

# EMR December 2020 Timetable Consultation

## Response from Railfuture

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### Introduction

Set out below is the combined response of Railfuture to Abellio East Midlands Railway's (EMR) consultation on the December 2020 timetable.

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities.

We recognise that the focus of this consultation is the Midland Main Line and we welcome the continued investment in and development of the route. We seek further enhancements to the East Midlands regional rail network and recognise that, though some improvements are planned for December 2020, more significant enhancements are planned for December 2021. Our comments are given for each of the three sectors of EMR's services, with a summary response, more detail where necessary, and comments on longer-term developments we wish to see.

### EMR INTERCITY

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#### Summary

- We welcome the promised improvements including faster journeys, more consistent patterns of departure times, greater connection opportunities, and earlier morning and later evening services. Subject to the detailed comments below, we welcome the standard-pattern timetable, which passengers and staff will more easily be able to carry in their heads, such that operation becomes second nature.
- We welcome the promised uplift in capacity.
- We welcome earlier morning services, with particular reference to the need for weekday first-train arrivals in the main cities from all directions to be by 08:30 at the very latest.

#### Detail

- We note the segregation of the **Sheffield** and **Nottingham** services and welcome the resulting better spread of departures for intermediate stations, with reduced 'bunching'. In particular, we anticipate that **East Midlands Parkway** will have a more even spread of Intercity departures in both directions each hour.
- We welcome the doubling to two trains per hour (2tph) of intercity calls at **Kettering**, restoring good connectivity to **Leicester**. This is also an important mitigation for the planned loss of through services from **Wellingborough**, **Bedford**, **Luton** and **Luton Airport Parkway**. We look for good connection times at **Leicester** between the **Nottingham** and **Sheffield** services for those passengers changing there.
- We note that the **Kettering** calls will be on the two **Nottingham** services and suggest that consideration be given to transferring one of these calls to the **Sheffield** semi-fast train in place of the **Nottingham** fast. This would both:
  - Give **Kettering** direct services on the **Derby** and **Sheffield** route, and
  - Aid the long-held aspiration for 'Nottingham in 90' by removing the Kettering call, though retaining the hourly non-stop services between **St Pancras** and **Market Harborough**.

We note, however, that this would reduce intermediate connectivity for **Market Harborough** to 1tph from **Kettering**, which would be a significant disadvantage. It would also reduce non-stop

**St Pancras to Leicester** services to 1tph. We note the comment in the FAQs section of the consultation document about bunching of **Sheffield** and **Nottingham** services if the former called at **Kettering**. However, we assume that the normal departure pattern from St Pancras each half-hour will be the **Sheffield** train first, closely followed by the **Nottingham** train. We therefore suggest that the order of departures for one such pair of trains each hour could be reversed, such that the **Nottingham** fast train departed just ahead of the **Sheffield** semi-fast, with the former running non-stop to **Market Harborough** (as now) and the latter calling at **Kettering**. This would accommodate the above aspirations while avoiding having a train waiting at **Kettering** behind another further ahead. We recognise that an even calling pattern at **Kettering** is important, especially given its interchange status with the EMR Electrics services.

- Removing all Intercity calls south of **Kettering** will speed journeys for stations directly served by Intercity but will add inconvenience and extended journey times for those requiring intermediate stations. A passenger travelling between, say, **Derby** and **Luton Airport Parkway**, will have to change trains twice; this will be a significant disincentive for rail travel compared with the directly parallel M1. **Luton Airport Parkway** is both an important destination and an important interchange point for those requiring Thameslink destinations north of London. We therefore ask that consideration be given to:
  - Retaining some Intercity calls at **Luton Airport Parkway**, ideally all day, but at the very least at the start and end of the day and, if possible, during the weekday peaks. They could perhaps be set down only southbound and pick up only northbound. We suggest that the Sheffield semi-fast service would be the optimum train for Intercity calls at **Luton Airport Parkway**.
  - Optimising the interchange arrangements at **Kettering**. If practicable, the Corby Electrics could run wrong line through **Kettering**; northbound on platform 1 and southbound on platform 2. This would allow cross-platform interchange in the up direction, and passengers alighting from down trains at **Kettering** would have a swift exit from the station.
  - We note that compliance with the DfT's June 2018 Invitation to Tender (ITT) train service requirement (TSR1) for peak services calling at **Wellingborough** and **Leicester** is deemed to be met by means of the interchange between EMR Electrics and Intercity services at **Kettering**. However, we remain of the view that there should be some through services, at least northbound in the morning peak should it prove impracticable for southbound afternoon services. We ask that consideration be given to the retention of some Leicester direct services from **Wellingborough** and **Bedford**, as well as **Luton Airport Parkway** throughout the day for business and leisure journeys.
- We welcome the general improvement in the spread of departures for all stations on the Intercity route, addressing some of the gaps in the service – especially in the evening peak from London – that have been a concern for some years.
- We welcome the later last services south from **Nottingham** and **Leicester** for intermediate stations such as **Market Harborough** and **Kettering** (*'over 20 minutes'* later than now). However, this is still too early for much of the evening entertainment market in the regional cities and we therefore seek later last southbound trains. These need not run through to London. However, the consultation mentions (page 10) *'...the final service to depart Sheffield [is] planned to be over one hour later than the present final service'*. Additional calls at stations south of **Leicester** on such a late evening service would be welcome.

- We recommend that consideration be given to extending some **St Pancras – Sheffield** services through to **Leeds** via **Barnsley**, ideally at least 1tph. This would go some way towards addressing **Leicester's** current status as one of Britain's worst-connected cities!
- We note the comment on page 28 of the consultation document about Intercity calls at **Belper**. However, we recommend that some of the **Sheffield** semi-fast trains call there; say, one every two or three hours. End-to-end journey times are less of a priority for these trains and we feel there is a potential market for northward travel from **Belper**.
- Similarly, we note the loss of through trains between **Alfreton** and **Langley Mill** and St Pancras, and we understand the reason for this. However, we welcome the promise of a morning **Sheffield to Nottingham** train serving these stations. We trust that good connections will be available, in both directions, at **Nottingham** with Intercity services. We also feel connectional opportunities with EMR Intercity at **Chesterfield** should be available for **Alfreton** and **Langley Mill**.
- There is no mention of Sunday timetables for Intercity. An earlier first northbound departure for stations south of **Leicester** is needed, at least sufficient to allow connection into the equivalent of the present 10:20 **Leicester** to **York** service. (Forward extension of this service to start from south of **Leicester** - at least **Kettering** and calling at **Market Harborough** - would be a good solution.)
- There is no mention of catering. We trust that catering will be at least equivalent to that on offer at present on Intercity.

#### For the longer term

- We recognise the advantages of eventually having a standard Intercity fleet in the form of the 33 x 5-car Hitachi bi-mode trains now on order. With all trains the same, any working can substitute for any other at short notice.
- However, we question whether the planned Intercity fleet of 165 carriages (33 x 5-car) will be sufficient to accommodate future growth. The main requirement will be at least for all peak services to be formed of double units (10 cars). We recognise the constraint imposed by platform lengths at St Pancras in terms of longer train formations. We also trust that the interior fit-out of these trains will be of a high standard and will have the optimum ratio of First to Standard Class accommodation as well as sufficient space for luggage and premium parcels.
- Though recognising the benefits that the new bi-mode fleet will bring to the entire route, we will continue to press for full electrification to Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield plus extensions to Moorthorpe (for Leeds) and Doncaster to link with existing electrification there. Indeed, we note the pre-election promise of Midland Main Line electrification made by Boris Johnson and will expect him to honour that as Prime Minister!
- We support a recommendation made elsewhere for consideration of an experimental off-peak **St Pancras – Luton – Bedford - Wellingborough - Leicester – Derby** service. However, as part of the aspiration for improved connectivity between the East Midlands and the North West, we would welcome consideration of whether such a service might usefully be extended from Derby, either to Crewe (or perhaps beyond, either to Chester or Liverpool), or via Stoke on Trent to Manchester. Calling at **East Midlands Parkway** would also provide airport access for the Stoke on Trent conurbation. We recognise that infrastructure investment would be needed for any such northward service extensions.

- We look for further enhancements of the service north of **Corby** to serve **Oakham** and **Melton**.
- We recommend that consideration be given to a peak weekday service from Nuneaton, **Hinckley** and **Narborough** to St Pancras (bypassing Leicester), with a corresponding evening peak return. This would serve a rapidly growing catchment area. A popular way to travel to London from this part of South Leicestershire is not into and out of Leicester but by car via Rugby, Stanmore and other places, or even all the way by car. This represents a loss of potential business for EMR.
- We pose the question whether joining and splitting of trains at **Kettering** or **Leicester** may allow a greater frequency of direct services while making optimum use of scarce paths at the London end of the route. In suggesting this, we fully recognise that there are implications for service reliability and resilience, in terms both of rolling stock and traincrew.
- We note the very recent (30<sup>th</sup> January 2020) announcement that **Bedford Midland** station is to be the interchange point between the Midland Main Line and East-West Rail (Oxford – Cambridge). This will raise questions in future years regarding stopping patterns for EMR Intercity services.

### EMR ELECTRICS

#### Summary

- We support the proposals, and particularly welcome:
  - The major uplift in frequency and capacity on the **London – Corby** route.
  - The resumption of peak calls at **Bedford** and **Luton**, and fully at **Luton Airport Parkway**.
  - The introduction by means of this service of a ‘London Luton Airport Express’.
  - The associated withdrawal of the Thameslink Express services, allowing Thameslink to resume their normal stopping pattern for **Flitwick**, **Leagrave** and **Harpenden**.
- We are concerned that the Class 360 fleet will not have been fully refurbished in time for introduction of the EMR Electrics service, though we recognise that this is caused by factors beyond EMR’s direct control. We trust that the refurbishment will be done as soon as possible and to a high standard, reflecting the longer distance of the end-to-end journey and the need for sufficient luggage space for **Luton Airport** traffic. We are therefore keen that the inauguration of the EMR Electrics service takes place in December 2020 as planned and is not delayed.

#### Detail

- We recognise that the proposals give **Corby** a significantly improved service, both direct to London and by means of improved interchange at **Kettering** to Intercity services northwards.
- **Kettering**: see above comment about ‘wrong-line’ working at **Kettering** for the Electrics to allow cross-platform southbound interchange with Intercity services (via platforms 2 and 3) and ease of exit at **Kettering** for those arriving on northbound Electrics services (platform 1).
- We welcome the introduction of a regular Sunday through service between London and **Corby**.
- We welcome the continuation of services north of **Corby** to serve **Oakham** and **Melton**.
- For travel between **Kettering** and London, passengers are likely to prefer the Intercity services to the Electrics, which could lead to overcrowding of intercity trains. Given the capacity the Electrics services will offer, we wonder whether there will be any fares incentive for **Kettering**

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passengers to use these services to and from London. This might also require some change to **Corby** and **Wellingborough** fares.

### For the longer term

- We support calls made elsewhere for additional stations on the route to serve areas of substantial new housing, particularly **Great Oakley** (south of Corby), and **Burton Latimer** (south of Kettering). Additional locations that have been mooted include a '**Rushden Parkway**' south of Wellingborough and **Milton Ernest**, north of Bedford, though the latter may be better served by an extended Thameslink service.
- We look forward to East-West Rail opening between Oxford, Bedford and Cambridge, with good interchange with EMR services at **Bedford**.
- We ask that the benefits (and disadvantages) of adding **St Albans** stops to the Corby Electrics service at some point after December 2020 be fully analysed.

## EMR REGIONAL

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### Summary

We welcome the various improvements promised for December 2020 but note that the main improvements to Regional services are planned for December 2021.

We welcome the planned increase in rolling stock capacity and the transition to entirely Turbostar-operated EMR Regional services.

Below, we comment on the proposals for individual routes, with longer-term aspirations identified in *italics*.

### Detail

#### **Nottingham – Worksop**

- We welcome the consistent hourly service between **Nottingham** and **Worksop**.
- We welcome extension of the final Saturday evening service to **Worksop**.
- *Longer term, we advocate the extension of the **Mansfield Woodhouse** services to **Ollerton**, with additional intermediate stations at **Warsop** and **Edwinstowe**.*

#### **Nottingham – Derby (- Matlock)**

- We welcome the increase in frequency from three to four trains per hour, ensuring that **Attenborough**, **Beeston** and **Long Eaton** gain an additional service each hour.
- We welcome the promised better connections to and from **Matlock** into London services at **Derby**.
- *Longer term, services between **Derby** and **Matlock** should be increased to 2tph; though we note that this will require infrastructure investment on the branch.*

#### **Leicester – Nottingham – Lincoln (- Grimsby)**

- We welcome the later evening services between **Nottingham** and **Leicester**.

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- We welcome the extension to **Grimsby Town** every 2 hours. This should include an arrival at **Lincoln** from **Grimsby** at around 08.30. We expect to see these services extend to **Grimsby** 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year.
- We welcome more evening services to **Newark Castle** from **Nottingham** and **Lincoln**.
- We would wish to see a **Nottingham** to **Lincoln** service arriving at **Lincoln** at around 08.30 Monday to Saturday.
- Detailed comment on **Nottingham** to **Lincoln** based on the assumption that times will remain similar to now:
  - All services including the extra **Lincoln** to **St Pancras** service should stop at **Hykeham** and **Collingham**. **Hykeham** has grown considerably since the current stopping pattern was planned and now has usage of over 176,000 passengers a year. With a population of at least 40,000 living within 3km of the station and new homes being occupied every week, this must surely justify an hourly service.
  - The Sunday service is currently illogical, with only two of the first five services stopping at **Hykeham** and **Collingham** and then all later services stopping. All services should stop at these stations.
  - With the introduction of the LNER **Lincoln** to **Kings Cross** service, the opportunity is there for a complete revision of the **Lincoln** to **Newark Northgate** service. All trains should call at **Hykeham** and **Collingham**. It is completely unreasonable to expect passengers from **Hykeham** either to have to travel into **Lincoln**, with all the traffic delays, for an ECML connection, or walk for 20 minutes between **Newark Castle** and **Northgate** stations. There has been rapid expansion of office and industrial development around **Hykeham** station and, given the amount of outstanding planning permissions, this will continue. We regularly hear of business visitors to **Hykeham** having to travel from **Newark Northgate** by taxi because of the lack of a rail connection.
- *Longer term, we would wish to see the **Leicester – Nottingham** section of this route operate with 2tph, to provide a ‘metro’ level of service for intermediate stations between the two main cities.*

#### Derby – Crewe

- We welcome extension to **Newark Castle** but would wish to see this extended to **Lincoln** in the future.
- We welcome later weekday evening services.
- *Longer term, we see this route as offering great potential to improve connectivity between the East Midlands and the North West. Consideration should be given to extending this service beyond **Crewe** to **Chester** or **Liverpool**, or both, to improve connectivity between the East Midlands and the North West. Similarly, we recommend consideration of **Manchester** as an alternative destination after **Stoke-on-Trent**. We recognise that any such service extensions would require investment in infrastructure upgrades and are therefore long term.*

#### Nottingham – Grantham – Skegness

- We welcome the intention to run the summer services to **Skegness** throughout the year.
- We welcome additional peak services between **Nottingham** and **Grantham**.
- We welcome later evening weekday services.

### Liverpool Lime Street – Nottingham - Norwich

- We welcome the additional late-night service from **Manchester Piccadilly** to **Nottingham**.
- We welcome an early morning **Nottingham - Norwich** service starting back at **Sheffield**, as well as evening services from **Norwich** running through to **Sheffield**, and a later **Norwich** to **Nottingham** service.
- We would wish to see an earlier service to **Norwich** on Sundays, especially to enable day trips that are not possible at present.
- We would welcome selective additional calls by EMR Regional services at **Ilkeston** and **Langley Mill**, to widen journey opportunities and provide some service resilience at stations whose service reliability has become very poor and whose usage has declined accordingly.
- *Longer term, we have concerns over the loss of through services on this axis and would advocate an overlap of any split service between at least **Nottingham** and **Sheffield** (i.e. Liverpool – Nottingham and Sheffield - Norwich), though we note current plans for the Norwich portion to run via Nottingham to Derby from December 2021. We seek assurance that any inconvenience to through passengers arising from a split in service will be mitigated through smooth interchange facilities and short connecting times.*

### Doncaster - Peterborough

- Welcome a more evenly balanced service throughout the day.
- We are disappointed to see no mention of Sunday services.

Ends.

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**Railfuture**  
**February 2020**

#### **For further information:**

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