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Speed kings: LNER Azuma train at Doncaster station in South Yorkshire
(Simon Calder)

LNER TO LAUNCH FASTER RAIL LINKS TO LONDON FROM EDINBURGH, NEWCASTLE AND YORK

LNER will face competition on the East Coast main line from a new low-cost operator

Simon Calder Travel Correspondent | Monday 14 June 2021 11:39 | [comments](#)



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LNER has revealed ambitious plans for more and faster trains on the East Coast main line from May 2022.

Passengers from Edinburgh, Newcastle and York will have more trains and faster journeys to and from London King's Cross.

David Horne, managing director of LNER, said: "While train operators generally tweak their timetables twice a year, full timetable rewrites do not come along often, and our last was in 2011.

"The 2022 rewrite is all about turning investment in our new trains and upgraded tracks into the improved train services that those investments have always been intended to underpin."

But towns and cities away from the core line between the Scottish and English capitals will see little or no benefit, and some travellers will lose out – with Sunderland removed from the LNER network.

The state-owned train operator, says: “Through more services, more seats and reduced journey times, we aim to attract the estimated three million Edinburgh-London and Newcastle-London journeys per year that are not currently completed by rail but, according to our analysis, could be attracted to rail.”

The fastest journeys between the Scottish and English capitals will take a few minutes over four hours – about 15 minutes faster than currently. Fast links between Newcastle and London will be timetabled for two hours, 50 minutes, around 10 minutes quicker than currently.



Some of these improvements are at the expense of direct TransPennine Express links between Manchester, northeast England and Scotland.

LNER hopes to “assure everyone a seat – resolving the issues we and our customers faced pre-pandemic when many of our services were at or over capacity”.

The new timetable aims to tailor trains more closely to demand: Durham will have slightly more services and Darlington fewer services than today.

Between London and Leeds, the number of seats available on weekdays actually falls from 18,500 to 18,000.

The train operator says: “We had hoped to deliver an additional London Leeds service every other hour through this timetable change, which would have also slightly reduced journey times.

“However to ensure a deliverable timetable, we have taken the decision to defer that improvement for a later change.”

Elsewhere in West Yorkshire, LNER hopes to extend a service from Leeds to start back at Huddersfield and call at Dewsbury. But instead of two daily Bradford to

The train operator says the Sunderland service has had low passenger numbers since it was introduced by LNER's predecessor, Virgin East Coast, in 2015.

“By removing it, we will be able to ensure a good level of seats on London-York-Newcastle-Edinburgh route services which will be of benefit to Sunderland customers connecting through Newcastle.”

A daily link direct from London King's Cross to Middlesbrough will be introduced in December this year, with more regular services once the station in the North Yorkshire town is completed.



There are hopes to open a direct link from London to Grimsby and Cleethorpes, which last ran in 1993. But LNER says it may not be possible to introduce the service immediately in May 2022 due to staff training requirements and work on the line and stations.

LNER has launched a public consultation, open to 5 August 2021, but the train operator concedes: “The timetable does involve a series of trade-offs which we would welcome your views on, although changes are unlikely to be made.”

Heading south, the first LNER train leaves Edinburgh at 5.40am, arriving in London King's Cross at 9.50am after a journey of four hours, 10 minutes. The average speed for the 393-mile journey is 94mph.

It runs the final 188 miles from York in one hour, 54 minutes, averaging 99mph.

To Leeds, the journey time is around two hours, 10 minutes.

The final northbound departures of the day to Edinburgh is at 8.03pm to Edinburgh, arriving at 12.41am; to Newcastle at 10.03pm, arriving at 1.35am; and at 11.41pm to Leeds, arriving at 2.40am.

Some trains will serve a new station at Reston, in the Scottish Borders between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Dunbar.

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The launch, originally planned for May 2021, has been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

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