

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
A.Kay@lboro.ac.uk

AGM

Tim Shoveller, managing director of East Midlands Trains, has accepted our invitation to be guest speaker at our branch AGM on 15 March at the Corn Market Hall, Kettering. The business meeting will start at 12.00, with the public meeting addressed by Mr Shoveller at 14.00.

Corby station

Tim Shoveller has also met with Corby MP Phil Hope and representatives of North Northants Development Company, East Midlands Development Agency and others, to discuss the service to be provided at Corby station, expected to open in December 2008.

Although the meeting was reported as being constructive, there is concern that the introduction of the new Corby service will lead to cuts in the service at Kettering and Wellingborough. A 1,200-signature petition was presented to Parliament on the latter issue.

EAST MIDLANDS TRAINS

December 2008 timetable

A detailed analysis of the proposed East Midlands trains timetable has been done by Dave Thornhill of Notts Campaign for Better Transport.

While Stagecoach will carry on the good work of the old Midland main line franchise, the future is not so bright on the services inherited from Central Trains.

In particular, Willington and many of the rural stations to the east of Nottingham will experience drastic cuts in services, with a complete loss of Sunday services at some stations.

It is true that patronage has been very low at some of these stations in recent years, but that is largely due to the poor service provided by Central Trains. Surely the new franchise holder should be trying to reverse the decline?

There is also some very poor timetabling. Connection times at Derby and Nottingham are very long for passengers on the Crewe-Skegness axis, which had through trains just three years ago.

Cycle-rail meeting

A group including cycling activists and local authority cycling officers were meeting with Emma Knight of East Midlands Trains in January to discuss integration of cycling with rail travel in the EMT area. The issues to be discussed include:

- The promotion of cycling in Station Travel Plans
- Secure and quality short- and long-term cycle parking at stations, including publicity, management and maintenance aspects
- Safe access routes to and from stations from different parts of their catchment areas
- Access for cycles on trains, including information and reservation arrangements
- Cycle hire at or near stations
- The development of wider cycle-rail packages between operators, cycling groups, local authorities, tourist boards and other possible partner agencies
- Learning from wider experience, particularly the award-winning work by Northern Trains
- Ongoing arrangements for consultation with national and local cycling groups, both on general issues affecting cyclists in the franchise area and on station-specific issues.



Intercity express project

By Roger Bacon
rbrail@btinternet.com

Railfuture East Midlands now understands that the Department for Transport will procure Britain's next generation of high-speed trains for use on intercity, inter-urban and commuter railways.

They will all evolve from the DfT's Intercity Express Project appraisal process. Tenders were invited in November 2007 and they must be in by May.

In recent articles in the railway press, the East Coast, West Coast, Great Western CrossCountry and Scotland have been mentioned.

But there has been no indication of what is likely to be on offer on the Midland main line. The DfT Rail IEP website contains a Network

Safe crossing at station

Loughborough is the East Midlands' fourth busiest station but under Central Trains it received little investment.

Hopefully this is about to change with the new East Midlands Trains franchise but Railfuture must keep up the pressure. The good news is that the station is at last to get lifts and a new footbridge under the "access for all" scheme.

Access is very much a live issue after a report that a member of the station staff was refused permission, probably by signallers at Leicester, to escort a young mother with a baby in a pushchair over the barrow crossing.

They had to use the Victorian footbridge instead.

It was suggested that the risk of using the footbridge was far greater than using the barrow crossing.

A rail magazine commented that the member of staff "was blindly following the rules . . . and that there was no room for professional judgement, common sense or anything else". The article went on to

Rail train infrastructure interface specification, in which an 11-page appendix list includes many diversionary routes, but again excludes the Midland.

As the tender invitation is seeking lighter vehicles which must be much more reliable with high standards of capacity, environmental performance and flexibility, it is of concern to Railfuture East Midlands to find the Midland is excluded.

If "environmental concerns are an increasingly important consideration in relation to long term rail strategy and the Government's broader environmental objectives" as quoted in the IEP specifications, where does this leave the East Midlands' and South Yorkshire's main express route if left out of the project?

say "why not just de-clutter the railway and leave the crossing as a lights-controlled foot crossing".

After observing many similar situations at Loughborough over the past decade, I would not be happy to authorise passengers to use the barrow crossing because trains pass frequently through the station at over 100mph and those approaching from the north are in sight for only 10 seconds before reaching the station.

Local rail user groups have campaigned for years to get lifts as well as extended and accessible platforms.

Like lots of other places on the Midland main line, Loughborough station has been starved of adequate investment in its infrastructure while the railway industry spends its billions elsewhere.

Insult is added to injury because our new East Midlands Trains franchise is also due to pay a hefty premium to the Treasury, unlike some who get large subsidies, new trains and massive infrastructure investment. **Roger Bacon**

Regional response needed

At a recent presentation in Leicester, East Midlands Trains managing director Tim Shoveller said he had aspirations to move the Norwich to Liverpool route from Connect to Mainline status by the end of the franchise in 2015.

Stagecoach has inherited poorly maintained and serviced trains from Central Trains and it could take a long while to fix them. Many never had the modifications and upgrades to similar equipment used elsewhere.

In the first week of the franchise engines blew up with bits coming through the crankcase. The carriage washer at Eastcroft depot in Nottingham was not working when EMT took over. There are also fears of overcrowding as the

centre coaches of class 158 trains have been removed for use elsewhere.

Overcrowding will be exacerbated by some units being out of service for upgrading.

This inter-regional service which connects five major English cities deserves better.

Buying new trains may be a better use of funds than refurbishing "tired" and poorly maintained ex-BR stock.

Railfuture East Midlands will be pressing regional economic "movers and shakers" and will be seeking support from other campaigners in the East of England, South Yorkshire and the North West.

Roger Bacon