

**Report of meeting with East Midlands Trains on cycling issues,
EMT Offices, Derby, Tuesday 29 January 2008**

Present:-

- Emma Knight (EK), Head of External Communications, East Midlands Trains
- David Mather (DM), East Midlands Trains
- Kelly Jennings (KJ), Customer Services Manager, East Midlands Trains
- Alastair Meikle (AM), Chesterfield Cycling Campaign
- Martin Bright (MB), Sustrans Yorkshire Office, Leeds
- Andy Salkeld (AS), Cycling Coordinator, Leicester City Council
- Mark Palfreyman (MP), Leicestershire County Council
- Keith Morgan (KM0), Nottingham City Council
- Paul Fulwood (PF), Passenger Focus
- Hugh McClintock (HMCC), Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign) and Assistant Convenor, East Midlands Cycling Forum

Promotion of cycling in Station Travel Plans

HMCC began by saying measures to encourage use of bikes to stations needed to be seen in the wider context of continuing projected increases in passenger numbers and the consequent increased need to develop coordinated approaches to managing their travel to and from stations with a view to maximising the use of all sustainable modes. Cycling's role was a very important part of this wider scenario, alongside access on foot and by other public transport etc. This meant that the new development of Station Travel Plans, as proposed in the July 2007 DfT Rail White Paper, was a very important opportunity to develop systematically a new more comprehensive and coordinated approach, including setting of targets for modal shift and regular monitoring of progress in achieving these.

PF said that he understood that there had been considerable interest from local authorities in being involved in the Pilot Station Travel Plans, especially from Warwickshire County Council and Transport for London. There was now a list of 25 possible candidates being considered by the DfT and ATOC were also one of the major partners in the National Steering Group being set up to oversee the planning and delivery of these schemes in the next few years.

On the subject of funding for station (access) improvements DM mentioned a sum of £5.4m for approximately 89 stations of which £1mn was already earmarked for Nottingham and £100,000 had recently been spent improving Derby Station facilities.

Secure and quality short- and long-term bike parking at stations, including publicity, management and maintenance aspects

HMCC emphasised the need for expanded and improved quality bike parking to be provided at both larger and smaller stations, with careful regard to security of bikes and users and also the convenience of users in being able to access cycle parking easily when pressed for time in going to catch their trains.

However, it was also important to recognise that not all cyclists riding to stations were doing so to catch trains but that many were also using bikes when popping in to make shorter visits, to enquire about trains and buy tickets, etc. For this group convenience of access to the ticket office was particularly important and for shorter such visits convenience might weigh relatively more than security, at least in daylight hours.

Cycle parking, for both shorter and longer term use needed be carefully installed, well-managed, well-maintained and well-publicised, within and outside the station and more widely. For short term provision, e.g. cycle stands, this meant also keeping the stands clear of clutter and repairing damaged stands, as well as having a policy to deal with abandoned bikes, after affixing a clear notice to bikes left for very long periods to warn the owner that after a certain date it would be removed.

Longer term cycle parking could take the form of cycle lockers or cycle compounds. In view of the cost, in terms both of finance and space, of lockers, cycle compounds were likely to be more appropriate in large stations, if they could be made secure. Where cycle lockers were provided there was a danger of vandalism or abuse, especially at isolated stations. Keeping a careful track of who was using them was therefore essential and, it was agreed in discussion, if this could not be provided then lockers were often likely to be as theft- or vandalism-prone as cycle stands in isolated locations.

Ensuring the personal safety of users of bike compounds, particularly after dark, was important on the access routes within and outside the Station, particularly between these areas and platforms, and installation of good lighting as well as train departure screens and clocks on these approaches could also be helpful.

The incorporation of cycle repair facilities could also be considered, at larger compounds, or facilitating arrangements with nearby bike shops for the servicing and repair of bikes left all day, as was common at stations in the Netherlands, for example.

DM raised the question of how much cyclists thought it important to have undercover cycle parking. HMCC said that he thought that most cyclists found this preferable, especially if they were leaving their bikes for a long time, but that they might be more willing to use unsheltered stands if particular locations were regarded as more secure and/or more convenient. The stands installed last year near the front and rear (Pride Park) entrances of Derby Station were a good example of sheltered provision.

HMCC also mentioned that there were now several good examples of good quality cycle parking facilities at stations in the UK including, for example, the double layer stacking system of bike parking at Guildford Station in the South West Trains franchise area (which recently received a national cycle-rail award) and also the facility at Finsbury Park Station in London developed by Network Rail in partnership with Transport for London. Users at this had to register with the attendant before they could use the compound, which they could then do with a smart card on a 24-hour basis. Good lighting and CCTV also helped bike security. He said this compound had been much admired and that TfL were now developing others at London stations, including one due to open soon at London Bridge Station, he understood.

AS pointed out that the DfT and Cycling England had recently announced a further programme of Cycling Demonstration Town projects (similar to the successful ones implemented over the last 3 years in several places including Derby, Brighton, Darlington, Exeter, Lancaster and Aylesbury) and that it was very likely that integration of cycling with rail use would feature prominently in the new round of bids on which local authorities such as his (Leicester City Council) were now working. HMCC said that he understood that Nottingham and Derby City Councils were also working on bids for the new round of CDTs.

KM, from Nottingham City Council, gave a brief run down of plans for cycle parking at Nottingham Station, being pursued with EMT, as well as asking for opinions on the use of a smart card entry and exit system.

Safe access routes to and from stations from different parts of their catchment areas.

HMcC said that it was important that the provision of good bike parking at stations was closely integrated with the development of safe access routes, to encourage usage. These needed to be planned with regard to personal safety as well as traffic safety and to be well-signed and promoted to encourage usage, particularly among people who previously would not have thought of accessing a station by bike.

As well as signing existing routes there needed to be a programme of upgrading these and also ensuring that further routes were developed and improved by taking advantage of wider traffic management changes, regeneration and redevelopment plans, and public realm improvements etc. in the vicinity of the station and near its main access routes.

These routes, covering approaches to the station from different directions, should form an important part of the local cycle network and, like other routes, be developed in close consultation both with local cycling groups and with the local authorities. Links to and from nearby Sustrans National Cycle Network routes should also be signed, as was already done at several stations.

Ideally these routes should focus on the station entrance and the main cycle parking areas, on different approaches. However, it was recognised in discussions that other considerations sometimes made this difficult including a general shortage of space, and the need to improve access for pedestrians, buses and taxis, etc., depending on the local circumstances and the varying constraints and opportunities at each station. Minimising the risk of conflict between arriving and departing passengers using different modes was also important.

Well-designed and well-promoted safe access routes could not only do much to encourage cycle trips to and from stations from people living within 10-15 minutes riding time (depending on the local topography etc.) but, along with good bike parking, could help to reduce pressures for more car parking. This was particularly important where space for car parking was at a premium and where, in some cases apparently, would-be rail passengers were now often deterred from using the stations because of a lack of car parking.

Ensuring much more effective use of limited space had apparently featured very much in the plans recently implemented for expanding cycle parking at Bedford Station, coordinated by First Capital Connect and Patrick Lingwood of Bedfordshire County Council, one of the best examples of recent FCC initiatives of this kind.

By contrast, Loughborough Station was a very striking example of where there were many sign of unmet demand with bikes left locked to any railing and posts etc, and this despite the poor cycle access to that station. This very unsatisfactory situation at station with well above proportions of passengers arriving on bikes, had been highlighted in the recent Travelwatch East Midlands survey of the main modes used by passengers to access several more important stations in the EMT franchise area, as reported at a recent Travelwatch East Midlands Conference in Leicester.

MP said this problem was now being addressed by Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council (Tony Herington) and that Leics CC were also looking at what could be done to improve the situation at Narborough station.

Carriage of bikes on trains, including pre-travel information and reservation arrangements

Introducing discussion on this item, HMcC said that cycling groups appreciated that there were major constraints, as a result of DfT policy on rolling stock, in expanding provision for bikes to be carried on trains in peak periods. Expanded, and more secure, bike parking at stations, could certainly help to reduce demand for bike carriage on trains, as could local cycle hire facilities, but it was also important to recognise that there were many people for whom the ability to take a bike (and not just a folding bike) on board was very useful, depending on the distance from their start of their overall journey to the train and from the end station to their destination and the availability of other means of transport and the

comparative time of different options for completing their journey.

At the very least it was essential that existing capacity for taking bikes on trains during peak periods was not reduced and that, in the case of 8-car trains, that a minimum of 4 bikes, rather than 2, could be carried.

It was also important to think positively about the potential for encouraging the carriage of bikes on more lightly used services, outside the peak and at weekends, particularly in areas with relatively low traffic volumes such as the north of Nottinghamshire and much of Lincolnshire. Promoting bike carriage on trains under these conditions could help attract more passengers and give an option for people wanting to cycle in quieter and more scenic areas, without feeling that they needed either to cycle all the way there and back, or, to take their bike on a car. The use of flexible space on trains was another way of improving provision for bikes, alongside that for people with wheelchairs, pushchairs etc.

Even where it was thought necessary to impose a limit of 2 bikes per train it would be very helpful if EMT could adopt the same policy as now adopted in the Northern Rail franchise area where train staff were told to use their discretion in whether to allow more bikes to be carried, in less crowded conditions. This would help to attract families who were much discouraged by the application of a rigid 2 bikes only rule. They also were likely particularly to appreciate the flexibility of being able to turn up and find a space on a train on a fine day, without having to make bookings in advance, when they decided at short notice to go for a leisure ride.

DM said that there could be a danger from such a flexible policy in that it might result in a backlash with cyclists complaining that they were not being shown the same flexible attitude one day that they had enjoyed on a previous occasion. MB said that, as a member of the Northern Cycle Forum, he was not aware of any reports of such a backlash in their area but that Paul Salvesen of NR could provide more comprehensive information. On the contrary cyclists had commented favourable on the more flexible attitude by staff and letting staff know of this feedback could help their morale. It was important not to judge users' reactions only the number of complaints received and cycling groups could encourage their members to give positive comments where appropriate. Many cyclists, he said, had already commented very favourable on the change of policy.

Another important point about bike carriage is that cyclists needed to be able to rely on not being stranded in the case of late trains or missed connections (on longer journeys), e.g. finding that only a substitute bus was available without any arrangements for them to take their bike on the rest of their journey or to stay at a local hotel until they could complete it on the following day.

Cycle hire at or nearby stations, e.g. local cycle shops.

HMcC said that the ideal situation would be universal provision of bike hire at all stations as was the case in the Netherlands and Switzerland. However he was aware that bike hire at stations in the UK was much rarer but could still be encouraged. One way to do this was to work closely with existing bike hire outlets including those run informally by nearby cycle shops. One example of this was Bunney's Bikes on Carrington Street in Nottingham, two minutes walk from Nottingham Station (who also, incidentally, informally offered secure bike parking for people catching trains, for a small charge).

The development of wider cycle-rail packages between operators, cycling groups, local authorities, tourist boards and other possible partner agencies, including local bike recycling schemes.

HMcC suggested there was much scope for EMT to work in partnership on cycling-rail issues and not only with cycling groups and local authorities. Other possible partners included local cycle shops, bike hire outlets, adult cycle training organisations (e.g. Ridewise in Nottingham), local bike recycling schemes (as developed very successfully in Leicester, for example), and also tourism authorities and hoteliers. In Nottingham for example Dale Twigger of Experience Nottinghamshire, the main tourist promotion

organisation in the county, was working on developing cycling packages for local hotels.

An important aim of local bike recycling schemes was to provide training in basic mechanical skills and collaboration could help to recruit railways staff needing these skills, as Dave Holladay (CTC Public Transport Campaigner) had often emphasised. He had also drawn attention to the newly appointed Cycling Champions in several parts of the country (including Leicester and Derby) and there was also scope here for cooperation.

There was also scope for EMT to become involved in helping to sponsor major cycling events in their franchise area, for example the Ride Leicester Festival in June Ride Leicester Festival (27/28/29th June (including a Cycling Seminar/Bike Film Festival/NSPCC Charity Ride, and the annual Great Nottinghamshire Bike Ride (on Sunday 22 June in 2008). This had been done by other operators, he understood, e.g. in East Anglia.

Learning from wider experience, particularly the award winning work by Northern Trains (Cycle Strategy) and the new DfT/Cycling England/ATOC Cycling-Rail Task Force.

HMcC and MB emphasised that we could learn much from developing good practice elsewhere, including the award winning work by Northern Rail on developing a Cycling Strategy and a Cycling Forum. This Forum, started early in 2007, now met quarterly. About 60 people and organisations, including many from local authorities in the area, were on the mailing list and meetings attracted about 30 people. The next meeting was taking place in Huddersfield on the following day and HMcC said that he had been invited by MB, one of its founder members, to attend and learn from their experience.

The new Cycling-Rail Task Force, being set up by the DfT, Cycling England, ATOC, with CTC, Sustrans etc. was due to have its first meeting soon, HMcC understood, and this would also help facilitate the dissemination of ideas on good practice, from which we could further learn as we could also from the development of Station Travel Plans.

Ongoing arrangements for consultation with national and local cycling groups, both on general issues affecting cyclists in the franchise area and on station specific issues

It was agreed that there needed to be a clear point of contact for comments/suggestions about improvements for cyclists at particular stations. EK suggested be channelled through EMT Customer Relations and then taken up with local Station Manager and local authorities.

It was also agreed that, to encourage wider debate and comment, a slot be included on cycling rail issue at the next East Midlands Cyclists' Forum meeting to be held in Chesterfield on Saturday 5 April, hosted by the Chesterfield Cycling Campaign and AM agreed to this, whether or not EMT could provide a speaker which might be difficult, EK said, in view of the volume of such requests they were now getting.

It was further agreed to hold another similar meeting in about a year's time and that all involved should meanwhile keep closely in touch by email etc. By then the new Cycling-Rail Task Force should be well into its work and we could also take full advantage of this very important new national initiative.

HMcC, 7.2.08