Rail Lincs railfuture

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From your Branch Chairman



A SIGN OF THE TIMES a deserted platform 1

at Grantham

Photo: LNER on Twitter

When I wrote my missive for Rail Lincs 86 we had only heard of Covid-19 as a new virus that was affecting some people in a province of China. There was little indication that it would spread so quickly around the World and that it was so dangerous we would all be locked down within weeks.

I have been relatively lucky in that the nature of my job meant that I was able to continue to work and enjoy some excellent weather whilst working. However, I know many branch members were not so lucky, in that you are either elderly, have pre-existing serious illnesses or in some cases are both elderly and ill. I do hope your self isolation

and shopping problems etc have been solved satisfactorily, and that you are as well as can be expected.

The lockdown has had a devastating effect on all public transport and the future for all transport is very uncertain. I'm sure many of you are, like myself, missing our regular fix of rail travel. To help explain where we are now on Covid-19 as regards the railways and what the future might hold, you will find two articles from me in this edition of *Rail Lincs*.

As far as Railfuture nationally is concerned, the AGM was cancelled and the autumn conference will now be an online session. We are looking towards the post Covid world and have 5 groups (below) looking at this. We propose to

have policy papers ready for circulation when stakeholders start to look forward again.

- 1. Climate Change and Modal Shift how the railway can reduce the carbon footprint of transport (Ian Brown)
- 2. Fares and ticketing making the system easier and fairer (Allison Cosgrove/Passenger group)
- 3. Restoring Your Railway line and station reopening (Roger Blake)
- 4. Future Industry Structure and the Williams Review taking the opportunity to move to devolution and concessions (Ian Brown)
- 5. Attracting the passenger back to rail improving the travelling environment (Allison Cosgrove/Passenger Group)

Locally all meetings are cancelled and officers and committee members have

been keeping in touch by telephone and email. At the time of writing, we are discussing a possible get together online through the medium of a Zoom meeting, but as not all committee members can cope with the IT involved, this can only be a short term solution.

I have been emailing regular updates to branch committee members and others on the distribution list. I don't send these to every branch member with email, as I know not all of you want to receive them. However, if you want to be added to the distribution list just send me an email (david.harby@railfuture.org.uk) asking to be added.

In the meantime, my best wishes to you all and I hope to be meeting you in person or hearing from you by email in the not too distant future.

David Harby, Branch Chairman

Fighting for Rail

On page 5 there is an article discussing the future of railways post Covid-19 and the impact of the various restrictions. The uncertain question is how many passengers will actually return to rail and when will they travel?

Unlike the retail sector, the railways have suffered from a negative message from government and the media, instructing the public not to use trains. Even the rail unions (except ASLEF), have added to this discouragement, showing concern for members' safety rather than job security. No doubt these actions were with good intention, but by openly discouraging rail usage, the industry's response appears to have been little short of panic to the point of 'shooting itself in the foot'! There have been dangerous lapses in retaining social distancing on Transport for London services and commuter routes into the large cities, but on local routes in Lincolnshire, for example, trains have been observed with only one or two passengers. I have reports of LNER peak services out of Kings Cross, with just three passengers on a 10-car train! What is now required is a positive message, reassuring the public that the industry is doing as much as possible to ensure the safety of rail passengers, as well as staff.

As restrictions are eased, with shops, garden centres and zoos allowed to reopen, the messages in the media and advice from the government, are telling us to 'go out and shop for the economy'. Why not: 'Go out and travel for the economy and future of the railways'?

Lockdown and social distancing looks likely to be with us for a long time, but surely the rail industry deserves some positive support. The campaign must start now, with all concerned fighting for a successful rail renaissance. There are reports that the low numbers of passengers are costing a subsidy of £100 each person journey! This can't go on and there is a huge danger that financial support from government will drastically be reduced.

In France, SNCF has launched what is described as an unprecedented re-launch of its TER regional passenger services, as

New Freight Flow to Spalding



A trial freight flow into Lincolnshire commenced during mid May, when Colas Rail operated a train of tank wagons carrying slurry from Aberdeen to Spalding, for onward movement by road to Palm Paper mill in Kings Lynn. The slurry is Calcium Carbonate which is shipped from Norway to Aberdeen for further treatment. The trains, which it is hoped will become regular workings, carry the equivalent of 33/35 lorry loads each.

Since rail access to the industrial area and docks at Kings Lynn was removed in the 1990s, the most viable option for this traffic was to use sidings at Spalding. (PM)

New Investment for GB Railfreight

NEW investment has been announced by GB Railfreight, which is planning to build more intermodal sidings at Peterborough with Balfour Beatty and Network Rail. At the same time it is making progress with a new control room, three classrooms, a board room and staff welfare rooms at Peterborough, as the result of a £3 million scheme which was announced earlier this year. The Up Yard at March has also been upgraded over the past few months, where a wagon maintenance and stabling depot has been built. This means that wagons needing attention no longer need to be hauled empty to the GB Railfreight site at Doncaster.

continued from page 2

the country starts to open up after the Covid-19 pandemic. Branded 'TER de France', a campaign, led by SNCF in conjunction with regional authorities with the aim to restore the momentum of growth seen since 2017. Plans include the

availability of 2 million discounted tickets at €10 or less, day and multi-day ranger tickets without additional restriction, enhanced summer services to encourage tourism and youth railcards. TER season tickets are to be valid on the whole SNCF network (PM)

Covid-19 the railway story so far

As soon as it became clear that the Covid-19 virus was circulating within the UK, the number of people using public transport started to decline with quite a few of us deciding not to make leisure journeys 2 or 3 weeks before the lockdown. These numbers then dropped to around 10% of normal when the lockdown started and all, except key workers, were told not to use public transport. Train Operating Companies (TOCs) were then left with the expense of running trains but receiving very little income.

To ensure that rail services continued for key workers, on 23 March the Government gave all franchises the opportunity to temporarily transition onto Emergency Measures Agreements. Under these agreements all revenue risk passes to the Government with TOCs running services for a fixed fee and the government taking all fare revenue. For most franchises these agreements run for an initial period of 6 months, with options for further extension or earlier cancellation as agreed.

Open Access Operators were not been offered any support. Hull Trains suspended all services from 30 March 2020 and Grand Central soon after.

As far as the East Midlands Railway (EMR) franchise is concerned, this means that all commitments made in the franchise are no longer valid.

All franchises immediately started to operate special timetables with a much reduced service aimed at providing a service for key workers and not much more. There were many factors involved in this decision. Trains were running almost, if not completely, empty; TOCs had train crew and depot staff self-isolating; Network Rail asked for shortday working so they could be sure of being able to staff all signal boxes; LNER

ceased operating North of Edinburgh because crew diagrams relied on overnight lodging at Inverness and Aberdeen and the hotels they used had closed.

The LNER Lincoln to Kings Cross service was stopped along with Sheffield to Gainsborough Central and all services on the Barton branch.

Since then, as Covid-19 deaths gradually decreased and it looked like the spread of the virus was being contained, train services were gradually increased so that from 18 May most TOCs were running what was effectively a Saturday service. EMR, TransPennine (TPE) and Northern are operating an unrestricted service but you can only travel by LNER, Cross Country and Avanti West Coast if you have booked and reserved a seat in advance. In most cases seats can be booked up to 5 minutes before departure.

To enable these to operate safely a lot of planning had taken place so that passengers on stations and trains could socially isolate and risks of infection to rail staff were as low as practically possible. Many signs were devised, printed and placed on stations and trains, staff briefed and publicity organised. To keep the 2 metre distance each carriage can only accommodate 15 – 18 passengers depending on the carriage.

The reduced service did have plenty of consequences for TOCs. Drivers lost their route knowledge and regaining this was difficult with only one person allowed in a train cab at any one time. I'm told this was one of the reasons why services on the Barton branch were sporadic when they restarted. Diversionary routes were rarely, if ever, used so route knowledge of these will have to be updated.

All train manufacturers ceased work for a short while until they and their union representatives agreed ways of safe

working and deliveries from sub contractors were secured. Inevitably these are reducing the number of trains they can manufacture so deliveries of new trains to TOCs are reduced. When these trains are delivered to the TOCs driver training is also reduced and in many cases stopped altogether.

Freight services were also changed during the lockdown. Extra services were operated to serve supermarket distribution and a new service was introduced from Spain using refrigerated wagons carrying fruit and vegetables, and medical supplies. Many container trains continued to operate from Felixstowe and London Gateway, as the container ships were already at sea before China locked down but these have since reduced. Hardly any construction materials have been carried due to most construction sites closing down but mineral and aggregate services have continued to run, mainly for Network Rail. Freightliner, DB Cargo and GB Railfreight have stored a lot of locos.

David Harby

Covid-19 – The Future?

by David Harby and Steve Jones (Secretary East Midlands branch)

There is only one certainty with the future and that is we will not go back to the way things were even 6 months ago.

In the short term nothing is likely to change whilst social distancing is in place and that will probably be with us until a vaccine is available (if ever) and enough of the population have been vaccinated to suppress the spread of Covid-19.

During this time TOCs will face plenty of challenges. As more people return to work numbers needing to travel by train are sure to increase despite the risks involved in travelling by public transport. This is going to put a lot of pressure on safely organising social distancing and dealing with possible overcrowding when they are limited to around 18 passengers per carriage. Similar safety concerns are going to occur at stations.

One way of increasing capacity is to lengthen trains, so we may see planned withdrawals postponed. Angel have announced that the 16 x EMR class 158 units they own are to undergo a C4 overhaul at Wabtec despite EMR planning to replace them with Class 170's.

One key message from TOCs is to encourage passengers to purchase tickets in advance by electronic means preferably by loading it onto your mobile phone to avoid the need to handle paper tickets. It will be interesting to see what effect this has on the long term move to electronic ticketing.

At present social distancing is being encouraged by various ways of marking seats as available/unavailable. In the longer term EMR are currently considering their options for the internal layout of the Class 170 units received recently from Scotland. It will be interesting to see if the seat spacing is changed and there are less seats in each carriage.

Bombardier Transportation has looked at the options for train interiors with social distancing:

https://www.railbusinessdaily.com/bombardier-transportation-uk-future-train-interior-concepts-more-compatible-with-social-distancing/

A more-or-less complete reversal of the recent policy of 'pack 'em in'! However, it cannot be viable longerterm.

Virus control on rolling stock is being done by enhanced and more regular on board cleaning. Air conditioning is normally just taken for granted (except

complaints about the unreliability of the Class 158 air conditioning) but how this is affected by Covid-19 is something that is exercising the minds of the TOC rolling stock engineers. For most efficient power consumption, the normal setting is to use as little fresh air as possible to avoid the need to heat or cool this fresh air. However doing this means the air within the carriage will be circulated throughout the carriage with the possibility of the virus being spread through the air con. Probably not so important on commuter services where the doors open frequently, but on a long distance service the doors could be closed for 2 hours or more so thoughts are turning to methods of cleaning up the re-circulated air.

We are assuming passenger numbers

will stay low for this year at least but at some t i m e passengers will come back to rail. What is uncertain is how many will return to rail and when they will travel.

Covid-19 response

Essential travel only
Capacity is limited.

Thank you for keeping the trains
for those who really need them.

A different message is now needed

The transition toward working from home (WFH) was well under way before Covid-19, but of course has accelerated massively. The traditional 9-5 Monday – Friday mass commute was already becoming a thing of the past. We suspect we will see a trend towards compression of the working week to Tuesdays – Thursdays as people extend their 'weekends', either as time off through flexible working, or through WFH. On the other hand, that may lead to an (eventual) increase in leisure travel.

The parallel moves to a more 24/7 society – especially for key workers – may mean that traffic flows on rail (and road) become more evenly spread throughout

the day. This may help the railways, in that they will not need to keep such massive amounts of capital tied up in assets that are only fully used for a few peak hours a day.

Then what about leisure travel? Locally will EMR, LNER, Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE) offer a lot more cheap advanced tickets to attract leisure travel back to rail? With predictions of high unemployment for quite some time in the future, how many passengers will be able to afford to travel, however many cheap tickets are offered? On the other hand if many can't afford a foreign holiday will they take more day trips though the counter-balancing loss of incoming UK tourism from foreign holiday-makers will affect the railways too; think of the trains between

Marylebone and Bicester Village and Oxford, packed with Japanese visitors!

Society will change, but an end to mass rail travel because of social

distancing means an end to spectator sports, concerts, cinemas, theatres, pubs and restaurants and any other activity where people gather in more than mere handfuls! Would the population tolerate that in the longer term?

Low oil prices are predicted to continue for years thus making car ownership and use cheaper than it has been for quite some time. How will that affect the modal shift to rail and will it go into reverse?

Mention of cheap tickets raise the issue of fares policy. This has been broken for ages and the government has already acknowledged that changes must be made. Railfuture nationally was

one of the stakeholders that had been involved in discussions with government over fares policy for some months before Covid. Whilst very few people are travelling would be an ideal time to make the major structural changes to fares policy that is needed. Will the government bite the bullet and do it?

Many of the people who have been killed by coronavirus have had underlying health problems. Likewise, franchising had underlying financial health problems before Covid with multiple franchises on course to fail during 2020. It is unlikely to survive the virus so the question is where do we go from here? Our hunch is some form of management contract similar to the Emergency Arrangements.

At least the Government and agencies such as Midlands Connect and Northern Powerhouse do not yet appear to have back-pedalled on their commitments to rail investment - at least in principle. There will be (already is?) a major economic down-turn. There is already media speculation (inspired no doubt by Government leaks) of a Government sponsored 'new- works programme', like there was in the 1930s, to stimulate the economy. And, if there is, will the railway be ready with shovel-ready schemes (Midland Main Line (MM) electrification, Lincoln - Nottingham line speed increases) to take advantage and get the country back on the rails, so to speak?

In this article we have posed a lot of questions but quite frankly we don't think anyone really knows the answers.

David Harby Steve Jones



Reversing Beeching and the East Lincs Line

The East Lincs Line (ELL) is not strictly a Beeching closure, but there are groups asking for reinstatement under the Government Reversing Beeching scheme and asking for Railfuture support.

Branch officers have looked at the possibilities of reopening the East Lincs Line and have come to the conclusion that there is no possibility of this achieving a positive business case so it has no chance of success.

Our views have taken into account the following assumptions:

Substantial sections of the line have been either built on or used for road schemes, so a new route would have to be found. The old line had many level crossings which would not be acceptable for a reopening and would have to be replaced by bridges. Given that the estimated cost of reinstating March to Wisbech with 22 level crossings is £200 million for just 7 miles of mothballed track the cost of reinstating the ELL would be huge.

The line would only serve one intermediate town (Louth) and this of modest size so the main passenger traffic would come from Grimsby and Boston, and would not be very large. Against this we have to take into account that there would be abstraction from other routes such as Grimsby to Newark.

There could be a market for freight between Immingham and Boston docks, however, this could be accommodated by a curve at Lincoln and redoubling between Sleaford and Boston at much lower cost.

Last, but not least, Railfuture have limited resources and we must concentrate our efforts on schemes with a high chance of success. Reinstating the ELL does not come within this remit.

David Harby

Friends of the Barton Line

- Services on the Barton Line were suspended because of the Covid-19 pandemic from Tuesday, 24 March, but were later reintroduced, albeit sporadically, as drivers had 'lost' their route knowledge.
- As from 1 March, the Barton Line franchise changed from Northern Rail to the government's Operator of Last Resort, to be known as Northern Trains Ltd. The Office of Rail & Road has intimated that the Barton Line service will not be transferred to East Midlands Railway until May 2021 at the earliest and may be as late as December 2021.
- Core sampling and other investigational works took place on the southern embankment at Barrow Haven station in March. The intention is to rebuild the platform later this year, possibly over several weeks around Christmas. The station is constructed on the site of a disused clay pit and, in

- recent years has shown signs of slipping.
- TransPennine Express has successfully introduced Automatic Selective Door Opening on its six-car trains operating out of Cleethorpes. The three end coaches on the Class 185 trains no longer need to be locked out of use between Cleethorpes and Doncaster. Where these trains call at short platforms, passengers should make their way towards the front of the train to disembark. For the Barton Line, this means the front five coaches at Grimsby Town and the front four coaches at Habrough.
- Extensive shrub clearance alongside the Barton branch in early March revealed several telegraph poles, complete with insulators, lying where they were felled.

Anthony Berridge

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★ Decarbonising Transport – setting the challenge

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878642/decarbonising-transport-setting-the-challenge.pdf

Climate Change and Rail

In June 2019 the government passed a law that requires us to achieve 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. To achieve this we will need to have phased out almost all fossil fuel use in the transport sector by then. How this will be achieved is discussed in a document* published in March 2020.

For the rail industry, Network Rail has been tasked with leading the Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS). You may be surprised to hear that around 48% of the rail network is already electrified, if we measure it by single track kilometres (stkm) as quite a lot of the electrified network is more than just a 2 track route.

The TDNS will essentially look at what forms of propulsion rail transport will need (electrification, battery or hydrogen fuel cells) and what is most appropriate for each currently non electrified route. Electrification is obviously the first choice, but given the high costs involved is not suitable for all routes. Reducing the costs of electrification will be a challenge that Network Rail will need to address. Hydrogen and battery performance will improve but they have a long way to go and informed comment is that they will only ever be peripheral choices. Hydrogen fuel cell is next best choice as it is go anywhere and suitable for up to about 200 miles, with the battery option at around 80 miles journey length the third choice.

An article by Roger Ford in the *June Modern Railways* suggests that another 10,800 stkm are suitable for electrification with 700 stkm identified for battery and 1000 stkm for fuel cell. This leaves around 3,000 stkm where the most suitable source is still to be determined.

Where does this leave Lincolnshire? On the assumption that all freight traction will be electric, except for battery/electric

bimode on some short journeys, we could see much of Lincolnshire electrified by 2050. Grimsby – Lincoln – Newark – Nottingham, the Joint Line and Cleethorpes – Scunthorpe – Doncaster are all freight routes so will be obvious electrification candidates, especially as they (except maybe Lincoln – Barnetby) have already had all bridges raised etc as part of the upgrade for container traffic.

Barton branch seems ideal for battery/electric bimode so that just leaves the Skegness branch where there are doubts. Boston is attracting increasing amounts of freight, so again, maybe electrification at least that far is an option. The question then is do they decide to go for the hydrogen fuel cell option or battery to Skegness? Or is electrification the best option?

This is of course dependent on many outside factors, not least whether the politicians will change their minds on the 'net zero' 2050 target. Timescale is another factor. Does electrification of freight routes get some priority for example, so the ubiquitous Class 66 fleets can be replaced by electric traction as they reach the end of their economic lives? Would Nottingham - Lincoln and Grantham be an obvious follow on from Midland Main Line (MML) electrification? The latest diesel fleets such as the Northern Class 195s have much cleaner engines so is replacement of them left until the late 2040s?

These are the sort of questions the TDNS is looking at. We should have some idea of the option solutions by the end of this year, but indications of timescale may be further in the future.

For a much more detailed discussion of this topic I recommend reading *Modern Railways June* 2020.

David Harby

***See panel opposite**

Doncaster Platform 0 – Update on Developments



Remote Platform 0 at Doncaster (*Photo: J. Thomas*)

I was invited by colleagues of the Yorkshire branch of Railfuture to join them in meeting with transportation officers at Sheffield City Region so that I could raise the issues of Platform 0. They suggested that they might be able to take some action over some of the issues if I could present them with a business case for doing so. That was guite a big ask, but what I could do was to show what an impact the new arrangements have on passengers on the Scunthorpe to Doncaster line. To that end, I approached Crowle Town Council who, to their credit, threw their weight behind a survey of passengers at Crowle station and invited the clerks of Althorpe Parish Council and Thorne Town Council to do the same.

Survey forms were left at the station and I had a number of conversations with people waiting for the train. What I did find was that few people were concerned with losing the through service to Sheffield and that the main concerns were around the coinciding of the re timetabling of the TransPennine

from Manchester at the same time as Platform 0 was introduced, the lack of consistency around holding the Northern stopper service when the TPE was late, the absence of a monitor at the foot of the stairs to Platform 0, the security and safety issues of being on the platform late at night and the sheer practicality of getting to and from there for people with limited mobility and/or with heavy luggage.

I felt that these concerns were taken seriously and was told that from 2021, there is likely to a half hourly service on the line between Scunthorpe and Doncaster, which will ease the connection issue. There is also a plan for Doncaster just started under Network Rail Modular Strategic Planning, which can look at these issues. They also said they would put me in touch with the Client Stakeholder Manager at Doncaster who is supposed to be increasing staff coverage on the station. This has not happened yet but then the world has been a bit preoccupied of late!

I am particularly concerned about safety issues after a couple of incidents just before Christmas when I rang both the Help and Emergency buttons on Platform 0 and was not answered after 60 rings!

Following on from this, Mike Savage and I are planning a survey of the stations on that line and look at what improvements can be campaigned for.

Ann Hindley

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See page 8 for Corresponding Committee Members.

Remember:
Articles,
Letters,
Photographs,
always welcome for
YOUR
newsletter.

New Platform at Hubberts Bridge



A new westbound platform 2 at Hubberts Bridge was brought into service on 1 June. The original platform was condemned by Network Rail as being unsafe and demolished over the Christmas period in 2019, prior to track renewal scheduled for the same period. This enabled new track to be re-aligned with the new platform and adjacent level crossing. The whole project from design to implementation was turned around in under seven months by main contractors SYSTRA and AMCO Giffen. All construction work was carried out at night when trains were not running. During construction, a rail replacement bus service for westbound passengers was in operation.

The new structure is of a modular design supported on plies. The new platform can now accommodate 2-car units rather than a single car. The final piece of work is construction of a waiting shelter which has been postponed due to Covid-19.

(Photo: Graham the Guard on Twitter)

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Please let the Editor Phil Mason, 10 Cottesmore Close, Grantham NG31 9JL, phil.mason@trackprint.net have copy by 19 September.

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