
Report on railway station toilets - draft

Following negotiations with East Midlands Railway (EMR) in the past few days I can report some quite encouraging news and also some challenges.

As part of EMR's franchise conditions they have to deliver improvements for the travelling public and Belper Station has been included in a list of 9 specific schemes that would be eligible for a Department for Transport (DfT) grant of up to £100k. The intention is to:

- Elevate Belper Station to be staffed between the hours of 07:00 and 14:00.
- Provide a building for the staff member
- This to include toilet facilities that also include baby changing.

That was the basic specification and it was hoped that the building could be sited at the top of the ramp leading to platform 2 (where you catch the train towards Derby). Unfortunately, the hoped-for leasing arrangement with the land owner was not successful as the cost was far in excess of what could be considered normal commercial rates. The scheme could have died right there but following discussions about a possible alternative site the idea has not been abandoned. There will be some challenges as well as opportunities which can be summarised thus:

- The alternative site is on AVBC land, the old bungalow land that is slated to become a car park extension. The building location is the black rectangle on the following map:



- The red lines are associated paths that would enable easy access to the station from the building; requiring an archway through the existing wall flanking the jitty connecting Field Lane with the platform 1 steps and another archway through the wall to provide a shortened route to both station ramps. The walls to be checked with English Heritage to ensure that the work is permissible.

- The building is not to scale on the map but would contain a railway office, toilets for male and female including baby changing and a radar accessible toilet.
- The possibility of basic drinks and snacks being sold from the facility has been discussed and would be advantageous. There is also an understanding that Transition Belper and English Heritage have shown an interest in having a presence at this location and this could be included in the scheme.
- EMR would welcome management of the facility from a third party (which could be BTC or a community group) which included the railway staffing element. This would be a franchised contract paid for by EMR.
- The use of the land would be agreed between AVBC and EMR via a 20-year leasing contract that would be guaranteed by the DfT for continuity should EMR be replaced by another franchisee.
- The DfT grant would hopefully cover all groundwork such as water, sewage and electrical works and foundation work would be minimal if the land had been prepared for car parking but an early understanding of expected costs would be helpful for BTC budgeting purposes.
- The advantage to AVBC would be a guaranteed income for up to 12 parking spaces for 20 years which would be in excess of the expected income from parking. They would also benefit from business tax being liable from the enterprise. No costings have been included in this paper as that would be a commercial arrangement, subject to negotiation.
- The advantage to BTC is that we gain town centre toilets, information centre and transport hub that offer enhanced opportunities for both private and public transport in the same location. In effect, a transport hub serving visitors, commuters and residents.
- A further advantage is a source of income that would pay for toilet maintenance/cleaning therefore relieving the cost to taxpayers.

These bullet points are not exhaustive as other ideas will no doubt emerge perhaps some parking bays being designated as “long term” and thus transforming Belper as a railhead.

There are challenges to be met but for this scheme to be successful there needs to be a “heads of agreement” established between EMR, AVBC, BTC and DfT. An expression of interest by BTC at full council is a required first step with a willingness to meet with other interested parties to come from AVBC.

EMR has invited interest in a site meeting and included AVBC, DCC, BTC in that invitation. A representative of the BTC facilities committee would of course be needed to attend.

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