

All change: The Castle Line

Nottingham - Lincoln Strategic

Outline Business Case



Midlands Connect
Transport | Investment | Growth

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Karl McCartney, MP for Lincoln

"Any improvement on the Nottingham to Lincoln line is welcome news for Lincoln. Nottingham is geographically one of our closest cities and bolstering our connection with Nottingham via improved rail connectivity will inevitably benefit both Lincoln and the entire Greater Lincoln area.

"I look forward to seeing this scheme progress, I am sure the Department for Transport will see how beneficial such a scheme would be to the wider economy."



Maria Machancoses, CEO of Midlands Connect

"Improvements to this corridor between Nottingham and Lincoln will make life easier for businesses, communities and visitors to this area. The scheme will tackle the slow and infrequent rail services which have resulted in relatively few journeys between the two cities being made by train.

"As the UK continues to ramp up its efforts towards net zero, the need for sustainable transport solutions is greater than ever before. This project represents the first step in attracting more passengers to use the trains, to allow further improvements in the future.

"Midlands Connect is committed to making the case for this strategic investment to boost the economy in the Midlands and provide a greener, sustainable transport network."



Background

The Nottingham to Lincoln corridor forms part of the Midlands' pan regional rail network. It is a critical link between two cities, providing an important east-west connection. Rail services along the route which is known as the Castle Line, connect Lincoln, Grimsby and Cleethorpes to Nottingham and Leicester via Newark.

The route also serves urban and rural areas such as the Gedling borough, the North Kesteven district of Lincolnshire and the more rural areas in the Newark and Sherwood district of Nottinghamshire. It plays an important role in integrating many rural communities of Lincolnshire with the cities and economic hubs.

This corridor is a key part of Midlands Connects' blueprint of investment known as Midlands Engine Rail which aims to revolutionise rail travel in the region. Our Strategic Outline Business Case demonstrates the importance of this rail corridor to the local, regional and national economy.

Nottingham is the second largest urban area in the Midlands, with more than 300,000 residents. It is home to an important visitor sector which accounts for £1.75bn of economic activity, creating a thriving leisure and tourism scene. The city centre train station facilitated over 5m entries and exits in 2021/2022.

Lincoln also draws a significant number of visitors from within and outside the area, attracting more than 3.3m tourists annually, generating £130m in economic output and supporting 2,000 jobs. A key challenge to growth is poor transport connectivity within, to and from the region.

Businesses relying on import and export links are key stakeholders in the region. The Nottingham - Lincoln rail corridor facilitates vital

freight transport to and from the Humber ports, supporting the local economies and securing many thousands of jobs.

This report focuses on a package of recommended improvements which, if delivered, will improve journey times to support economic growth, enhance connectivity and promote social mobility in the communities along this route. Investment in this rail corridor will also encourage a transition to more sustainable travel and help tackle pockets of deprivation.



The benefits

Much of the area is rural in character, with higher levels of car ownership and longer-distance trips which result in higher emissions.

Midlands Connect recognises the need to make train travel more attractive and help people transition to sustainable transport. This is part of our grand challenge, to deliver a greener, fairer and stronger Midlands region.

Improving train journey times will help to reduce car dependence for both visitors and residents, and improve social mobility. Parts of Nottingham and Newark have been identified by Government as priority areas for investment to help remove social inequalities and boost the local economies.

Currently just 10 per cent of journeys between Nottingham and Lincoln are taken by train. The core option recommended will deliver an increase in line speed from predominantly 50mph to 75mph throughout the route.

Improved journey times will attract more passengers, and alongside the arrival of HS2 in

Nottingham, Midlands Connect's long-term aim is to double the frequency of services along this route in future.

By relocating one existing signal unit, short sections of minor track re-alignment and carrying out structural repairs to existing culverts, these speed improvements can be secured at an estimated capital cost of £18m.

Historically low levels of investment in transport in the East Midlands have created poor demand for rail travel. Increasing the speed along this corridor will be the first phase of intervention. By bringing this early benefit, we can strengthen the case for further investment in the years ahead.

This proposed line speed improvement scheme represents high value for money with a strong Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.0, that translates to £2 worth of economic, social and environmental gains delivered for each £1 pound of public money invested.



Our grand challenges:



Fairer
Integrated end-to-end
journeys and enhanced
quality of life



Greener
Contribution to Net
Zero by 2050 goals



Stronger
Faster connections for business,
enabling population and
employment growth.

Nottingham - Lincoln in numbers



£18m
Project cost



+25mph
Train speed

**Only 10% of journeys
currently taken by train**



**Every £1 spent will
bring £2 worth
of benefits**



What next?

This Business Case has been developed thanks to the co-operation and input of key stakeholders in the rail industry, and Midlands Connect's partners such as Local Transport Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. The project has been developed with Network Rail and local train operator East Midlands Railway (EMR).



Midlands Connect and its partners therefore recommend to The Department for Transport that approval is granted to proceed through to Decision to Develop. This is the second of five stages in the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) framework.

The proposed milestones for this scheme could see work start in April 2026 with completion in Summer 2028.





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