

## East Midlands

By Roger Bacon

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### ■ ■ Station improvements

A toilet for the disabled has been installed at Loughborough Midland station by East Midlands Trains and work is being completed on an improved bus stop and new shelter. Around 30% of journeys to the station are made by bus and the new stop will provide room for three buses at the same time.

At a meeting in February with Paul Clark, the Under Secretary of State for Transport, East Midlands branch was assured that funding for a new footbridge with lifts was still available. However this is unlikely to go ahead until Network Rail has extended the short main line platforms with work expected to start in early 2010.

### ■ ■ Electrification

A working group from both East Midlands and London & South East branches has agreed to provide a joint response to the Midland main line rail utilisation study consultation to be published this spring. Electrification of the route beyond Bedford is a key requirement, as are capacity and speed increases on this main line through the East Midlands and South Yorkshire conurbations. Recent reports, and others going back to 1980, had stated that the Midland main line had the best cost/benefit ratio in the UK for electrification and work should have been completed by 1990!

### ■ ■ Aspirations and actions

A decision is still awaited from the Department for Transport on East Midlands Train's proposals to improve capacity on the Liverpool to Norwich route. No new trains are promised and the best that can be hoped for is that some will be cascaded from other train operators if available. Despite "aspirations" at the time of bidding to make this route "of inter-city standard by the end of the franchise", it is to lose all catering trolleys from this May and some tables and luggage racks are to be removed to provide more seats, although passengers and train staff alike think this a poor way to increase capacity.

### ■ ■ Train refurbishment

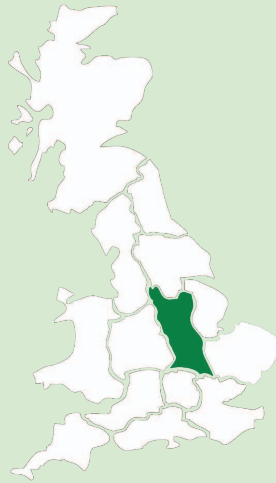
Although much of East Midlands Train's rolling stock is now painted in its new livery, very few have been refurbished inside and compared with other train operators, they look dirty and worn. Now work has started on the class 158 units, with completion scheduled for August next year. The IC-125 trains programme was scheduled for May or June with completion of all 11 sets taking about one year. Unlike CrossCountry, First Great Western and National Express East Coast, the old British Rail seats will be retained. It should be noted that around 70% of the rolling stock on East Midlands Trains dates from before 1992 and the franchise will receive none of the DfT's 1,200 new coaches or any Hitachi super express trains.

### ■ ■ Upgraded station needs more trains

Cromford station – which featured on the cover of *Some Might Say* by Oasis – has received major investment of around £237,000 to refurbish its listed buildings and to make it a gateway to the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. A



longer term plan is to provide an information centre about Arkwright's Cromford Mill, and for the station to become a bus interchange with links to the many local attractions. However trains which now run hourly from Nottingham via Derby only stop at Cromford every two hours. It seems a pity that after such major station investment, the stopping pattern is unchanged in the May 2009 timetable.



# A sympathetic ear

By Norman Bradbury

One month after Transport Minister Lord Adonis met a delegation from Railfuture, he was promoted to the Cabinet and took the top job as Transport Secretary.

Topics raised by the Railfuture delegation on 6 May included fares and ticketing, capacity and overcrowding, rolling stock issues, train design issues, funding and finance, the "new approach to transport assessment", light rail and cost cutting and the recession.

Railfuture chairman Mike Crowhurst raised the confusion generated by variations in time of day validity of off-peak fares by different operators.

The Railfuture delegation was surprised that Andrew Adonis was unaware this was not covered in franchise specifications.

We also expressed concern about premium fares and urged a move back to standard fares for a given distance and ticket type.

Howard Thomas spoke about overcrowding and stressed that fares should not be used to ease overcrowding as this could lead to more people using already congested roads and would be inconsistent with government policy.

We expressed concern that passenger groups were rarely consulted

regarding coaching stock design and noted designers' repeated failure to align seats with windows, especially on inter-city trains.

Norman Bradbury pointed out that having too many airline seats in a carriage reduced space for luggage between seat backs.

It was noted that the inter-city express programme specification called for 50% of seats to be in bays but this objective now seems to have been overlooked.

We were told the "new approach to transport appraisal" had removed the tax on fuel "benefit" but we have since learnt that the "new new" approach is still not fair to rail.

Lord Adonis listened with interest to Norman Bradbury's endorsement of lightweight trams, particularly as being planned in Galway.

He also asked for evidence regarding ticket office published opening hours not being adhered to.

He appeared throughout to be attentive and receptive to many of our points.

As there was insufficient time to discuss them all, a number of papers were left with him.

The Railfuture team was made up of Mike Crowhurst, Norman Bradbury, Howard Thomas and John Friedberger.

## Euro passengers unite

By Trevor Garrod

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Seventy delegates from 14 European countries, including a group of Railfuture members, converged on Berne, Switzerland, for the seventh annual general meeting and conference of the European Passengers' Federation on 14 March.

They were addressed by Andreas Meyer, chief executive of Swiss Federal Railways, who said Switzerland was famous for its reliable railways. Every second citizen is a regular rail customer and passenger-kilometres had grown by 31% between 2003 and 2008. The greatest challenge now was how to cope with the increase.

His colleague Martin Butikofer said Swiss Railways was improving information, such as use of mobile technology and on-train screens with information about both train and bus connections.

Alain Barbey of the international train operator Cisalpino described the challenges and future plans for their services between Switzerland and Italy and how their trains were integrated into those countries' domestic timetables.

A very informative presentation by Markus Thut described the General Abonnement (a national public transport travelcard) now used in one form or another by over 2,500,000 people in Switzerland. "The travelcard is like a car", he



said, "Once you've got it, it is there and you get in."

Other speakers dealt with the development of Post Bus services (not just in Switzerland) and accessibility for people with reduced mobility.

For EPF, Albert Lambert reported on the work of the study group to make international multi-modal journeys easier; while Christopher Irwin set out what should be European priorities in the coming years.

These included clear modal-neutral passenger rights, ensuring that information technology enabled the users, wise allocation of transport costs, and action on sustainable mobility. He saw "great opportunities for European knowledge-based industries" in making public transport travel easier.

The presentations can be found on [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu) and a full conference report is available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

The EPF board, consisting of one nominee from each member organisation, was approved, and from its members were elected: Chairman, Trevor Garrod; Vice-Chairman, Christopher Irwin; Secretary, Josef Schneider; Treasurer, Rian van der Borgt.