



Newark Business Club - Over 1000 members

9th July 2021

Robert Jenrick MP

Email: rizks@parliament.uk cllr.ben.bradley@nottscc.gov.uk

Dear Robert,

East–West Rail Connectivity through the Lincoln-Nottingham Corridor

As you may be aware, East Midlands Railway introduced an emergency timetable for their regional services on 19th June, with a stated reduction to 85% of their normal service across the franchise. The Lincoln-Nottingham corridor, has been affected more significantly than other routes:-

- There is not even a basic hourly service between Lincoln and Nottingham and three periods in each direction through the day when there are gaps between services between Newark and Nottingham in excess of an hour, up to 1h43m,
- Newark has lost 26% of its service to Nottingham including the important 07.36 commuter train and 21% of the service from Nottingham,
- The service between Newark Northgate and Lincoln has been decimated with a 60% reduction and gaps of six and seven hours between EMR services. Fortunately, LNER are continuing to run services on a two-hourly frequency.

These are in addition to the peak-hour withdrawals in May that reduced arrivals in Nottingham from Newark between 07.30 and 08.30 from three to two (against the commitments from Conservative Ministers at the Newark by-election in 2014).

It is a massive blow to Stakeholders who have campaigned for years for improvements to the east-west railway through Newark. It is especially frustrating as it is clear that the DfT did not listen to Stakeholders concerns raised during the franchise consultation in 2017. We specifically expressed concern over the implications on train crew requirements if the DfT implemented their planned alterations to the train service in Nottingham. They initially said that it was an issue for the Operator, and when pressed they simply dismissed the matter. It is now clear that, as we feared, their bad planning and late changes to the franchise requirements (specifically retaining the Norwich-Liverpool services under EMR) has led to a crew shortage. We also drew attention to the problems when East Midlands rail services were last franchised in 2008, when the DfT failed to ensure that there was enough rolling stock to operate the train service. They have failed again with this franchise, planning to transfer 20 trains from Southern to the East Midlands by December 2021 even though there were at that time no identified replacements for them in the Southeast – there are still none.

We accept that the COVID pandemic has impacted on delivery of train services but not to the disproportionate extent it has on Newark. The pandemic was not an issue when the DfT took the decisions that have resulted in the train service in the East Midlands being under resourced, a continuation of their neglect of our regional train service.

www.newarkbusinessclub.co.uk

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Newark Business Club meet at:

The Everyday Champions Centre, Jessop Close, Brunel Business Park, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 2AG
1st Friday of the month

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The franchise led by the DfT for the East Midlands from April 2019 is not fit for purpose. There are no plans to address the known shortcomings of the train service in the Lincoln-Nottingham corridor, no through trains to Derby or Birmingham, uncompetitive journey times and only one train an hour between Lincoln and Nottingham. The result is that rail has a low market share, from Lincoln 7.4% to Nottingham, 7.2% share to Derby and 5% to Leicester; on other properly resourced east-west flows like Sheffield-Manchester rail has a 50% market share.

East Midlands Regional services need to be properly resourced and the advertised timetable restored as a matter of urgency, especially with the recent announcements about removing restrictions and getting people back to the workplace, but the major issue is how those services are improved in the longer term to make them more attractive to people and improve rail's market share through the Lincoln, Newark, Nottingham corridor. There are options to do this by:

- ✓ Restoring the two trains per hour service frequency between Lincoln, Newark and Nottingham,
- ✓ Restoring the hourly through trains between Lincoln/Newark and Birmingham with a target reduction for end-to-end times of 27-minutes if they operate via Derby or 40-minutes via Castle Donnington,
- ✓ Operating the Nottingham-Leicester stopping service independently of the Lincoln-Leicester trains with the Lincoln services west of Nottingham only calling at East Midlands Parkway and Loughborough, and a target reduction for journeys from Lincoln to Leicester of between 25 and 30-minutes,
- ✓ Matching the service pattern between Lincoln, Newark and Nottingham with demand. There is a 13-minute journey time penalty for trains calling at all stations between Newark and Nottingham against one running non-stop and clearly the level of demand at some of the stations does not justify an hourly service.

With the information in the public domain, it is impossible to assess the additional cost of this major enhancement, but we are advised that it should be deliverable at a cost of less than £5million per annum for a scheme that would make a significant contribution towards the Government's levelling-up agenda. It is a small amount to pay when contrasted with the £200million that the DfT is strongly supporting to deliver further enhancements to the railways in the North Cotswolds, one of the most affluent areas of the UK. It should also be possible to deliver the enhanced service by the December 2023 timetable.

The only thing that is stopping improvement to our rail service is the lack of political will. There are four Conservative MPs who should have a direct interest in the Nottingham-Lincoln corridor, five if you include Mark Spencer as we know that his constituents use Lowdham. In addition, Ben Bradley is both an MP and Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council, Darren Henry the Broxtowe MP is the Co-Chairman of the Midlands Engine. Will you please combine to press the Transport Secretary to initiate major improvements to our regional train services to drive a modal shift from road to rail and support your government's levelling up agenda and climate change.

Yours sincerely

Michael Hardy, Chair of Action Group

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