were back almost to pre-Covid levels, with some even exceeding them, but for others the recovery is much slower. In the following paragraphs we have attempted to put some context to the figures.

On page 10 is a table listing the main stations in our area as well as a few smaller stations that have been included to illustrate points made in this article. We have compared 2024/25 with 2023/24 and 2019/20, which shows the recovery, or not in some cases, since before Covid. It must be borne in mind that these figures are for the period ending ten months ago so do not include summer 2025.

All our principal stations are now above pre-Covid numbers except for Derby which has been very slow to recover. Despite an increase of 610,594 from 2023/24 usage at Derby is still 113,354 below pre-Covid level.

Other stations that are yet to reach pre-Covid level are Mansfield, Belper, Scunthorpe, Stamford and Syston. Scunthorpe can probably be explained by the economic woes the area is suffering following contraction in the steel industry and demonstrates that the railway is not immune to outside influences.

The Robin Hood Line, Mansfield Woodhouse to Bulwell section is worthy of some detailed comment. The long-standing 2tph between Mansfield

Woodhouse and Nottingham was reduced to weekday peaks only in June 2021, with the hourly service only being reinstated on Saturdays from May 2023. The hourly service remains 0800-1700 on weekdays.

Overall, Mansfield Woodhouse–Bulwell

2024/25: 982,206

2023/24: 936,256

2019/20: 1,257,348

2018/19: 1,277,740

2017/18: 1,258,108

Traffic loss is significant for the Mansfield and Ashfield stations, Mansfield Woodhouse, Mansfield, Sutton Parkway & Kirkby-in-Ashfield which are the most affected by the frequency cut. The other station, Hucknall is served by NET, whilst Newstead and Bulwell were unaffected due to being only hourly.

Annual average footfall 2017-20: 970,137 (Mansfield Woodhouse, Mansfield, Sutton Parkway & Kirkby-in-Ashfield). Actual footfall 2024/25: 708,914. Loss: 261,223 (26.93%)

These statistics look pretty catastrophic to us. The big question is whether this line is costing the public purse a greater amount than before the frequency cut, due to revenue loss?

Both Skegness and Cleethorpes did well. This is somewhat surprising when, looking back at news headlines, we see that traders on the Lincolnshire coast were complaining of a poor summer. It would be interesting to see more detailed figures to see if the increase was on Butlins changeover days of Mondays and Fridays.

The rail replacement bus service every two hours between Scunthorpe and Doncaster returned to rail in December 2022 but this was still only two-hourly rather than the pre-Covid hourly service. ►

◀ As can be seen by the figures for Crowle, some passengers have returned but numbers are still not much more than half what they were in 2019/20. Locals tell us that the bus was very unpopular so, rather than rely on the bus, they found alternatives, with many driving to Thorne North to get the hourly train service from Hull. Clearly, this alternative is still preferable to the reinstated rail service.

The effect of EMR not reinstating all their services on Regional routes can be seen, with Burton Joyce being used to demonstrate how passenger numbers collapse when a regular service is replaced by fewer trains at irregular intervals. The final missing trains in the pre-Covid hourly Newark Castle to Crewe service were reinstated from December 2024 and the smaller stations benefit from the revised December 2025 timetable. It remains to be seen how quickly passengers return to the intermediate stations. If Crowle can be taken as an example, then recovery will be slow.

Hykeham was another station where recovery post-Covid was slow but now staff have returned to the office at the video game software company based near Hykeham station numbers are above pre-Covid levels. However, from conversations with passengers at Hykeham, there are still plenty of commuters from Hykeham to Newark and Nottingham who are hybrid working.

When 'commuters' are being discussed the assumption of many is that these are primarily paid workers. This is not always a correct assumption. Lincoln, Worksop, Saxilby and Gainsborough Lea Road, for example, have significant numbers of students as regular commuters and this goes some way to explain why those stations are now above

pre-Covid levels. No doubt readers will see other examples in their area in the ORR data table.

An exception to this assumption about students appears to be Newark Castle, which has a significant number of students using it. The explanation may be that the percentages used by the statisticians to determine the split between Newark Castle and Northgate for 'Newark stations' tickets is out of date.

Usage at Corby has continued to boom with 2024/25 numbers getting close to double those for 2019/2020. There is much housing growth at Corby and the twice-hourly EMR Connect electric service is now well established. Paradoxically, Kettering, which is also seeing much new housing, has seen only a modest increase. Having said that, Corby was starting from a low base compared with other stations in the area, such as Market Harborough and Wellingborough. The high level of usage at these stations is creditable considering the major fall in daily commuting since pre-Covid; this being more than offset by part-time commuting and leisure travel.

Two small stations in the Derby area are included in the table: Belper and Peartree. Belper has an all-day service on the Matlock branch, plus a small number of calls by main-line services to and from Sheffield. Peartree is in a built-up area on the south side of Derby but has a very sparse train service. Its usage comfortably exceeds pre-Covid levels but is still low. With more station calls it could achieve much more. Ironically, from December, EMR have withdrawn the Peartree calls from the two evening peak services from Nottingham to Crewe, rendering commuting to Derby and Nottingham no longer possible. We can expect that usage at Peartree will be very low indeed until a reasonable service is restored. ▶

<b>Estimates of station usage</b>			
<b>Station</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>
Barton-on-Humber	36,646	29,848	33,106
Beeston	574,304	518,670	606,570
Belper	236,080	180,154	219,184
Burton Joyce	15,330	11,014	13,392
Cleethorpes	274,032	252,632	307,184
Corby	301,588	498,620	561,182
Crowle	26,898	13,758	14,622
Derby	4,220,014	3,496,066	4,106,660
Doncaster	3,946,406	3,915,952	4,533,514
East Midlands Parkway	343,420	326,786	355,098
Elton & Orston	68	212	68
Gainsborough Lea Road	174,122	184,600	211,442
Grantham	1,390,648	1,278,244	1,484,114
Grimsby Town	432,356	385,812	438,712
Hinckley	349,874	302,284	377,764
Hykeham	183,026	157,070	208,754
Kettering	1,032,982	1,063,076	1,136,558
Leicester	5,322,728	5,303,830	5,527,136
Lincoln	1,966,100	2,059,670	2,286,040
Loughborough	1,331,286	1,287,300	1,421,786
Mansfield	395,920	313,788	323,412
Matlock	223,250	190,206	227,012
Market Harborough	898,058	882,598	943,468
Newark Castle	759,898	548,968	618,574
Newark Northgate	909,804	957,410	1,078,800
Nottingham	7,864,690	7,144,540	8,112,724

<b>Estimates of station usage</b>			
<b>Station</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>
Oakham	176,647	205,920	226,030
Peartree	3,892	4,354	5,256
Peterborough	4,934,692	4,720,686	5,299,726
Retford	541,674	546,108	602,590
Saxilby	75,654	76,254	93,894
Scunthorpe	396,638	325,412	379,072
Sileby	124,242	134,392	153,360
Skegness	323,202	358,304	397,520
Stamford	366,652	296,664	343,052
Syston	232,064	182,754	213,180
Uttoxeter	165,784	160,532	188,406
Wellingborough	917,400	867,608	980,522
Worksop	474,830	456,672	515,488

Finally, and ‘just a bit of fun’, as they say on election night TV coverage, is Elton & Orston. This is included as the least-used station in the joint Branches’ area. It became famous as the least-used station on the whole network in 2021/22, with only 40 entries and exits in the whole year, reflecting its deeply rural position and minimal train service. Usage had increased more than five-fold by 2023/24 as enthusiasts sought to show the station some love but has now fallen back to 2019/20 numbers.

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/>

*David Harby, Ian Clark  
and Steve Jones*



Two LNER colleagues at Grantham station have used their skills at handiwork to create a new welcome for passengers.

Station customer service assistants Phil Armstrong and Jez McLeish created a unique planter that is shaped like an LNER Azuma train. The planter, which has pride of place on Platform 1, was made mostly from recycled materials and is situated in the space formerly occupied by ticket barriers. (Source LNER)

## The half-empty glass

*NOTE: numbers in parentheses refer to sources.*

*Please email the editor for a pdf of these notes.*

And it came to pass... At the end of 2025 your writer was reflecting on the repeated 'pause' of further Midland Mainline (MML) electrification, so no surprise that a Biblical turn of phrase came to mind.

The pause was a surprise but not unpredictable. In 2023 Transport for East Midlands (1) hoped, 'We must ensure that bi-modes do not become a risk that mean that electrification is seen as a "nice to have" on the MML "one day" ...', yet this is what happened back in July 2025 (2). Your writer's Chesterfield MP (Toby Perkins) did at least get some minor consolation from rail minister Lord Hendy, who pointed out that at least July's spending review did not cancel the project entirely! A significant factor was that the Class 810 'Aurora' bi-mode trains now entering service *weakened* the case for electrification. This makes the writer wonder what the residents of Oxford, Swansea, Bath, Bristol and points south and west thereof are now thinking. In any case, the argument narrowly linking one particular stock to a route is flawed, as we shall see.

At least the pause caused other politicians to become more vocal in expressing their support for full MML electrification, notably MPs Abitsam Mohammed (Sheffield Central) (3) and Catherine Atkinson (Derby North) (4), as well as elected mayors Oliver Coppard (South Yorkshire) (5) and Peter Soulsby (Leicester) (6). Although Hendy was correct in saying 'There isn't enough money to do everything' (4), it was a question of priorities and that the MML did not rank high enough. This is despite the evidence of pausing being exactly the *wrong* strategy to use in order to keep costs down.

So what might these costs be? Your writer indulged in a back-of-spreadsheet calculation, using as his guide the Railway Industry Association (RIA)'s 2019 *Electrification Cost Challenge* report (7). This was produced as a response to the calamitous overspend of GWML electrification a decade ago, the fallout from which continues to cloud Government thinking about major projects (8). (Yes, even though there are more recent egregious examples, e.g. CrossRail and, an order of magnitude higher and still ongoing, HS2. Why do the Transport Secretary and her Department evidently have a selective memory? Is it that these latter projects serve London?) Anyway, in prices current at the time, the RIA's report suggested a cost of £1-1.5 million per single track kilometre (STkm) depending on complexity, with various Scottish schemes (of which more later) tending to be at the lower end while south of the border were higher.

There are, roundly, 377 STkm between Wigston South, Sheffield, and Nottingham, including loops and an allowance of 1km for each platform or through line and their approaches at major stations (Sheffield, Derby, Nottingham, and Leicester), but excluding any run-off / lead-in wiring to and from non-electrified routes at major junctions. However, as the RIA report points out, tunnels and stations tend to add complexity, so for cost purposes let's double the length of the tunnels and add another 1km for all the station platforms or through roads on the route. Doing so adds the equivalent of 75 STkm, giving a total of 452 STkm.

What does this mean for costs today? Figures for recent electrification are hard to come by but a *Rail* article (9) in December 2025 suggests £2m per STkm ►

◀ to electrify a short branch line. However, this would not be representative of a larger-scale, longer-term project, even less for the much-desired ‘rolling programme’ of electrification. Remember, too, that the most recent wiring of the MML from Market Harborough to Wigston South was done on time and *under* budget (10), so it *can* be done.

Meanwhile, Transport Scotland recently published its revised rail decarbonisation strategy (11) which, importantly, looks at track and train together for a target date of 2045. This contrasts with most routes in England and Wales where both a strategy and a target date have been lacking since

Network Rail’s landmark *Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS)* of 2020 (12). This has long-since been kicked into the DfT’s long grass,

although the RIA bravely attempted to revive interest in decarbonisation in April 2024 (13). No matter the source, all conclude that electrification is the preferred end-state over many routes – Transport Scotland says ‘Inter City and suburban’ which, if applied to the East Midlands, would cover most lines west of Lincoln. Nor should we forget freight routes, such as that from Immingham, for which there is no viable decarbonised alternative for traction over any significant distance. The remaining, smaller, part of the network would use battery-electric or battery-only technology. The RIA estimated that 67% of the network should eventually be



wired (rather less than *TDNS*), compared to the current 38-40%. Now that the admirable electrification of the south Wales valley lines has been completed, the only major project at present is the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade which involves more than electrification.

So why is more not currently being done, or even planned, especially as was widely reported at the time of pausing that further MML electrification is ‘shovel ready’? In their appearance before the Transport Select Committee (4) both Hendy and the DfT’s Alex Hynes were at pains to stress the need for an investment pipeline strategy, which will become easier to produce once track and train are once again integrated (as with Transport

Scotland) under Great British Railways (GBR). Hynes, formerly with ScotRail and Network Rail Scotland, notably illustrated this by highlighting

how successful Scottish rolling programme of electrification has been! In November 2025 he was appointed to ‘lead the next phase in the transition to GBR’ at the Department for Transport Operator Limited (DfTO) (14), so your writer hopes his expertise will be used to have GBR produce a decarbonisation strategy south of the border, akin to Transport Scotland’s *Strategy*.

We must recognise that, with so much catching-up to do, for the next couple of decades or more, rail will be in transition towards decarbonisation. Most major and many secondary routes carry a mix of Inter City, suburban, and freight traffic, so focussing too narrowly on one ▶

◀ kind of stock and one route (as was done for the MML pause, and continues to blinker the GWML) ignores the bigger picture. We must not lose sight of the goal and the benefits of creating an electrified *network* for passenger and freight beyond this or that *route* through suitable interconnections, with rolling stock cascaded as electrification is completed. Filling-in the gaps reduces the need for alternative traction – at additional cost – for a few miles between lines already electrified for services over much longer

distances. The DfT's *Network North* from 2023 (15) showed such ambition but sadly was unfunded. A start has to be made and where better than with the 'no regrets' (16) remainder of the MML?

A final thought: The current Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, enjoys an electric ride from her Swindon constituency to London, so how long will it be before the new GBR HQ in Derby is served by electric trains?

*Richard Bradford, December 2025*

*Photo previous page: Wires wanted: Soon after introduction to passenger service, Aurora Class 810 010 hurries south past Hasland with the 14:00 Sheffield to St Pancras International on 3 December 2025.*

Photo: © Richard Bradford

## ***How long will it be before the new GBR HQ in Derby is served by electric trains?***

### **Revised Nottingham station bridge restrictions**

East Midlands Railway (EMR) is to close access to platforms from Nottingham station's footbridge at weekends after data showed that a recent extension of restrictions led to a significant reduction in assaults and abuse towards both staff and customers.

In August, EMR restricted access to platforms via the footbridge between 7pm and 6am each day, replacing the previous 11pm to 5am window. It will now restrict access on weekends, closing at 7pm on Friday and reopening on Monday at 6am. Starting from February 6.

The company, which is part of Transport UK, will now further extend the restrictions to weekends after data showed a 45% drop in assaults and abuse on staff and customers during the closure times. The company also recorded a 38% reduction in slips, trips and falls.

Despite these changes, the footbridge will continue to serve as a public right of way 24/7, maintaining access between

Station Street and Queen's Road, including connections to the tram network.

EMR will also retain the ability to open the gates during major events, times of crowding, or in response to emergencies, ensuring operational flexibility.

Putting these restrictions in place and routing customers through the ticket gates also helps to protect railway revenue – ultimately reducing the financial burden on taxpayers – while also delivering clear improvements in safety, station security and the overall customer experience.

In response to earlier feedback from customers, local businesses, and community stakeholders, EMR has introduced improvements such as clearer signage, enhanced wayfinding and updated guidance for those accessing nearby taxi ranks and services.

The company continues to work closely with local partners to ensure any impacts from the changes are well managed and that mitigation measures remain effective.

*Source: EMR*

## LNER don't care about local commuters

"LNER don't care about local commuters" was one of the less critical comments I've heard about LNER since the new ECML timetable was introduced last December. Most comments have come from passengers and their families who have found travelling for work and education between Retford, Newark Northgate and Grantham varying between difficult and impossible.

To put their complaints into context, there are now no direct weekday trains at all from Newark Northgate to Retford after the 07:12! In the other direction it must be difficult to believe, but if you want a direct train between Retford and Newark you have to wait until 22:00. From Newark Northgate to Grantham, if the 15:45 is too early, passengers face a three-hour wait until the next one at 18:45. In the other direction there are no trains between 0756 and 09:55 and it is even worse in the afternoon, with another three-hour gap between 15:54 and 19:17.

This is especially annoying for Newark, where the £15.4 million Air and Space Institute opened last year. This Air and Space Institute is a unique opportunity for school leavers to train for pilot, engineer and ground-crew roles in the air and space sector.

Peterborough to London commuters who want a fast LNER train are also complaining loudly. They used to have a choice of 07:20, 07:40 and 07:49, giving a convenient arrival for a 09:00 work start. Now they have the 07:12 arriving Kings Cross at 08:01 and 07:34 arriving 08:30. The next train after that is the 08:14 from Peterborough. Not surprisingly, most commuters are now wishing to use the

07:34 and if you are a commuter from Spalding this is your only option. Reports are that this 07:34 train is now heavily overcrowded – a situation made worse by it being one of the Class 91 loco-hauled trains which have been reduced to seven carriages so it can match the Azuma timings.

Who is actually to blame for this state of affairs, where adding an extra train every hour and prioritising long-distance passengers paying higher fares (though a 12-month Peterborough to London zones 1-6 season ticket is no bargain at £11,036) means commuters are facing an inferior service, is not a simple answer. Is it the DfT, who procured the Azuma fleet with the intention of running a more intensive service to the detriment of commuters? Is it ORR, who allocated extra paths to Open Access bidders in the face of objections from DfT, or is it LNER, who are under pressure to raise as much revenue as possible?

Whoever is actually to blame, commuters are in no doubt that the culprit is LNER and that the new timetable is designed to ignore the needs of local travellers. LNER have already told representatives of Peterborough commuters that they will look to see if some changes can be made in a future timetable, but we have seen no such promises made to commuters between Grantham, Newark and Retford. Even if changes are made, they will be at least six months away, more likely 18 months, and by that time will there be any passengers left who want to make local journeys?

Last minute update: At Peterborough LNER are stopping a Newcastle to Kings Cross service at 07:42.

*David Harby*

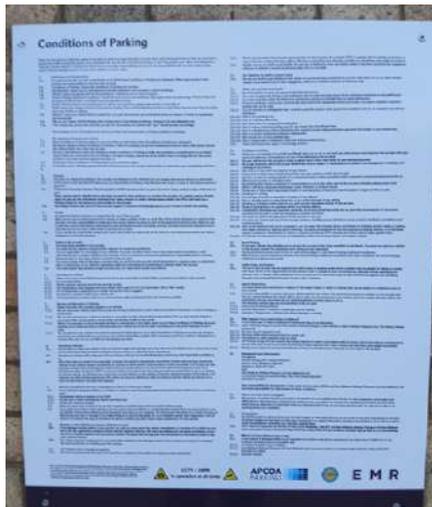
***Whoever is actually to blame, commuters are in no doubt that the culprit is LNER***

## New car park provider for EMR – the need to speed-read is essential

East Midlands Railway (EMR) have appointed APCOA Parking (UK) Ltd to operate their paid for car parks. Right is a copy of the Conditions of Parking. To save you finding a magnifying glass the first words are: “These are the terms on which you agree to use this car park. It is important that you read them and understand them”

To read through that lot on your way to get your train clearly you must have an incredible ability to speed-read or plan to arrive 30 minutes before your train departs!

*David Harby*



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### FUTURE LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Wednesday, 22 April, 15 July and 14 October 2026. Venues to be arranged.

Non committee members are welcome to attend as observers.

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