

East Coast Main Line Company Limited

East Coast House, 25 Skeldergate

York YO1 6DH

eastcoast.co.uk

Michael

request-196352-949ac90d@whatdotheyknow.com

24 March 2014

Dear Michael,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

I am writing in response to your Freedom of Information request, dated 22 February 2014, concerning involvement of the Church in East Coast events and communications. We do not hold recorded information to cover all of your request, but are happy to provide more information that falls outside the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) to answer your various questions. For ease of reference, I have listed the six parts of your request with the corresponding response below each.

To provide any information held by East Coast concerning the decision to include the church in any ceremony over the past 18 months. This includes, but is not limited to, the opening of Wakefield Westgate station, train naming ceremonies and internal newsletters:

Within the past 18 months, the Church has been involved in the official opening of Wakefield Westgate station and the naming of a locomotive 'Durham Cathedral'. There have also been a number of articles, provided by the Railway Chaplain, within internal staff communications. These are attached within Appendix A.

The planning for the official opening of Wakefield Westgate station was largely undertaken in internal meetings. The suggestion of involvement by the Bishop of Wakefield in the event was also made by Wakefield Council.

In June 2013, an East Coast locomotive was named 'Durham Cathedral' in recognition of the cathedral as an iconic and historic feature visible from the East Coast Main Line; a previous locomotive had been named Durham Cathedral prior to East Coast taking ownership of the business in November 2009. The train naming also sought to promote the exhibition of the Lindisfarne Gospels, a historic manuscript that was on display in Durham in the summer of 2013. Given the focus and nature of this event, Durham Cathedral and other Church of England representatives were closely involved in the plans.

The Railway Chaplain is affiliated to the Church of England, and the Chaplaincy is supported in its work by East Coast and other train companies. The York based Chaplain, whose remit covers the Yorkshire and North East sections of the East Coast route, provides a small 'thought' item in East Coast's bi-monthly newspaper for staff, called *Coastlife*. This reflects his pastoral role for all railway staff and the articles have a contemplative, rather than religious, focus.

Information about the railway Remembrance Day and Christmas Carol events, organised by the Railway Chaplain, have also been provided in the East Coast weekly staff news bulletin.

To provide any communications between East Coast and the church in regards to the above ceremonies:

All communications concerning the Wakefield and Durham events, that we still hold, are attached in Appendix B. There are various attachments referred to within these communications and these are also attached, marked as appendices D to H. Please note that the personal identifiers of individuals not holding senior or public positions have been withheld from disclosure (from these attachments) as this is exempt information under Section 40 of the FOIA.

To provide any communications concerning the involvement of other religious organisations in the above ceremonies:

A copy of an invitation to the Wakefield event for a Muslim Imam is within Appendix B. The same invitation was also issued to a second Muslim Imam and a local Roman Catholic priest though we no longer hold that information.

To provide any recorded information detailing why East Coast felt that the church was needed at these events:

The involvement of the Bishop of Wakefield in the official opening of the station was primarily discussed in planning meetings. It was also suggested by Wakefield Council. It is not unusual for transportation vehicles, those designed for land or sea, to receive a blessing. The involvement of the Dean of Durham and other Church of England representatives in the 'Durham Cathedral' train naming formed part of the event itself.

To provide any recorded information concerning financial contributions from East Coast to any religious organisation:

In common with other UK rail companies, East Coast makes an annual financial contribution to support the work of the Railway Mission. The annual contribution in the last full fiscal year (2012/13), taken from our management accounts, was £20,000. The Railway Mission provides support to railway employees and their families across the industry.

To provide any internal communications requesting staff feedback on which religious representatives should attend any of the above ceremonies:

Please refer to Appendix C for an email exchange concerning the involvement of different religious faiths within the Wakefield Westgate official opening ceremony. The letter referred within those emails is also attached, marked Appendix I. Staff are involved in planning these events, and feedback about all aspects of the event is sought through discussions with local teams ahead of each event, although no recorded information is held regarding this.

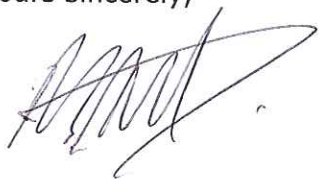
I hope this is helpful to you. If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to ask for a review. In the first instance you should contact me again to request this. If you choose to exercise that right, and are not satisfied with the outcome of the review, you have the right to complain to the information Commissioner by contacting:

The Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

Telephone: 08456 30 60 60 or 01625 54 57 45

Website: www.ico.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Short', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matt Short
East Coast Main Line Company Limited