

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HIGHWAYS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
CABINET MEMBER**

CONSULTATION: INTER CITY EAST COAST RAIL SERVICES

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 A new franchise for the Inter City East Coast (ICEC) rail service will start in 2013. The Department for Transport (DfT) is consulting councils and others about the services they wish the new operator to provide.
- 1.2 There is no East Coast route station in North Lincolnshire at the moment. Our proposed response concentrates on:
 - ensuring that good connections are maintained at Doncaster and Newark; and
 - pressing for direct services to North Lincolnshire stations from 2019. From this date, new trains may make it easier to provide through services to places off the main line.
- 1.3 The deadline for responses is 18 September 2012. As such an urgent decision is required by the Cabinet Member on this matter.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The East Coast Main Line runs from London Kings Cross to Peterborough, Newark, Doncaster, York, Newcastle and on to Scotland. There is also a frequent service to Leeds, branching from the main line at Doncaster.
- 2.2 ICEC trains do not serve any station in North Lincolnshire. We rely on connections at Doncaster and Newark.
- 2.3 Like most passenger rail services, ICEC will be franchised to a commercial train company. The DfT specifies the service provided. Operators compete to offer either the highest premium payment to the Government or the lowest subsidy.

- 2.4 The current ICEC franchise expires in December 2013. The process to find a new operator will start in October 2012. The DfT has asked councils for their views about services over the next 10 - 12 years. This is about overall objectives and principles rather than a discussion about a specific timetable.
- 2.5 The DfT's objectives for the franchise include:
- Realising the passenger benefits of long distance services and contributing towards the overall financial position of the railways
 - Supporting economic growth
 - Ensuring that reliability, punctuality and the passenger experience improve over the life of the franchise.
- 2.6 The council's draft response forms Appendix 1. It is not likely that ICEC trains will serve any North Lincolnshire station before 2019. From that date, new InterCity Express Programme (IEP) trains will be available. Some IEP trains will have both diesel and electric power. Potentially, they can serve places away from the main line. This could include Scunthorpe and Barnetby. Our response stresses the importance of doing this.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The DfT wishes to explore whether some local services should be included in the ICEC franchise. In our area, they identify:
- Newark – Lincoln – Barnetby – Grimsby (Currently East Midlands Trains)
 - Doncaster – Scunthorpe – Barnetby – Grimsby – Cleethorpes (Currently part of the First TransPennine service from Manchester and Sheffield).
 - Cleethorpes – Barton (Currently Northern Trains).

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The DfT says that the advantages of a wider franchise could include:
- Integrated planning of long distance and local services
 - Encouragement of new through service opportunities
 - A more diverse franchise, with less reliance on variable income on main line trains. (Though all of the suggested add-on services are subsidised).

4.2 The DfT also lists some potential risks:

- Increased cost because established franchises will be split up
- Loss of management focus on particular markets
- Inconsistency with emerging policy for devolution of local rail services
- Loss of some through journey opportunities.

4.3 We suggest not favouring this “chalk and cheese” option. Our reasons are given in full in our proposed response to Question 3 as set out in the appendix. Our particular worry is that it could lead to a split in the TransPennine service at Doncaster. This would mean that any passenger travelling from North Lincolnshire towards Sheffield and Manchester would have to change trains, as well as those using the main line. We do not believe that any gain for the ICEC service would outweigh the adverse effect of splitting up regional networks.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 There are no financial, staffing, property or IT implications for the council.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 Environmental

6.1.1 The east coast main line is one of the UK’s main strategic transport routes. A frequent, reliable and affordable service is essential to the country’s economic health and development. A good rail service provides an attractive alternative to the private car, particularly to and between major cities.

6.1.2 For areas away from the main line itself, reliable and convenient connections and, if possible, through services will encourage the use of the rail system and reduce “railheading” by private car to main line stations.

6.2 There are no other implications to consider.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 We have had discussions with officers from neighbouring authorities. Their views are broadly the same as ours.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the council's response as set out in Appendix 1 for forwarding to the Department for Transport.
- 8.2 That this decision is treated as urgent to allow for meeting the Department of Transport deadline for a response to the consultation of 18 September 2012.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Inter City East Coast Franchise Consultation Document, Department of transport, June 2012 available at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-24/>

Inter City East Coast Franchise Consultation

North Lincolnshire Council Response

The DfT ask a series of questions. Our response is set out as replies to these questions.

Q1. Do you agree that the proposed franchise objectives are an appropriate expression of the priorities?

Main line trains do not serve any North Lincolnshire station. We rely on connecting services for links to London and other ICEC stations. Though there is an opportunity to serve North Lincolnshire destinations directly in the longer term using IEP trains, it is likely that many journeys will continue to be via connections.

Convenient and secure connections with local and regional networks are vital to assist economic growth in North Lincolnshire. They also encourage travel from local stations rather than railheading to Doncaster or Newark. This benefits other rail services and helps to reduce carbon emissions. Conversely, poor and missed connections discourage rail use and give the impression that areas away from the main line are “hard to reach”.

We believe that the objectives for the ICEC and other franchises should include the recognition of the importance of co-ordination with connecting services. We need:

- A clear statement about when connecting services will be held
- No penalty for trains delayed awaiting connections and
- A return to a punctual and reliable service which is the key to providing good connections.

Q2 Are there any other issues that you believe the Department should take into account in determining the length of the new ICEC franchise? (10 – 12 years)

No.

Q3 What is your view on the new ICEC franchise as a multi-purpose train operator along the route rather than focusing only on the current InterCity services?

We do not agree with this proposal. Integration of ICEC and regional and local trains is very important to North Lincolnshire. However, we think that that a multi-purpose franchise would have adverse effects.

- The ICEC service is a strategic route of national importance. The franchisee should focus on its operation and development.
- It would lead to fragmentation of the network. More operators would be involved in service provision on routes away from the main line. (Contrast this with expectation that in future there will be one operator for the North of England, rather than the present two).
- It would encourage more sub-contracting of services and functions. Our experience of the Cleethorpes – Barton line (franchised to Northern but run by TransPennine) leads us to believe that this is expensive and can result in poor customer service.
- Management attention would inevitably concentrate on high-revenue main line services at the expense of connecting routes and local passengers.
- Connections between ICEC trains and other services are important. However, local and regional trains have other functions beyond acting as feeders for the main line. Crucially, we do not wish to see any arrangement which terminates South TransPennine trains at Doncaster, forcing passengers travelling towards Sheffield and Manchester to change trains.

This option appears to assume that good connections can only work if they are between the same operator's trains. We believe that the railway should provide convenient and reliable connections, irrespective of who runs the trains. Higher revenue and passenger satisfaction scores will reward operators taking the wider view.

Q4. Do you have any comments on which services might be considered for inclusion in the new ICEC franchise and how they might be specified?

See Q3.

Q5 Are you aware of any other rail or non-rail major development schemes that are likely to have a significant impact on the new ICEC franchise?

No.

Q6 Are there any research findings, evidence or other publications that you wish to bring to the attention of the Department as part of this refranchising process?

No.

Q7 We invite your views on the train service specification. Which aspects should the Department mandate and which can be left to commercial discretion? Should there be a change in the specified minimum service level when IEP trains are introduced?

We support the key issues set out on paragraph 9.5. In addition, we wish the specification to require a calling pattern at intermediate stations which facilitates connections with regional and local train services.

We agree that there should be a review of the minimum service specification when the IEP fleet is introduced, so that the capabilities of these new trains are fully used.

Q8 We invite your views on the potential for the franchise to serve locations accessible from the East Coast Main Line which currently have limited or no direct services to London.

The introduction of IEP trains in 2018/19 offers a golden opportunity to provide direct services between London and Scunthorpe and Barnetby. Such services are fundamental and key to the development of our rural economy and our own urban centres and would bring an important boost to industry and commerce in North Lincolnshire and encourage economic growth. A recent survey of the Institute of Accountants for England and Wales underlined this argument. The survey showed that local rail links to the national network are very important to business and higher education and also for inward investment.

The ICEC service offers international connections via St Pancras. These serve the national network and again, provide crucial links for areas away from the main line and a real travel choice to a wider catchment area nationally.

Q9 Are you aware of any ways in which improved ticketing, smart ticketing and passenger information might be provided?

We support the requirement to use new and emerging ticket technologies.

Q10 Do you support the use of National Passenger Survey (NPS) scores to monitor and improve service quality of the ICEC franchise? Are there any other approaches that might be more effective in securing improvements in customer experience?

We support the use of NPS scores for this purpose.

Q11 What are consultees' priorities for improvements to the stations managed by the ICEC franchisee?

No station in North Lincolnshire is on the current ICEC network. It is important that stations offering ICEC connections, principally Doncaster and Newark, have facilities which permit easy interchange with regional and local services. This includes accurate and immediate information provision and suitable waiting areas, toilets and refreshment outlets. These things are particularly important at times of disruption.

Q12 What do you believe are the most important factors in improving safety and security (actual or perceived)?

- Staffing
- Lighting
- Architectural design
- CCTV and "Help Points"
- Safe access to stations by car, public transport and sustainable modes including walking and cycling.
- A reliable and punctual service which removes the need for unexpected waits.

Q13 Are there any increments or decrements to the DfT's proposed specification that stakeholders would wish to see and would be prepared to fund?

None.