

RailFAIR! - Castle to Castle

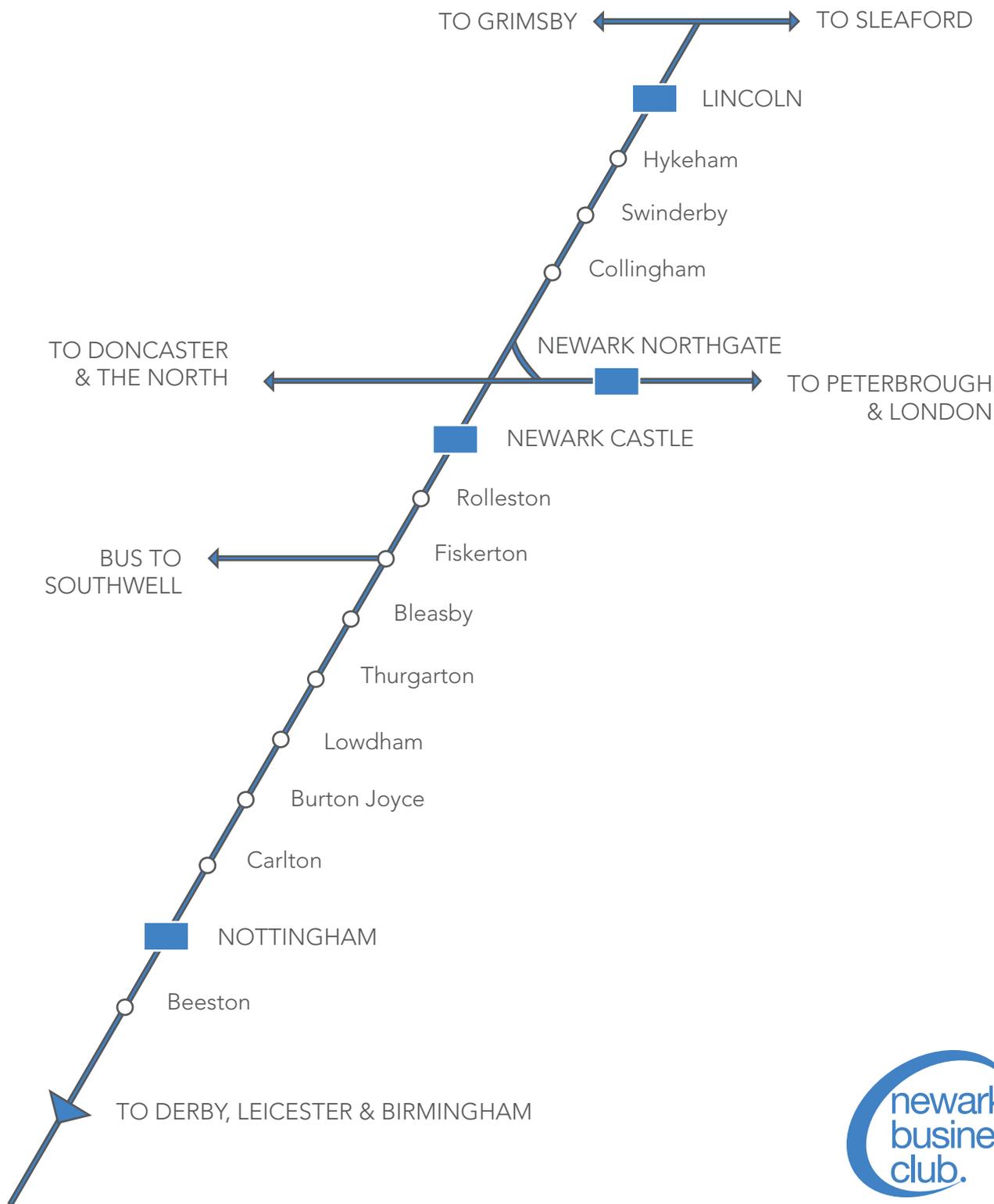
Nottingham to Lincoln - Proposed Train Service Improvements

Campaigning for Better Rail Services

RailFAIR!
Castle to Castle

Nottingham to Lincoln

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September 2013



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Nottingham to Lincoln - Proposed Train Service Improvements



THE BACKGROUND.

This is a revised and updated briefing note to replace the one issued by Newark Business Club on 8th July 2013. It has been prepared using information from the latest development timetable that East Midlands Trains are currently working on.

Nottingham and Lincoln are two of the major cities that drive economic growth in the East Midlands. The railway line through Newark Castle that connects the two has a train service that is arguably one of the worst in the UK. The service frequency is around half that of some seaside branch lines and the fastest journey time is slower than over 100 years ago with an average time of no less than 60 minutes for the 33¾ mile end-to-end journey.

Government action over the last decade has been to make the service worse rather than develop it, including:

Year	Action
2003	Service frequency reduced from two trains per hour to hourly.
2005	Through trains from Lincoln and Newark to Birmingham withdrawn . At the same time some well used peak-hour trains like the 17.06 from Lincoln to Nottingham were also withdrawn .
2007	In a statement to the stock market, promised a two-hourly service from Lincoln to London from December 2010.
2009	Went back on the promise of the two-hourly service from Lincoln to London. The May 2011 timetable change was a disaster for Lincoln with extended journey times to/from London mainly driven because the connections at Newark Northgate on and off London trains either required increased waiting times or were broken altogether.
2012	Reduced capacity in Lincolnshire by replacing the one two-car train operating entirely within the county with a one-car unit. This has led to regular overcrowding and instances when people have not been able to board trains.

At the same time as the Government were heaping more misery on rail users in Lincolnshire in December 2012, they were doubling the train service frequency on the East Suffolk line between Ipswich and Lowestoft, clearly requiring additional rolling stock and higher costs. Even with the emerging numbers of extra passengers using that improved service, the number of journeys on the East Suffolk line is around one-half of those generated by the inadequate service between Nottingham and Lincoln. It is more evidence that the Government does not support train services in an even-handed way.



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The Nottingham to Lincoln line is also an important freight artery connecting the Midlands with the Humber Ports and the freight business is almost certain to benefit from an upgrading of the track and signalling on the route.

THE STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE SERVICE.

Business representatives, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire County Councils together with other Local Authorities, User Groups, East Midlands Trains and Network Rail have identified a strategy to improve the service. The overall objective is to restore the two train per hour service frequency between Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln within five years. It is proposed to do so on a staged basis that would also deliver faster journey times with each stage. A key objective of the strategy is to encourage modal shift from road to rail by improving the peak-hour service in a way that offers a real choice for passengers who commute into Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln.

The stages for the strategy are:

Stage	Proposal	Target Date
1	Extend hourly Matlock to Nottingham trains to Newark Castle to serve intermediate stations and provide faster journeys for the Leicester to Lincoln service.	December 2013 (The date missed through lack of modest pump-priming funding but May 2014 remains an option)
2	Network Rail propose to re-signal the line between Nottingham and Newark Castle to allow for a line speed of 85/90mph.	December 2016
3	Upgrade track and level crossings between Nottingham and Newark Castle to increase line speed from 60mph to 85/90mph.	December 2016
4	Upgrade signalling, track and level crossings between Newark Castle/Newark Northgate and Lincoln to increase line speed from 55/70mph to 85/90mph.	December 2018
5	Electrify line from Nottingham to Lincoln as an add-on to the Midland Line electrification.	To be determined

The strategy would be an effective way of starting the upgrading of the infrastructure between the Humber Ports and Birmingham that has significant political support in the region.

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THE BENEFITS FROM THE IMPROVED STRATEGY

Lincoln becomes the big winner after the completion of stage 4 with the restoration of a two train per hour service to Newark Castle and Nottingham with journey times averaging around 40 minutes. Stage 4 will also provide opportunities for faster journey times between Lincoln and London via Newark Northgate.

However, real benefits for Lincoln come right from stage 1 which would give:

- *Two additional morning trains to Nottingham, both arriving before 07.45,*
- *An evening service every hour in both directions - currently 2-hour gaps,*
- *Average journey times from Nottingham 7 minutes faster than at present - (53½ minutes instead of the current 60¾ minutes),*
- *Faster journey times to Nottingham – mostly (10 out of 13) 52 minutes or under between 08.00 and 19.00.*

It is surely important to have an improved train service to support the major investment in the LN6 project and **Hykeham** is a big winner from stage 1. The service to/from Nottingham would be transformed with the proposed service delivering:

- *An increased service frequency, from 8 to 18 trains daily eastbound and from 9 to 18 trains westbound,*
- *A regular service with one train every hour in each direction,*
- *Faster journey times, averaging 46 minutes to Nottingham (currently 54 minutes) with journeys from Nottingham taking an average of 45 minutes (currently 49 minutes).*

The train service at the major intermediate station, **Newark Castle** would be massively improved with the restoration of the two trains an hour frequency to/from Nottingham between 07.00 to 18.00 and the number of arrivals in Nottingham before 09.30 increasing from three to seven trains. In addition, through trains to Long Eaton and Derby would be restored.

For other intermediate stations, **Collingham, Fiskerton and Carlton** would see improvements with an hourly service that is already provided at **Lowdham**. The service level at the other stations on the route will be broadly maintained at the existing level although timings have been altered in some cases to improve journey opportunities and hopefully encourage growth from the present low use.

Stage 1 of the strategy would more effectively connect Lincoln line stations into the excellent bus, and planned improved tram connections at the **Nottingham** Station Hub.



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THE DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY.

A key feature of the proposed strategy is that, whilst it requires a maximum initial funding of £700,000 per annum for three years to implement stage 1, it is mainly delivered through enhancing planned track and signalling renewals and improved rolling stock utilisation resulting from faster journey times. As such, it is exactly the sort of train service improvement the Government should be initiating and not resisting.

However, the Department for Transport has consistently refused to fund the additional trains stating that they must be funded by Local Authorities for the first three years after which they would consider providing the necessary funding. The Government annual spend on transport per head in the East Midlands at £235 in 2010/11 was significantly below the average spend for England of £344 per head providing yet more evidence that they do not see regional equality as necessary when funding transport projects.

Whilst the delay in introducing the improved service is disappointing, an even bigger concern is the impact that it will have on stage 3, the upgrading of the track and signalling between Nottingham and Newark Castle. The business case for stage 3 depends crucially on the number of passengers generated from the time saving delivered by stage 1 with all Lincoln, and the majority of Newark passengers as beneficiaries; this means non-stop trains between Nottingham and Newark. Without this, there is every possibility that Network Rail will re-signal the line between Nottingham and Newark with the track still only capable of the existing 60mph running and the train service on the route remaining fossilised in the 1960s for another thirty years. Worse still, there would be a further knock-on effect with stage 4 as it will not have the benefits from the passengers who would be attracted by a faster overall journey time from Nottingham to Lincoln; this will weaken the business case with it being purely based on the journey time benefits between Newark and Lincoln.

Nottinghamshire County Council has set aside a significant level of funding towards the extra trains but unless national and local politicians find a way of securing the additional funding quickly, the whole strategy will collapse. The Transport Secretary, the Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin MP made clear, in a statement on 26th March 2013, that discussions were taking place to extend the existing East Midlands Trains franchise by thirty months and that his department will look to negotiate further passenger benefits, which will ensure the best deal for taxpayers. *Funding the additional trains would deliver this pledge.*

Newark Business Club consider the upgrading of the railway between Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln essential to drive economic growth in a corridor with three government designated growth points. Funding for the stage 1 improvements is required immediately to start the delivery of the strategy that will transform the train service on the route. We call on national and local politicians to secure the funding to kick-start those improvements as a matter of urgency.