

SixShiresRail

Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland

Newsletter for Railfuture East Midlands
& Lincolnshire branches

railfuture

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

The announcement of a general election on 4 July has prompted me to attempt to publish SixShiresRail number 4 somewhat earlier than usual, rather than at the end of the month which would be only a few days before polling day. As you will see in this edition, there is a wealth of assistance for readers wishing to lobby prospective candidates about issues regarding our railways and I hope you receive your copy in good time to take action.

When dealing with politicians at local and national levels, I generally get the impression that they are unaware of the workings of the rail industry when they propose, often 'vanity', ideas. The article on page 6 uses a presentation from Northern to explain the many complicated issues that are involved in making timetable changes. Reproducing the powerpoint images into print has not been very successful and I apologise for the lack of clarity. Contributors to SixShiresRail are reminded that ideally photographs and graphics should be submitted as jpg files and there is no need to spend time arranging text matter with illustrations into various Word formats (docx, odt) as I strip out text prior to importing in my publishing programme.

The articles on decarbonising our railway and on electrification, are pertinent to any future policies of a new government, and I hope readers can enlighten our candidates on the workings of our railways. *Phil Mason*

General Election Lobbying now is the time to start

*A message from the chairs of
East Midlands and
Lincolnshire branches*



We don't need to remind readers that there is going to be a general election on 4 July. Now is the time to start asking candidates for their opinions on rail issues.

From our experience many of them will have given little thought to rail. Even when they have been elected, rail is often nowhere near the top of their priorities or interests so a letter from a voter at this time will encourage them to think about the issues.

Individual letters from voters also have a lot more effect than letters from a Railfuture branch covering a wide area so we are now urging you to get busy contacting your own prospective candidates. To help you do this we have put together a crib sheet of suggested questions. We are not suggesting you necessarily ask all of the questions. Selecting just 2 or 3 that interest you might be more effective.

In addition to selecting from these questions, you might like to lobby for any local issues you have. Things such as 'Access for All' lifts at Sleaford and better access at Bingham and Melton Mowbray. When selecting these it is worth bearing in mind that an MP is elected for a maximum of 5 years so they are going to be looking for issues they can promote that will be completed or well on ▶

◀ the way to completion by the time they are asking for you to re-elect them so they can boast about their success in their next election leaflets. This is not to say you shouldn't also ask for their support for your local realistic reopening campaign if you have one.

To find details of your local candidate we suggest looking at the “who can I vote for” web-site:

<https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/ppcs/details/?region=East+Midlands>

If you don't find time to write before the election, a letter to the newly elected MP is just as good. It will help to put pressure on whichever party is in power to implement their promises on rail.

*Phil Thomas, Chair East Midlands branch;
David Harby, Chair Lincolnshire branch.*

Railfuture Lincolnshire and East Midlands Branches – General Election crib sheet

This crib sheet is designed to help frame questions to general election candidates. It lists some general themes that apply across the two branches. Additional local issues that apply to a particular route or station can be added to provide local context to these issues.

East Midlands Franchise commitments

The current East Midlands Railway franchise included a commitment to provide an hourly service on all routes. This commitment has not been met on a number of routes including:

- Peterborough–Lincoln–Doncaster
- Lincoln–Grimsby
- Lincoln–Newark Northgate (service integrated with LNER)

Sunday services were also promised on a number of routes including:

- Cleethorpes – Barton on Humber
- Nottingham to Worksop (Sunday services currently run to Mansfield)

- Nottingham to Leicester local services

Reasons for this include lack of decision making by Ministers on approving expenditure on rolling stock and staff.

The franchise runs until 2030 and passengers can't wait until new agreements are in place.

Question – how will you ensure the franchise meets it's requirements?

Freight Traffic

There are a growing number of freight trains in the region, both serving local terminals such as the Doncaster i-Port and East Midlands Gateway, and passing through the region. These trains are essential for getting lorries off the road and help meet climate change requirements (rail freight uses 75% less energy than freight by roads according to Government figures). There is no current alternative to diesel lorries. Electric lorries may require expensive upgrades to bridges to carry the extra weight, or have restricted range or loading.

Future rail freight growth will depend on additional infrastructure to allow extra and longer services to run. Key pinch points include Leicester and Ely.

Question – how will you ensure that these improvements are delivered in a timely manner?

Need for long term and big picture thinking

The Government is meant to publish an annual schedule of project funding as part of the “delivery pipeline”. A schedule has not been issued for several years. There is also a tendency to treat each project as a standalone item rather than part of a bigger picture or long term strategy. This results in additional costs and delays for projects.

An example of this is the Manchester to Sheffield route where £150m has been ▶

spent on upgrading the route to allow for additional trains. However these are unable to run as other infrastructure work at each end of the route has not been approved.

To get to zero carbon emissions, there is a need to either electrify routes or introduce battery or hydrogen trains. Either option requires key decisions to be made regarding future rolling stock and in the case of hydrogen trains the development of a national hydrogen network.

Question – what are your long term aspirations for the railways in terms of passenger numbers and amount of freight and how will you ensure decisions are made in a timely way?

Linking planning and transport

There are plans for new housing in many towns and villages. The transport impact of new developments must be considered. New development should be prioritised close to railway stations and/or have a suitable bus service. Developers should be required to contribute to improvements at the local station via S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments. Political parties have expressed a desire to reform planning laws, but this is often about speeding up development rather than making it more sustainable.

Question – what changes to planning rules would you make to improve the transport sustainability of development?

Accessible and passenger friendly train service

There are many examples of good practice around the country but passenger experience is inconsistent. For example; trains with pushchair spaces in Liverpool, level boarding trains and virtual station tours in East Anglia, screens with sign language on some LNER stations and station buildings in

community use. These need to be rolled out across the country. On the other hands there are many stations with poor access and limited shelter. Changing Places toilets are required at key stations.

Question – how will you put pressure on train companies and the Government to improve services and station facilities?

Summer services to Skegness

Unsatisfactory summer services to Skegness have been with us for almost as long as Railfuture, Railway Development Society and Railway Invigoration Society before that have been in existence. For most of that time train operators have struggled to cope with demand, but usually due to reasons outside of their control they have failed.

In recent times EMR, and EMT before them, have never had access to an adequate amount of rolling stock. Last year was particularly difficult for East Midlands Railway (EMR) because they had lost their class 180s and the cascade of 170s to EMR was running late. This resulted in EMR effectively having to also become a bus operator for the 2023 summer peak.

Readers will be pleased to hear that this year EMR have more rolling stock available and they plan to have 40% more seat capacity than they had last year. This means that the busy services on weekdays, as well as Saturdays, will be operated by 5-car class 170s. There will also be some 4-car class 158 services. A benefit of the advance booking system in operation in 2023 is that EMR have been able to identify the services with the highest demand and it is these that will be 5-car in 2024. The two services from/to Derby will also again operate.

The plan does not include timetabled rail replacement buses this year, but there ▶

◀ will be buses on standby to use if needed.

Advance booking will be available as it was last year and separate queuing systems for pre booked and on the day purchases will again be in place at Nottingham and Skegness. There was some criticism of this system last year but on the plus side this does mean those who are less able and families with young children do have the opportunity to book ahead, and board the train before they are pushed aside by those young and fit individuals who have no regard for anyone but themselves. Behaviour that the writer often sees when boarding evening commuter services at Nottingham, Lincoln and Sheffield!

There is a dedicated passenger information webpage at <https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/summer-skegness>

David Harby

East Midlands gets just four Access for All upgrades between 2024-2029

Just after the election was announced, DfT issued the list of Access for All station upgrades in the current Control Period of 2024 – 2029. The East Midlands gets upgrades at Chinley, Sileby, Sleaford and Stamford. They are all ones that have been needed for a long time but it is just four out of 50 on the list. East Midlands near the bottom where transport funding is being distributed but that is nothing new.

The full list can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/railway-stations-awarded-access-for-all-accessibility-funding>

David Harby

Help – EMR, We have a problem

My local station is Hykeham which although it has 120.000 plus passengers a year is unmanned. There is a ticket machine, Smartkiosk, in the car park which includes a train running information screen plus an information totem giving, usually but not always, the same information.

On the platforms there is a very poor provision of waiting shelters and both platforms, staggered either side of a level crossing, have so called ‘Help Points.’ The car park is situated adjacent to the Lincoln bound track meaning that to get to or from the Nottingham bound platform passengers have to use the level crossing.

I was doing passenger surveys for East Midlands Railways (EMR) on Saturday 11 May and chose to start with the 11:42 to Leicester. Having checked the EMR website prior to starting I saw that the previous train to Leicester had been cancelled owing to a unit failure so I anticipated problems.

On arrival onto the platform some of the passengers were those stranded by the previous cancellation, but I was then amazed at the numbers arriving onto the platform and was unable to survey all of them as passengers were eager to tell me of the problems they have when using Hykeham.

Some were unaware of the existence of the information screens in the car park, as a lot of passengers walk from Hykeham and don’t go near the car park, and when informed about them said they were a poor substitute for the previous information screens that were on the platforms, and of course if the train was delayed and you went to look at the screens you could get stranded the wrong side of the barriers and miss the train. ▶

◀ Some had already tried to use the 'Help Point' but said that it just kept ringing and was not answered. Regulars told me this was the norm if anything went wrong.

I had checked and found that the 11:42 was scheduled as a 2-car unit that was reported full and standing leaving Grimsby and was eight minutes late by Barnetby. I warned passengers that there was a very good chance that they would not be able to board the train when it eventually arrived. By the time the train did arrive there were 63 passengers waiting to board, on Saturdays the 09:45, 10:42 and 11:41 usually have between 25 and 35 passengers waiting to board and these trains usually leave Hykeham full and standing, and on arrival the guard of the 11:41 refused to let anyone get on. After a few harsh words from both the passengers and the guard, passengers who had pushed on got off as the guard assured them that a bus would arrive in fifteen minutes to pick them up.

As I was present I was able to tell those 7/8 passengers waiting to go to Newark that there was a Northgate train due in fifteen minutes. This arrived on time and those passengers boarded but on chatting to the guard he told me that the bus referred to by the 11:41 guard had gone direct from Lincoln to Nottingham but that the following Lincoln to Leicester train was a 3-car unit.

By now I was interviewing passengers for the 12:42 to Leicester, two of whom were a mother and daughter travelling to Manchester Airport. How would they have coped if they had been waiting for the 10:42, cancelled, then denied boarding on the 11:41. The 12:42 eventually arrived at 12:52, delayed at Lincoln waiting for a driver,

and all waiting boarded, but I estimate that of the 63 waiting for the 11:41, 50 had gone home.

It seems to me that Hykeham is off the radar for EMR and the way the passengers were treated was, at best, poor! Talking to passengers on Saturday their main complaints were about overcrowding and regularly having to stand both ways and they thought it was poor value for money not having a seat for a 45 minute journey. I again surveyed on Saturday 18 May and the 11:41 left full and rammed with standing passengers with 38 passengers boarding and the 12:42 had 26 passengers boarding and left full and standing, both 2-car units. My survey stint on Sunday 19 May allowed me to talk to a couple who were going to Newark who told me that they used to go to Nottingham on most Saturdays but had given up on that as they were not prepared to stand both ways, assuming that they could get on.

Is it really too much to ask for information for passengers to be available on the platform and for some sort of system to be in place for when things go wrong, especially as in this case when EMR knew at 09:35, which is when the unit failed at Nottingham, leading to the cancellation of the 10:42? Also, when you have a 'Help Point' that help is actually available!

Chris Brown, Lincolnshire Branch committee



Hykeham, Internet image.

Timetable change – why does it take so long?

Why can't we have more frequent trains, earlier morning or later evening trains, more trains stopping at my local station or even a completely new service such as Leicester to Manchester? Questions like these are frequently asked. Northern recently held a timetable consultation meeting where one agenda item gave us some insight into the tremendous amount of work that is needed to arrange even a simple timetable change.

For any stakeholder aspiration the first stage is to do a financial/economic evaluation. The sort of questions that have to be answered are: Is there evidence that the service would be used? How much would it cost to run the service (e.g. Unit lease costs, fuel, traincrew, maintenance, track and station access charges)? Calculate the wider economic benefits (e.g. time savings, modal shift from cars, enabling new housing or industrial development and local jobs created as a result of a better rail service).

When all these figures have been calculated it is very likely that the direct costs will exceed the estimated revenue so any overall positive benefit will come from the wider economic benefits. The Train Operating Company (TOC) will therefore require additional funding to operate the service, so the funder will also need to be satisfied that it meets their strategic priorities.

When the change is approved in principle and the likely funding identified the real hard work of organising the timetable change then starts. This process is outlined in the flowchart accompanying this article.

The very first stage is to see if there is actual capacity to fit the changes into the timetable. Is there space in the timetable for any extra services? For example if

extra stops are to be added will there be any conflicts at junctions or at stations? At a busy station such as Nottingham it may be that a five minute later arrival would mean the platform is already occupied by another service. If the train is to have an extra carriage added to cope with increased demand will it fit the platforms? For example the 2-car units operating the Leeds – Lincoln / Nottingham service use platform 17 at Leeds and currently this platform is unable to accept 3-car units on this service.

If earlier or later services are planned will the route be open or will it need a change to the signal box opening hours. An example of this is that the current Cleethorpes to Sheffield service has to leave Cleethorpes at 13:20 so as to be clear of the Barnetby to Gainsborough section before the signal boxes close for the afternoon shift.

This diagram shows how complicated the train paths are on the Leeds to Sheffield route. Not in the East Midlands, but we have plenty that are just as complicated. If the plan is not robust and there are too many risks of punctuality declining the changes will not take place, which is exactly what has just happened with the proposed East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable for December 2024.

Assuming the timetable will work, then there are still plenty of other elements that could stop the changes being introduced. Does the TOC have enough units to operate an additional service? – Currently Northern have no spare diesel units and there are no diesel units available to lease anywhere in the country.

What effect will the change have on train crew diagrams? – For example: if extra stops means the train arrives at Nottingham 10 minutes later and the conductor on that service currently only ►

has an 8 minute allowance before his next duty then clearly their whole work diagram for the day will need to change. Can an earlier or later time still fit in with maximum working hour regulations for the driver?

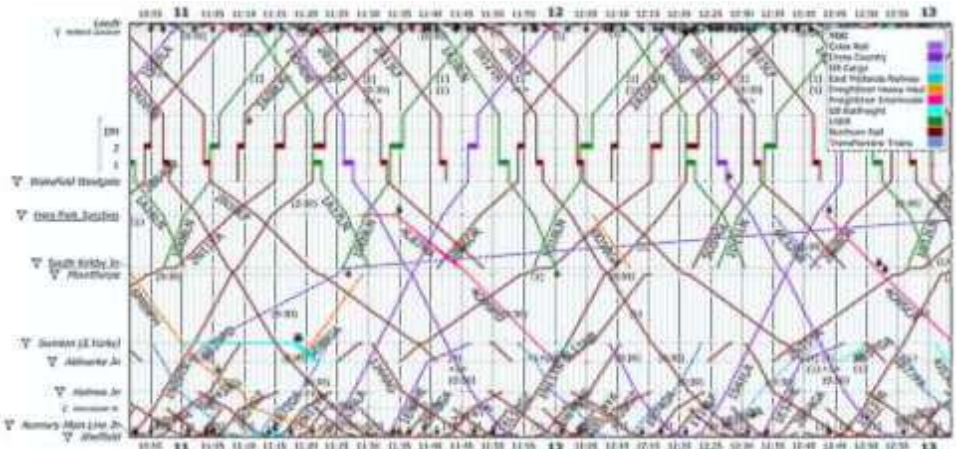
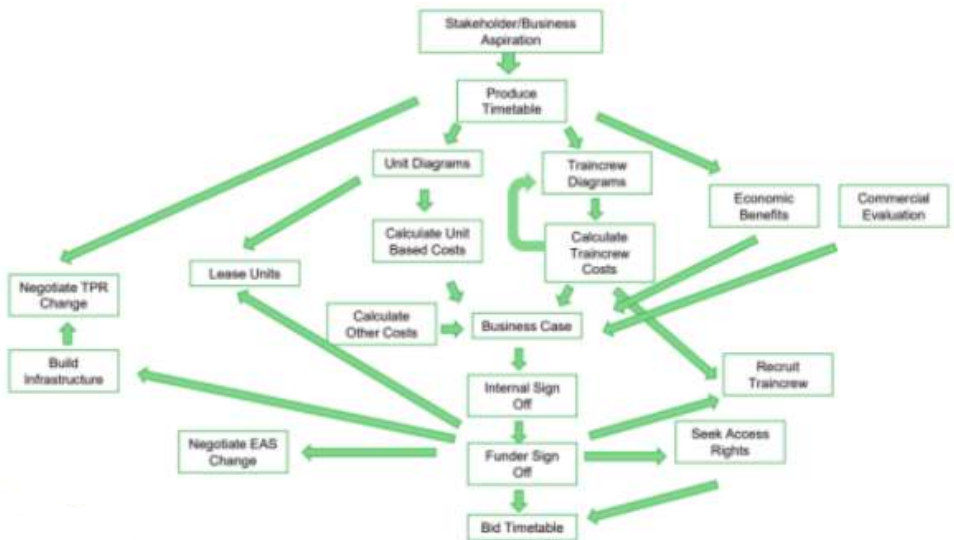
The outcome of this could well mean that extra drivers and conductors need to be employed. It can take at least 12 months before a new driver is fully trained, sometimes as long as 2 years

from when the jobs are first advertised.

Another factor that has to be taken into account is that the TOCs have to make their initial timetable bid changes to Network Rail around 9 months before the proposed change.

So the answer to the question ‘Timetable change – why does it take so long?’ is that what initially seems to the typical passenger as a simple process is in reality extremely complicated.

David Harby



(Apologies for the poor quality reproduction of these powerpoint slides – Ed.)

Options to decarbonise our railways *Nick Dibben*

Two reports in recent months have set out alternative and possibly conflicting approaches to decarbonising our railway network by 2040 in order to meet the country's net zero target by 2050. What both reports have in common is that electrification of the busiest routes is the best solution but due to the cost this is not the solution for more lightly used lines. They also note that there are many diesel trains that will need replacing in the next few years so decisions are needed on a future fuel strategy.

The Hydrex report produced with funding from Midlands Engine looks at the potential for hydrogen powered trains in the Midlands. 11 routes were assessed using a set of criteria that included the hydrogen demand and storage requirements and the cost comparison with overhead electrification. The 4 routes with the best results were:

1. Nottingham–Skegness
2. Worcester–Birmingham–Stratford upon Avon
3. Birmingham–Shrewsbury
4. Birmingham–Kings Norton

The report notes that prototype hydrogen trains are already in operation in Germany and there is a test vehicle within the UK. Options for green hydrogen production are considered and this will depend on a key decisions on the development of a national hydrogen distribution network.


The second report has been produced by the Railway Industry Association (RIA) and looks at the potential for battery powered trains across the country. It's proposal is based on "a thirds strategy". It notes that around a third of the network is already electrified, it suggests that a further third should be electrified and the remaining third should use battery vehicles. The report includes an interesting graph comparing

electrification in Germany where around 200km is electrified each year over the last 50 years, with the approach in this country which is very much boom and bust with no electrification in some years.

The RIA note that battery trains are more efficient than hydrogen trains, however they are likely to have a much more limited range. Current performance suggests that 60-80km is the limit although this may improve in the future.

By looking at the entire country some of the routes suggested in the hydrogen study would be electrified such as Birmingham to Worcester or partly electrified such as Nottingham to Grantham on the Skegness line where the Norwich to Liverpool service and freight traffic justify electrification. This is important as Nottingham to Skegness on battery power would exceed the capacity of the batteries. Part electrification would allow recharging enroute. The same would apply to Nottingham to Grimsby services where electrification between Nottingham and Newark is proposed. For longer routes rapid charging points are planned along the route, although the report does not say what time would be required to recharge the batteries and the problems of installing large power supplies in remote areas.

So which is the best option? It is difficult to say as neither report makes a cost comparison with the other technology. With orders for new trains required in the near future, it is essential that the Department for Transport and the Treasury look to the long term and the bigger national picture including a rolling programme for full electrification. The bad news is that this is not something they have a good record of doing.

Copies of the two reports can be found online: 

Friends of the Barton Line

- In the early part of the year, services on the line were terminated short of the advertised destination or cancelled on an averaged about two per week. Reasons ranged from strike action, failed train, unit short of fuel or delayed train crew.
- The waiting shelter at New Holland has been replaced by one alongside the access path, and shelters at New Clew, Healing, Goxhill and Barton are due to be demolished and replaced in situ.
- The 175th anniversary of the line was celebrated on 1 March when a panel listing key events was installed at Barton station.
- A land slip west of Scunthorpe station

on 2 & 3 May led to all rail services between Scunthorpe and Doncaster being replaced by buses.

- TransPennine Express services into Cleethorpes have been affected by the capacity upgrade works on the Hope Valley line, but it was expected that when completed, these would improve reliability to Cleethorpes and have less impact on Barton Line services.
- There has been a proposal to having classical music played at Barton station to deter anti-social behaviour (as was being successfully implemented at certain times of the day at 23 of Northern's stations – however, a public address system would first have to be installed.

Anthony Berridge

Repairs to Spalding footbridge

Network Rail will be undertaking repairs to St John's Road Footbridge in Spalding after being granted planning permission by South Holland District Council.

The grade II-listed bridge, which links St John's Road and Green Lane over the Joint Line railway, south of the station, is a rare and large-scale example of its type. It was built by the Great Northern Railway Company in around 1860.

The proposed repairs are sympathetic in terms of material match and visual impact. Previous pre-application schemes for this proposal suggested use of extensive composite materials unsympathetic to the nature of the listed asset.

The bridge is in a visually poor condition, and therefore, promotion of the restoration is of key importance. proposing only spot repairs in nonobtrusive and discreet positions and the replacement of materials either like for like, or contemporary materials enhanced to promote longevity and robustness.

Source: Lincs On-Line



Hydrex Report: <https://midlandengine.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Hydrogen-Rail-report-for-web.pdf>

Railway Industry Association Report: <https://www.riagb.org.uk/ALCHPNZRW24>

The future's electric: An appraisal *Richard Bradford*

In late-October 2023, Transport for East Midlands (TfEM) published *The future's electric*(1), a report encouraging government to authorise the continuation of electrification of the Midland Mainline (MML) north, from its current limit of South Wigston, through Leicester to Nottingham, Derby, and Sheffield.

The report provides useful data to support its argument that the MML deserves to be electrified, from population density along the route (at 1200 people / sq.km greater than both the WCML and ECML, apparently), to passenger usage (9 million) and CO2 emissions from current (diesel) intercity (IC) services (48000 tonnes). Naturally, it is the latter which form the key arguments for decarbonisation and concomitant air quality improvements; those who have stood on the platforms at Nottingham and Sheffield where trains idle for extended periods can attest to the need for that! It notes, though, that these emissions somewhat offset – by 80% – any arguments for rail being less polluting than driving. Using the Department for Transport's (DfT) figures, the report calculates the 'carbon emission values' of existing MML IC operations at £13m / year.

But the report goes further than the improved environment which would result from electrified services. The demand for MML IC services is growing having by March 2023 surpassed the same month in 2019 (i.e. pre-pandemic), and population growth in the main MML cities of Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, and Sheffield is higher than the UK average. *The future's electric* includes the usual themes about the benefits of electric trains and services in comparison to diesel (or bi-mode) ones: improved journey times, lower costs for purchase

(20% lower than bi-modes) and maintenance, and greater reliability. A useful point is that the current enthusiasm for bi-modes should not obscure the need for full electrification: the new trains should not be an excuse or relegate electrification to a 'nice to have ... one day'. It is not clear that the DfT will like this, given that the department nailed its colours to the mast in pursuit of its Intercity Express programme. Its Class 810 Aurora offspring are scheduled to enter service on the MML next year, as announced in July 2017 by the erstwhile Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling(2).

Authorisation to continue electrification northwards would also mean that the existing workforce could be kept together rather than wastefully disbanded and then reformed. This has been a key argument against the stop-start attitude of successive governments towards rail electrification since the mid-1950s, as maintaining expertise reduces construction costs. These are typically cited as the barrier to electrification, notwithstanding that they are more than recouped afterwards by reduced operational costs. Sadly, even the erstwhile Chief Executive of Network Rail, Mark Carne, fell into the trap with his 2018 statement(3) that 'electrification is difficult and expensive', presumably to please his DfT paymasters in the wake of the Great Western Mainline upgrade debacle. With friends like these...

Moving on, the *The future's electric* maps the MML running roughly midway between the East- and West Coast Mainlines. However, both the map and electrification could go much further: it is only in relatively recent (franchised?) times that the MML has been considered to finish at Sheffield. Historically, Midland services ran to Leeds and even ►

◀ to Scotland; they also served York on the direct but now rather neglected line through Pontefract Baghill, routes which have long been given over to CrossCountry and Northern services. Given that Sheffield is rather beyond TfEM's domain, it would be asking a lot for The future's electric to look in detail at services from there, and in fairness it does point out that Sheffield links to the presently aspirational and 'one day' electrification foreseen in the Network North(4) proposals: the Hope Valley route to Manchester as well as north to the ECML at Doncaster and South Kirby (for Leeds).

Squarely in TfEM territory, though, are the routes north and south from Chesterfield via Barrow Hill and the Erewash Valley respectively. The Barrow Hill line provides a rather longer route to Sheffield at Nunnery Junction as well as allowing freight to and from the north to by-pass the city towards Rotherham. The Erewash Valley is also recognised for its heavy freight use, not to mention the 2 (EMR and Northern) regular passenger services to Nottingham and beyond, and DB Cargo's depot lies at the southern end. However, while The future's electric makes passing reference to freight, as the Barrow Hill and Erewash Valley lines are not part of the MML, and despite them also being used for empty-stock moves and diversions, they receive no further attention. This is a pity, as the MML north of Bedford was once forecast to be part of an Electric Spine(5) freight route running from the port of Southampton to South Yorkshire (and presumably on to the ECML).

Likewise, east-west links between the East and West Coast mainlines via Nottingham and Derby via the north curve at Trent Junction should merit consideration for electrification. Oddly, The future's electric mentions possible

enhancements to local services from Newark, which has no direct ECML connection, but not those to Grantham which does (and is used by EMR's 'regional' Liverpool to Norwich service). West of Nottingham, in addition to EMR local services, there are regular CrossCountry services which join those from the north at Derby before heading to Birmingham. The Derby – Birmingham route merits particular attention in view of the cancellation of the East Midlands branch of HS2.

The press release(1) for The future's electric quotes the Chair of TfEM, Sir Peter Soulsby, as saying upgrading the MML would be a strategic move, enabling it to become a part of a local and national electrified rail network. The report appears to mark a Damascene conversion of TfEM's constituent councils from their supine attitude in 2017 when further electrification of the MML north of Kettering was ruled out and bi-modes accepted. TfEM is right to prioritise electrification of the 'core' MML, but is The future's electric perhaps a little too wary of drawing attention to various links to be considered as natural add-ons to actually enable this integration? Admittedly, freight is difficult since it really needs terminal-to-terminal electrification of a route, not disjointed sections. Nevertheless, every little helps.

While this or that route may merit electrification, the key to remember is: Networks, not just lines! Rail electrification presents a clear example of 'the more you have, the better it is', especially when various appendages are linked up (aka 'in-fill'). Look no further than the 3rd-rail routes south of London, as well as the growing overhead networks around Birmingham, across the central belt of Scotland, and around Glasgow. ▶

◀ Sources

(1) Transport for East Midlands (26 October 2023) The future's electric [Press release and report]. Available: <https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/prime-minister-urged-to-switch-on-east-midlands-by-naming-the-date-for-midland-mainline-electrification/>

(2) Butcher, L. (2017) Briefing paper SN05907 Rail electrification. London: House of Commons Library. Source speech 20 July 2017 available from: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commo/ns/2017-07-20/debates/17072054000036/RailUpdate>

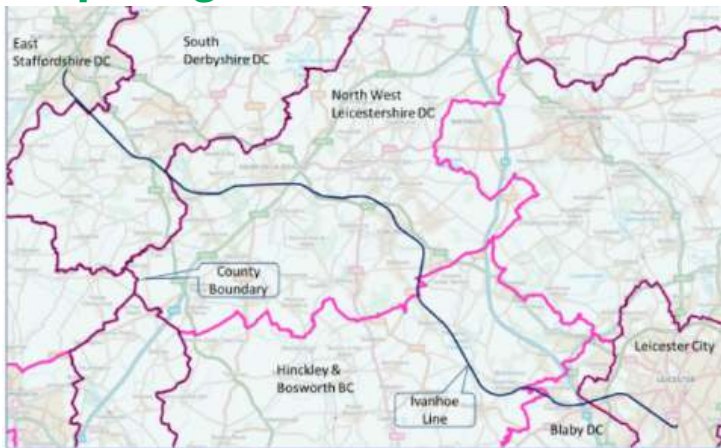
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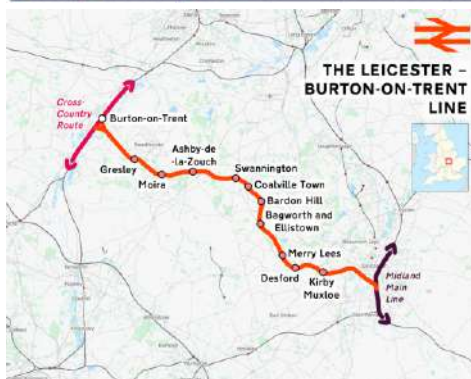
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(5) The High Level Output Specification (HLOS) 2012: Railways Act 2005 statement. Available : <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78f25ee5274a2acd18b05b/railways-act-2005.pdf>

Reopening the Ivanhoe Line



The Ivanhoe Line passing through nine local authorities.



The Line's route.

◀ The guest speaker at the open meeting following this year's East Midlands Branch AGM was Bruce Wakley of the Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line (CRIL).

Bruce opened his talk with a map showing the route of the Ivanhoe Line, Leicester to Burton-on-Trent, overlaid with the local authorities through whose areas it passes. There are no fewer than nine of them: four top-tier local transport authorities (Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire County Councils, plus Leicester City Council), and five District councils. This adds to the complexity of what is already a complex project.

The main population is on the western half of the route, from Coalville to Burton. The eastern half is much more rural until it gets into the outskirts of Leicester.

There was an earlier plan to reopen the whole route, sponsored by Leicestershire County Council, in the 1990s. Indeed, the first phase of this; a local passenger service on the slow lines between Leicester and Loughborough with reopened stations at Syston, Sileby and Barrow-upon-Soar did go ahead. This is now a well-established route, though the trains run between Leicester and Nottingham, Lincoln and in some cases Cleethorpes. The earlier plan envisaged quite a number of stations through to Burton, plus Willington (which also reopened, but is served only by CrossCountry services between Derby and Birmingham). There is a trade-off here: catchment at lots of local stations versus journey times.

The progress of the campaign so far, was outlined, with its successful bid for initial funding via the Government's Restoring Your Railway (RYR) programme. The Campaign was founded by the late Geoff Bushell in 2018 and made steady progress in promoting the

idea. In April 2019 came funding totalling £50,000 from the local authorities towards a feasibility study. Unfortunately, however, sub-national transport body Midlands Connect declined to support it. RYR was launched in January 2020 and, with the support of four local MPs including Andrew Bridgen, the initial 'round 1' bid was approved. 2020 was also the start of the Covid pandemic, and the loss of Geoff to Covid in November that year was a terrible blow. Nonetheless, CRIL continued, and in 2022 the DfT agreed to progress the scheme to outline business case (OBC) stage, to be undertaken by Network Rail via consultants AECOM. This was completed in January 2024 and is now going through the related governance process. While this is under way, CRIL is not publicly campaigning, so as not to 'rock the boat'.

Bruce outlined the official business case process, which has five 'dimensions': strategic, economic, financial, commercial and management. These support the succession from strategic outline business case (SOBC) to outline business case (OBC) and finally full business case (FBC).

An interesting feature of the Ivanhoe Line's area is its population growth, which is well above the national average of 16.3% from 1991 to 2019. For example, South Derbyshire District's growth in that period was 47.6%! This is partly because, as an ex-mining area, there is much brownfield land available for housing. Alongside this is its transport problems: the parallel A511 road is very congested. There are only two road bridges into Burton over the River Trent, causing traffic delays and making the buses unreliable. Nonetheless, most of the housing development is on the east side of the river. ▶

◀ Moreover, the National Forest is becoming established as a major tourism area. Indeed, the reopening proposal was originally labelled the National Forest Line, and this title may yet re-emerge. Nearly all visitors to the National Forest arrive by car; modal shift to rail is part of the business case. The 'staycation' trend since Covid has increased this potential.

As noted above, most of the population is on the western half of the line. Swadlincote, with 45,000 people, is the largest town in England outside the recognised urban areas without a rail connection. Coalville (35,000) is the 4th largest. Car usage is exacerbated by the lack of effective public transport.

Moreover, the line falls entirely within the logistics 'Golden Triangle', with its many jobs in warehousing and distribution but poor public transport access.

The line at present is very much freight only. It carries between two and eight freight trains a day, at low speeds on track that is not maintained to passenger route standards, and which is famously affected by subsidence. The west to north curve at Knighton, essential for efficient access to Leicester station, has been removed and light industrial units occupy part of the site. The land freehold is owned by the City Council, though numerous other parties own and lease the buildings on it. Relocation is not seen as insurmountable, but it is another complication. The SOBC for a reopened line is based on 60mph line-speed, upgraded signalling, and a passing loop at the Leicester end of the singled section. This is also complicated, as the present single line occupies the middle of the double-track formation. It would therefore need to be removed, shutting the line to freight for a period, to allow double track to be installed. Moreover,

when the A42 road was dualled, the new railway bridge over it near Ashby-de-la-Zouch was built for only single track. Ironic! A contrast can be made here with the Peaks & Dales scheme for the line north from Matlock; the track having been removed from the Monsal Trail gives a clear trackbed to work with and no freight traffic to divert or even lose to road.

The SOBC envisaged stations at Drakelow & Stapenhill, Castle Gresley, Moira, Ashby, Coalville, Ellistown, Meynells Gorse, and Leicester South (near the football ground). Work continues both on possible station sites and exact locations. One consideration in new station locations is accommodation of rail replacement buses(!), which is proving a possible hindrance to re-using the old station site at Coalville.

There are pockets of local opposition to the railway, on the grounds of noise, pollution and suspected adverse effects on house prices. There was a petition on the government petitions website that gained as many as 113 signatures; astonishingly, some of these were from people in Norfolk and even Lancashire! Nonetheless, any genuine local fears must be properly handled. It is also well known that proximity to a station actually increases house prices, potentially quite significantly.

Options are now being modelled and a 'Minimum Viable Product' (MVP) has been identified, for a Coalville – Burton – Derby first phase. Running through to Derby removes the need (= cost) for reinstating a bay platform at Burton and increases the journey opportunities. It also eases operations as EMR could service it from Etches Park depot, using Class 170 units.

However, track capacity between Burton and Derby is an issue, because of ▶

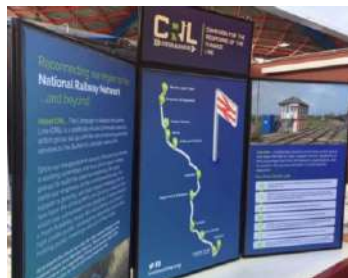
◀ the frequency of CrossCountry trains. CrossCountry are cooperating in timetable modelling. Whether the Ivanhoe service would call at Willington therefore remains uncertain, which is ironic given that it was the original Ivanhoe Line proposal in the 1990s that saw this station reopened. Perhaps speculatively, if the Birmingham – Nottingham trains were to bypass Derby by using the line through Castle Donington, this would release capacity north of Stenson Junction. That offers other possibilities, such as speeding-up Birmingham – Nottingham journey times especially now HS2 East is unlikely ever to be built. It could also provide a station at or near Castle Donington to serve the emerging freeport area nearby. The point here is that railway reopenings can often be seen as a package with wider network benefits, and not just as individual lines.

The MVP would have three new stations, at Coalville, Ashby and Gresley. It would serve the bulk of the population, totalling 225,000. The service would be hourly; 2tph would require a second platform at Ashby, which would not be straightforward. Hourly freight paths also need to be provided. The stations are intended to be in town centre locations with minimal car parking, partly for sustainable access reasons and partly because car parks involve a lot of land and therefore cost. The capital costs need to be controlled, as the benefit:cost ratio (BCR) is low and is subject to further analysis. Having said that, the DfT have indicated that it is not just about BCR; it is about levelling up and connecting cut-off communities.

The current position is that HM Treasury approval is awaited for funding of the full business case for Phase 1, Coalville - Burton. That depends at least partly on the internal Network Rail

governance process and it would be completed in 2026. In the meantime, CRIL maintains its policy of ‘not rocking the boat’.

As for Phase 2, through to Leicester, a desktop study has indicated a high estimated capital cost as far as Leicester South, given the complications mentioned above. The campaign needs to be invigorated at the Leicester end, and many questions need to be answered. Not least of these is the number and locations of intermediate stations, bearing in mind the cost of any station with more than one platform, where bridges with lifts would be required. The Knighton curve would be additional, and a further hurdle is accommodation of Ivanhoe trains on the Midland Main Line into Leicester. Not only is the MML busy, it is set to become more so with the planned 2tph Leicester – Coventry service, additional trains between Leicester and Birmingham, and the fact that Ivanhoe trains would proceed off the reinstated tight curve at very low speed. There is also the increasing Felixstowe container freight traffic through the Leicester pinchpoint. Tricky! The DfT has indicated that if the Ivanhoe Line can get through to Leicester London Road station, Leicester South would not be needed. However, Leicester South would have a valuable catchment of its own, including the sports grounds. It is also nearer than London Road to some university halls of residence, Southfields College, and the Royal Infirmary.



EDITOR'S MAIL

'FOOTFALL and PUSHCHAIRS'

Two things arising from Issue No. 3. Firstly, I was surprised to see Grimsby Town omitted from the station footfall analysis. I would imagine though that the station was adversely affected by both the unreliability of TPE services, and the series of rail strikes which made planning journeys something of a lottery.

And beware of the potential problems with having reserved spaces for prams and pushchairs. For issues arise with

step-entry buses that have allowed such contraptions. There is initially the conflict between wheelchairs and buggies, when those with the latter have refused to give up the allocated space to their disabled counterparts.

On top of this there is friction when people can't find a seat because of someone with a pram taking up 3 potential spaces. There can also be a potential loss of revenue if you are allocating spaces which remain unused.

Tim Mickleburgh. 'Grimsby

EAST MIDLANDS BRANCH

Chair: *Phil Thomas* phil.thomas@railfuture.org.uk

Vice-Chair: *Terry Holt*

Secretary: *Steve Jones* steve.jones@railfuture.org.uk

Email: eastmidlands@railfuture.org.uk

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

EM Branch Twitter handle: [@RailfutureEMids](https://twitter.com/RailfutureEMids) <https://twitter.com/RailfutureEMids>

LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH

Chair: *David Harby* – david.harby@railfuture.org.uk

Vice-Chair: *Phil Mason* – phil.mason@railfuture.org.uk

Secretary: *Don Peacock* – don.peacock@railfuture.org.uk

Lincolnshire Branch's Twitter handle: [@RailfutureLincs](https://twitter.com/RailfutureLincs)

Direct link to Branch News: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Lincolnshire+Branch>

FUTURE LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Wednesday, 24 July; Wednesday, 9 October 2024 and Wednesday, 15 January 2025.

All meetings to be held at the community room, Sleaford station at 12 noon.

Non committee members are welcome to attend as observers.

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SixShiresRail 5 will be published in October.

Please let the Editor, Phil Mason, 10 Cottesmore Close, Grantham NG31 9JL, phil.mason@railfuture.org.uk have copy by 27 September.

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Registered Office:- Edinburgh House, 1-5 Bellevue Road, Clevedon, North Somerset BS21 7NP (for legal correspondence only). All other correspondence to 14 Ghent Field Circle, Thurston, Suffolk IP31 3UP