

Department for Transport
East Midlands Trains Franchise
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR

28th May 2009

Dear Sir,

East Midlands Trains and Sundays

You are no doubt aware that train services operated by East Midlands Trains (EMT) have been decimated on recent Sundays, 31st May is the fourth in succession.

It is difficult to define the reason. Drivers are refusing to work, yet as Sundays are voluntary, it is not an industrial dispute. This void in definition seems to have defeated industry managers and ultimately of course the only solution is to bring Sunday into the guaranteed working work. This could be expensive and will take months to negotiate, indeed, from my discussions with EMT workers this may be impossible to achieve due to the dire state of industrial relations that now exists on EMT.

We are looking at the East Midlands having no reliable Sunday train services for the foreseeable future. Manifestly, this is unacceptable. The economic impact on the Lincolnshire coast that depends on tourism, the status of Nottingham University which sees students returning in huge numbers Sunday night, to the Robin Hood Line which saw the priced option for a Sunday service delivered only last December, are just three examples of where we now looking into the abyss.

But this situation is not new. The DfT is aware of exactly the same situation that dragged on for many months on the old Central Trains franchise and we are aware back then that the 'status quo' of no Sunday trains was allowed to prevail, despite the damage delivered to local rail services.

Subsequently we have been appalled that the SLC2 for EMT reflected the decimation of passenger numbers caused by the lack of Sunday trains and many local stations east of Nottingham saw a 75+% cut in Sunday services. What started off as an industrial relations problem under Central Trains, was then defined as the new level of service by DfT for EMT. Where does that lead us to in the future?

There are key questions here.

- 1) Given DfT was aware of the Sunday problem on Central Trains, did the new contract with Stagecoach require a solution to this by a given date?
- 2) If so, was the franchise agreement priced accordingly? And if not, why not?
- 3) What action is DfT considering to ameliorate the Sunday situation in the East Midlands¹?

To pre-empt your response that this is nothing to do with DfT, we robustly refute this and this is just where government should be providing direction and leadership.

Yours faithfully,

David Thornhill
Chair – Nottinghamshire Campaign for Better Transport

¹ There are many ways that passengers could be provided with a service via cross-TOC cooperation, but this is unlikely to happen without direction from above as it will require relaxation of certain SLC2 agreements.