

Stop the big lorries



This picture of a "gigaliner" during trials among normal traffic in Germany shows what is in store for us if the Government is stupid enough to allow them on to Britain's roads.

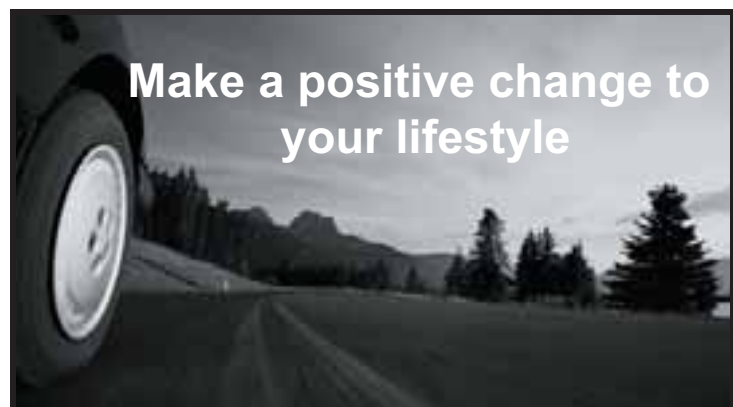
Germany rejected the tractor trailer towing a large trailer, on safety grounds and in Britain an examination of the Government's own statistics, commissioned by Freight on Rail, undermines the case for it.

The research, by independent consultants found that rather than reducing the number of lorries needed, previous increases in vehicle dimensions failed to stop heavier, larger lorries doing more mileage and driving around with ever lower load efficiency. Heavier lorries use more fuel and so the

lack of any efficiency improvements has meant more CO₂ emissions. This evidence undermines the Government's justification for permitting previous increased lorry dimensions and questions the validity of current arguments for the "long, heavy vehicles".

The Government is currently evaluating whether to allow trials of the LHV's (25.5 metres long and 60 tonnes in weight).

Freight on Rail campaigner Philippa Edmunds calls on Railfuture members to write to Ruth Kelly, Transport Secretary, DfT, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR, with a copy to their own MP, urging the Government to reject the mega-lorries. More info: www.freightonrail.org.uk



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LOCAL ACTION

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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■ ■ East Midlands Parkway

Final planning approval was given for the East Midlands Parkway station on 26 October. Stagecoach will be paying for an increase in the car parking capacity from 500 to 800 spaces.

■ ■ Leaf fall

Following the publication of the Central Trains autumn leaf-fall timetable, we have made it clear that we do not regard this reduction in service level as acceptable. Our response is also critical of Network Rail for not clearing vegetation and keeping the tracks clear.

■ ■ Local enhancements

Network Rail will soon be restoring a third track between Wellingborough and Kettering. Further north, the Erewash Valley line between Trowell and Clay Cross has been resignalled, with some track and crossovers replaced for faster running speeds. This should in principle improve the prospects for a new station at Ilkeston. Railfuture was recently contacted by Philip Rose, an Ilkeston borough councillor who is keen on this project, and we directed him to LANRAC, the regional pro-rail councillors' group.

■ ■ Meetings with train operators

Branch members were planning to attend a "Meet the TOCs" meeting on 30 November in Leicester, organised by TravelWatch East Midlands. This was a useful opportunity to question Stagecoach, the new East Midlands franchise holder, as well as Arriva CrossCountry and National Express East Coast. Meanwhile, local cycling groups are also hoping to set up a meeting with Stagecoach to discuss cycle parking at stations and cycle carriage on trains.

West Midlands

■ ■ CrossCountry

Arriva's Michael Holden was in Birmingham in October to explain how the new operator hoped to make changing trains as easy as possible and to promote alternatives to Birmingham New Street station. The Voyager trains will have extra seating and luggage space.

Print-at-home tickets will be made available and passengers will be steered towards the cheapest fare available.

■ ■ West Coast

The Southern service from Clapham Junction is to be extended north to Milton Keynes and possibly south to Gatwick Airport, according to a Department for Transport briefing meeting in Birmingham in September.

■ ■ Over-sixties pass

People aged 60 and over will be entitled to free local bus travel anywhere in England, from April 2008. Residents in the West Midlands will also be able to travel by train and tram free.

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