

# raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

Issue 210 • June 2026

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**Manchester Piccadilly through platforms on bank holiday weekend**

**Severe overcrowding – Britain is not alone**

**Hamburg Hauptbahnhof at going home time**



**In this issue we look at how problems compare across Europe.**

## Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

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- A Cambridge Metro
- St Neots East station on EWR
- March station: no man's land?
- Bikes on trains
- Timetable changes in East Anglia
- Bus connections at stations
- Cambridge South opens in June
- St Edmund's CRP gets its name
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All photos by authors unless stated

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Needed modal shift from roads is compromised by conflicting demands on the rail network – particularly in the east

## **east west RAIL | Consultation At a glance 2026**

Railfuture asks members and RAIL EAST readers to write to the East West Rail Company by **9 June** to express support for the project. Below are some proposals.

### **1 New eastern entrances at Cambridge and Bletchley stations**



### **2 New Cambourne station with journeys of just 15 minutes into Cambridge station.**



### **3 Rebuilt Bedford station with additional platforms to allow for EWR trains and additional London services.**



### **10 New Bedford St Johns station to serve Bedford Hospital.**



**Longer trains** to support anticipated increase in demand.  
**Up to 5 trains an hour** meaning services every 12-15 minutes.

## FROM THE CHAIR

### BY IAN COUZENS, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH



As I'm sure you are aware, Greater Anglia, c2c and Network Rail Anglia have now started to operate as an 'integrated business unit', one of the operational units which will exist as part of Great British Railways. Martin Beable, Greater Anglia's MD, explained to us at our AGM in February how this offers the chance to work more efficiently in coordinating the operational and infrastructure sides of the railway — view his slides at [www.railfuture.org.uk/display4379](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/display4379). This should be good news if efficiencies can be made with any financial savings being reinvested back into the railway. Of course, the government expects to save money from bringing the railways under public ownership (train services have been outsourced under public control since 2020), but what we don't want to see is savings being extracted while at the same time short changing on investment. As passenger numbers continue to grow, public approval ratings will start to suffer if trains become overcrowded due to the brakes being put on new rolling stock or upgraded infrastructure. While passenger satisfaction with Greater Anglia is currently riding high, continued growth is reinforcing the case for further investment in our region. On [page 5](#), Peter Wakefield raises his concern about cuts to services now that GTR (formerly Govia Thameslink Railway, but the 'G' now means Greater) after it became publicly owned on 31 May.

As Great British Railways starts to roll out its own branding, will the business unit successors to the train operating companies retain their own branding to some degree? This is important, I would suggest, because it's about how the business units project themselves in their own area and how they can properly be held to account by local stakeholders and public, as well as holding GBR to account overall at a national level.

While the railways themselves are being reorganised, so is much of local government in the East, where future relationships between the railways and local government will become increasingly important. The three unitary authorities proposed for each of Norfolk and Suffolk and the five for Essex arguably offer a clearer route for engagement with rail, especially when the two regional mayors for Norfolk/Suffolk and Essex are added later with statutory rail powers. The creation of a Greater Norwich authority and one for Ipswich and South Suffolk ought to strengthen the ability of our main cities to shape local transport policy. It is true to say that much time over the coming years will be taken up with the reorganisation itself rather than developing, let alone implementing, policy — but then, when has the planning timeline for railways been anything other than long term?

### Tendring

So much of our campaigning effort is spent focusing on issues affecting the Cambridge area, we might need to remind ourselves sometimes that campaigning is going on right across the large area our branch represents. So, I was pleased to attend the Tendring Transport Users AGM in May, chaired by Railfuture member John Smock, and to hear members, stakeholders and the public voice issues affecting their area. A key rail aim is to increase the rail service in Tendring to a half-hourly frequency. The basic timetable pattern sees an hourly Clacton to London semi fast, coordinated with an hourly Walton/Frinton to Colchester slow, which also calls at the Colchester Town terminus. The Clacton train meets the slow at Thorpe Le Soken, allowing passengers to connect from one train to the other. Interestingly, Colchester Town station, with a steadily increasing footfall, has a valuable three services per hour in the Colchester mainline direction but only one onwards to Tendring. With the station well located for Colchester's commercial centre and new housing growth along the Tendring lines, there should be a good case for a second train serving communities to the east.

## East West Rail public consultation

In May we emailed Railfuture members and other contacts asking them to respond to the latest public consultation held by the East West Rail Company. I would like to thank everyone who did so, and especially those who replied to me personally. The consultation closes on **9 June**, which will be before readers receive a printed copy of RAIL EAST, but a useful final reminder to those who get it by email. Tom Watts has an article on [page 15](#) about Railfuture's wish for a St Neots East station.

## Railfuture events

Moving on a little further north to Ipswich, we hope you can join us there for our June branch meeting where we welcome the community rail partnership (CRP) officers Thalia Woodgate from the East Suffolk Lines CRP and Lesley Rayner from the newly created St Edmund's Line CRP. We report on the launch of the latter on [page 21](#). Thalia and Lesley will talk about their roles and CRP activities in their respective parts of Suffolk and we look forward to hearing what they have to say — see below.



Improved signage at Saxmundham station encouraged by the local CRP.

For our Norwich event on Saturday 26 September 2026, we have something special. Greater Anglia has agreed to give Railfuture members a guided tour of its Crown Point depot, close to Norwich station — an open day was held in June 2026, but tickets were all snapped up in just a few hours. The bad news is that we only have 12 places. Therefore, please contact me at [ian.couzens@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ian.couzens@railfuture.org.uk) (or write to me – see back page) by 31 August 2026, if you wish your name to be put on the list. If necessary, we will hold a lottery to see who attends. Further details will be provided in the September issue (211) of RAIL EAST.

Because it is impractical to have both the depot visit and our usual public meeting with a guest speaker on the same day, there will be no meeting this time. The good news is that we have a guest speaker for our Cambridge meeting on 28 November 2026 — Stuart Ratcliffe, Head of External Communications at the East West Rail Company. Many readers will know Stuart as a former BBC Look East reporter.

Finally, I am particularly pleased to see articles in this issue from members and other readers who have not contributed before. Thank you!

## RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 13 JUNE 14:00

**St Mary's at Stoke, Stoke Street, IPSWICH IP2 8BX**

Our free-to-attend Ipswich public meeting is at our usual venue, which is a short walk from Ipswich station. As mentioned by Ian Couzens, our guest speakers are Lesley Rayner (photo left) and Thalia Woodgate (right) who will talk about the valuable work done by their respective community rail partnerships.

Free coffee/tea and biscuits will be provided in the interval (donations are always welcome) followed by an update on Railfuture's recent and planned activities and campaigns.



# **SUMMER 2026 TIMETABLE CHANGES ACROSS EAST ANGLIA**

## **BY PETER WAKEFIELD**

Greater Anglia (GA) has made some positive changes to the timetable from 17 May 2026, reflecting welcome growth in traffic, brought about by an expanding population and the associated growing economy as well as possibilities created by the performance of the new train fleet. Below are some of them and our aspirations.

### **Coastal services radiating out from Norwich**

To the northeast of Norwich there is rapidly growing new housing that has led to a further investigation into the feasibility of a new station at Dussindale on the Sheringham line. Pleasingly, GA has responded to the area's need for better links now, by stopping all its trains at nearby Salhouse station. Salhouse will now enjoy a service once an hour instead of every two hours.

The other two links from Norwich run east to Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. GA has dipped a toe in the water by creating two cross-Norwich services from Lowestoft by combining them with Norwich - Cambridge - Stansted services. A late service from Norwich to Beccles via Lowestoft is initiated too. Yarmouth does get additional peak services but we support local groups that would like to see something more dramatic serving the economy of their coastal community in the form of some GA services from Cambridge continuing across Norwich to the town. We support some East Midland Railway services carrying on into Yarmouth too, especially at weekends.

### **Flagships and Stowmarket connections**

The flagship service on GA is its half-hourly InterCity service between Norwich and London. Stowmarket had a call once an hour but now both trains each hour will call. Stowmarket station is the major railhead for a wide area but also a key junction station between the Bury St Edmunds - Cambridge line and the service to Norwich. The half-hourly service to Norwich will provide an important "back stop" for interchange.

### **Cambridge – continuing growth**

Around Cambridge, the service pattern initiated in December 2025 has settled quite well, especially from a GA point of view. The operator quickly responded positively to a particular problem the new timetable threw up. In May further changes have taken place on all GA routes out of the city, including the busy Ipswich and Norwich routes being provided with relief services Monday-Friday at morning and evening peaks. Additional services will also be provided on the Cambridge-Stansted Airport route, especially in the early morning, meaning that the service runs more or less every half hour early until late.

GA recognises that all its routes should eventually have a train at least every half hour. This level of service is urgently needed on both the Cambridge - Norwich and Cambridge - Newmarket - Bury - Ipswich routes. However, we recognise this won't happen until Ely Area and Haughley Junction works are funded and delivered.

Nor can the equally urgent need for additional early and late services alluded to in the March station article on [page 8](#) be possible in the short term because of "Ely". We also recognise that the Cambridge - Peterborough service won't get the needed enhancements because Cross Country does not have the necessary rolling stock.

Maybe the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority should start negotiations with GA to provide the extra urgently needed early morning and late evening services between Stansted Airport and Peterborough.

### **Service cuts dictated by government to save money**

Railfuture is concerned about cuts to services on Greater Thameslink Railway (GTR) services, which are entirely aimed at reducing costs. Whilst patronage is lighter over the summer, and reductions may seem justified, this is unprecedented over the last 30 years and does not bode well for the future. Railfuture has communicated with GTR to express its concern, and we expect GTR to ensure that government is aware.

## THE LAST MILE (OR TWO MILES IN OUR CASE) – MORE ON BUS CONNECTIONS...

BY PHIL STRONG

The signs on the platform at Audley End station say “Audley End for Saffron Walden”, so anyone getting off the train at Audley End would expect a connecting bus service to the town, and indeed there is one, but it is nowhere near as good as it could be.

There are two bus routes serving Audley End, both of them hourly: the 319/320 to Saffron Walden and Haverhill, and the 301, which runs Saffron Walden – Audley End station – Newport – Stansted Mountfitchet – Bishops Stortford.



In addition, there are some early morning and early evening shuttles between Saffron Walden and Audley End (route 59/590), which have survived despite the reduction in commuting post Covid.

Now we come to the problem: timetabling and punctuality. The 319/320 is reasonably punctual in both directions (usually within five minutes). There is enough slack in the timetable to accommodate delays due to roadworks and congestion.

However, the number 301 timetable does not seem to have enough wait time at each end of the route, which means that delays can build up during the day. The previous operator, Central Connect, informed Essex County Council (ECC) that the timetable was unworkable and asked for it to be revised. In summer 2024 Central Connect gave up running the service, claiming (as reported in the local press) that ECC had not responded to its request. After a few days without buses, current operator Stephenson's took over the route, but the timetable was not changed.



If running to time, the 301 coming from Saffron Walden doesn't connect with trains for London. It is timetabled to arrive at Audley End at xx46, but the London trains off-peak leave at xx17 and xx39. So, at least a half an hour wait.

The 319/320 from Saffron Walden connects better with the London trains, arriving at Audley End at xx15.

For connections from London, we have a farcical situation where the 319/320 bus leaves Audley End at xx20, and a train arrives from London at xx25. According to one driver I spoke to, “We're not allowed to wait for the trains, we get penalised for late running.”

The xx47 arrivals from London have a 17-minute wait for the bus departure at xx04.

## Proposed cuts

In autumn 2025, despite receiving extra funding from central government for buses, ECC announced its intention to withdraw one of the services to Haverhill, the 320, and the early morning/evening commuter shuttles (59/590). The 319 would remain but running every two hours.

If implemented, this would have cut the number of buses between Audley End and Saffron Walden by about a third, and left the communities of Radwinter, Hempstead and Steeple Bumpstead with no buses at all.

But the local community produced an overwhelming response to the public consultation, gaining a reprieve for the time being. Our county councillor Paul Gadd said on 2 April:

“We have just had calls from the head of passenger transport [at Essex CC] to say that the 59/590/320 services will be retained until June 2028 at least ... Re-tendering will start early 2027, so we'll be going through the same process again in a year's time or less, and need to get better usage before then.

“They accept that there have been a lot of unreliability issues recently, and the need for timetable changes to synchronise better with the trains.... Stephenson's have assured them that they are trying to address the unreliability issues, and say they have been hit with various driver issues which they have hopefully solved.”

Councillor Gadd, an Independent, was re-elected on 7 May 2026 and intends to pursue timetable improvements at the earliest opportunity.

Other long-standing issues with the buses include:

- No services to/from Audley End station on Sundays and bank holidays
- No services to other nearby villages such as Elmdon and Littlebury.
- There is no bus which passes near Audley End House (a 25–30-minute walk from the station) — a major heritage attraction in the county.
- Our bus information screen looks OK, but it just repeats the timetabled arrival times, and the bus disappears off the screen after this time – whether it has arrived or not. We need real time information on the screen. Stephenson's and ECC both said last year that this should be possible, so we are hopeful it will happen.

I should mention that there is good provision for cycle parking at Audley End, and a well-signposted cycle route to Saffron Walden (although it is unlit and includes a steep hill). So, the able-bodied also have that option for “the last two miles”.



*Phil Strong is a long-time Railfuture member who lives in Saffron Walden. All photos by the author.*

# MARCH: THE STATION LEFT IN NO MAN'S LAND

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

**Fragmented rail management, high fares and weak services are holding Fenland back**

March should be one of the best-connected towns in Cambridgeshire. Instead, it sits in a railway no man's land — a station operated by one train operator, served mainly by another and priced by a third. The result is a confused, inconsistent offer that leaves passengers paying more and receiving less.

A Railfuture member and March resident recently set out the problem with striking clarity. Although the station is managed by Greater Anglia (GA), most trains are run by CrossCountry (XC), while East Midlands Railway (EMR) — whose trains rarely stop — sets the fares. This unusual arrangement means March benefits from none of the regional rover or ranger tickets available almost everywhere else. "We don't qualify for East Midlands nor Greater Anglia," the resident wrote. "We are in a no man's land."

The consequences are felt daily. A simple local journey for the 15 miles to Ely costs £8.95 return with a Railcard, £13.50 without. However, note the next 15 miles to Cambridge (Ely-Cambridge) costs £3.95 return with a Railcard, £6.00 return without! The fare from March to Cambridge and back with a railcard is £18.40 (£12.25 with a Railcard). And XC will not accept Group Saver tickets!

Looking at longer distance fares, a through ticket to Edinburgh from March is almost £100 more expensive than splitting at Peterborough. Greater Anglia offers no discounted fares from March, and CrossCountry's advance fares provide only marginal savings.

Service levels tell the same story. The early Sunday morning Ipswich–Peterborough train runs only in summer, despite year-round equivalents elsewhere in East Anglia. The long-requested later evening train from Cambridge remains absent. And while GA promotes improvements across the region, March — served by three operators — sees little benefit.

All this comes as March faces major growth pressures: 1,600 new homes, a 2,000-worker reservoir project, and rising demand from people priced out of Cambridge. Yet the town's rail offer is weaker than what is available at many single-operator stations. Even basic issues — replacement bus access, Platform 2's tired waiting room, car-parking charges — chip away at confidence.

Residents are voting with their feet. Some now drive to Huntingdon — just over 20 miles southwest along the A141 — for a simpler, cheaper route to London. Others avoid rail altogether — the deserted platforms (right) are during a long gap between trains.

March and Wisbech together have nearly 70,000 people. Both should be plugged directly into the vibrant Cambridge economy with reliable, **affordable** services. Instead, March is treated as an afterthought — a station everyone uses but no operator truly takes responsibility for.



## SIX KEY ASKS FOR MARCH STATION

(Railfuture East Anglia Campaign Priorities)

### 1. A Single Lead Operator (DfT & Operators)

March's biggest structural problem is fragmentation. Railfuture calls for one operator to take full responsibility for fares, service planning, ticketing products and customer experience. The current three-way split leaves March with no accountability and no strategic direction.

### 2. Fair, Logical Fares (EMR & DfT)

- End EMR's control of fares for a station it barely serves.
- Introduce a regional rover/day ranger valid from March.
- Reduce the cost of short local journeys, which are among the highest in East Anglia.

### 3. Year-Round Early Sunday Service (GA & Network Rail)

- Make the 09:15 Ipswich–Peterborough service permanent all year and provide an earlier service from Cambridge to March and Peterborough – the first currently is from Cambridge leaves there at 11.00!
- Bring March into line with the rest of the region.

### 4. A Later Evening Train from Cambridge (XC & GA)

- Reinststate a usable late evening departure so March and Fenland residents can participate fully in the region's cultural and economic life. If XC based in Birmingham can't see the point of a late service from Stansted Airport and Cambridge to March and Peterborough, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) should negotiate services from the Airport leaving Cambridge at 22.00 and 23.00 with the much more focussed GA.

### 5. Station Facilities Matching Demand (GA)

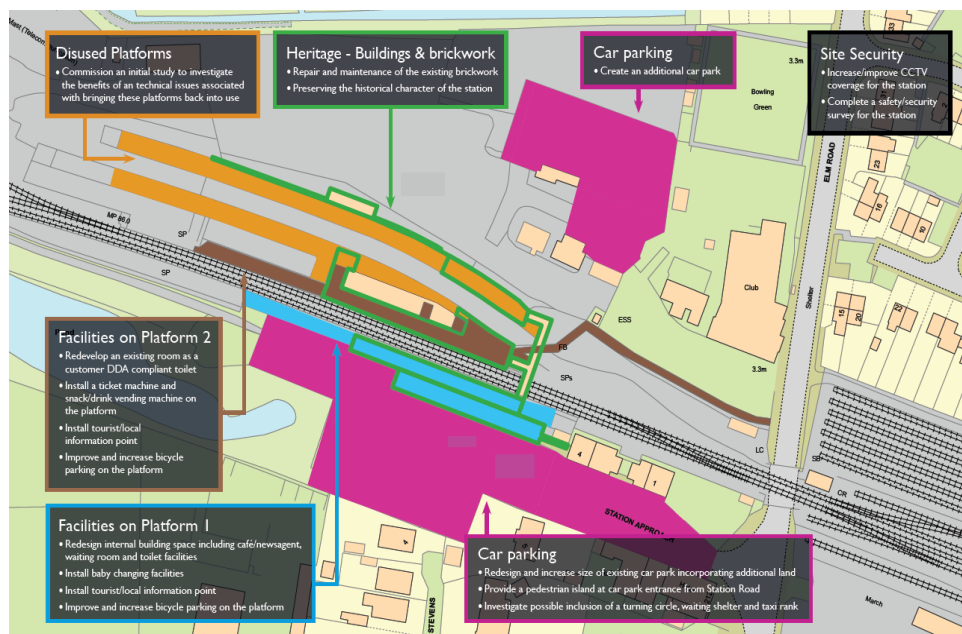
- Upgrade the Platform 2 waiting room.
- Resolve rail replacement bus access issues.
- Have staff available to assist passengers at the bus stop when needed.

### 6. A Coherent London Travel Strategy (All Operators)

- Provide clear guidance on the best routes to London by promoting the message that the best option is via a change of trains at Ely for King's Cross – with a fair fare to match.
- Address the fact that many residents now drive to Huntingdon for simplicity and cost, adding unnecessarily to road congestion and vehicle emissions in the area.

Maybe it is time for the CPCA to take the lead on ironing out these unfair fares and train service anomalies in Fenland, one of the most socially and economically deprived areas in England.

The graphic on the right shows the 'Masterplan' for March station, which was implemented by the CPCA — spending on such infrastructure is not as productive if serious issues with the train services remain.



# EXPERIENCING THE RAILWAY IN MAINLAND EUROPE

## A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE BY JERRY ALDERSON — PART 1

COVER STORY

Imagine being given unlimited rail travel in First Class for an entire day — with any complimentary refreshments and lounge access that go with it — for just £35 per day, and to do that not just once but every day of your holiday. It sounds like the best bargain in Britain. Well actually, it's the best bargain in Europe, and one that few would be aware of, because it's not publicised on Britain's railways, and certainly not on any station notice boards.

Interrail has existed since 1972, although initially only for young people to travel across Europe in any country other than their own. However, since 1998 it has been extended to everyone, with young people and seniors getting a discounted price. If you buy a 'global pass' (i.e. not a specific country) then it also allows outward travel from your home country and inbound on your final day. The £35 is based on buying a 10-day global pass valid over a two-month period with a senior discount during one of three annual sales periods. It cost €408, under €41 a day.

The aim of the trip was not just a holiday but to see whether the railway in Britain is really as bad as its critics claim, and to look for examples of best practice that could be introduced in Britain, and which Railfuture could campaign for. The latter will be covered in part 2 of this article in issue 211 (September 2026).

I covered seven countries over fourteen days, thirteen nights, with 10 Interrail travel days, on an anti-clockwise route (Netherlands, Germany, Czechia, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Netherlands again), with a flight from Budapest to Copenhagen. The intention was to travel on the metro and tram systems in most cities where staying overnight, but there was insufficient time for the places passed through, such as Gothenburg (a one-hour stop) and Bremen (arrived late in the evening), though still time to photograph them.

One of the interesting differences is that British stations all show their full name, whereas many on the European mainland might just say Central Station or the equivalent. Not a problem unless you are trying to identify it on a photograph.

### Who loves ya, baby? Is it Maria, Yvette or Mimi? Certainly not Edith!



Great Northern is often criticised for the dirtiness of its trains. Dutch Railways (NS) provides an eco-friendly way for lovers to express themselves (left), better than carving their names on a tree. NS seems to be eager to use as little water as possible, as it's difficult to work out when train exteriors were last washed.

It was not obvious where NS trains are maintained — no depots were visible on any journey. But at Bremen in Germany there was an impressive carriage washer that was close to the station (right).



### Automatic ticket gates

Few mainland European countries have ticket gates on their railway. The Netherlands is the exception, with gates protecting revenue to every platform at every station — even though many stations are not staffed. There are help points to ask to be allowed through, and this was used on the few occasions when the QR code on the Interrail app was rejected. At Oslo Airport, the premium-fare airport express train (like Heathrow Express) has two dedicated platforms and is gated.



The above photo is at Schiedam Centrum (in the Netherlands) where there are separate, but adjacent, gate lines for the railway (left) and the metro (right). As an Interrail passenger, my pass covered the former but not the latter, so it was inevitable that I had to exit one and enter the other (a small detour). Perhaps locals using a common payment method might not need to do so. At least the gates were identical and could either scan a QR code or read a chip. The help point mentioned on the previous page is the tall post between the two gate lines.

Sticking with the Netherlands, it was the only country experienced that suffered from graffiti in their toilets — 100% of those checked — worse than GTR's Thameslink trains, if that's possible! As they say on TV, look away now if you are easily shocked. Although not shown in this photo, the toilet seat didn't escape either. Ticketless travel should be close to impossible, so paying passengers are doing this.



Trains in most countries had 'silent' (an absolute) carriages. In Britain we have 'quiet' carriages, implying that some low-level noise is allowed. On the double-deck NS trains, this instruction was shown on the window glass (see below left). How well can you read this? When entering at a subterranean station (such as Delft), it was not visible at all, only appearing when the train came into the light. German ICE trains had a much clearer sign (right).



Many large stations have completely rebuilt spacious station buildings but often nothing has been done to the platforms themselves, which are from a different era.

In Britain we criticise the lack of canopies (e.g. Cambridge North). A minor Czech station on the way to Prague had a long canopy for possibly few passengers. But



canopies are not universally present. To increase capacity, two new tracks opened at Copenhagen Airport early in 2026, with long platforms, but no canopies, just a couple of bus shelters. This is astonishing, as the two existing platforms were largely underneath the station building and therefore protected from the rain. Poor signage to the two new platforms led to a completely unnecessary exit from the station building to cross a road.

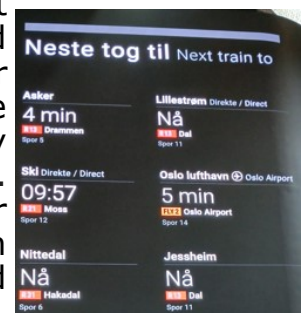
There was a Czech station with numbers to stairs that didn't match the platform numbers themselves — very confusing. In Prague at the main station the same number was used for both faces of an island platform, bizarrely. It was unclear what would happen if trains were present on both sides and unlocked.

In recent years Deutsche Bahn has gained a reputation for poor punctuality, and it seems to be deserved, but the longest delay experienced was arriving in Prague an hour late, annoyingly minutes after the ticket office had closed. At Osnabrück station there was a train with two of its windows apparently smashed and covered by wood.

The train from Malmö to Stockholm and from there to Oslo had mandatory seat reservations — the conductor does not perform any ticket checks but seems to have a handheld device that shows which seats should be occupied at any point on the journey and challenged anyone in an unreserved seat. It was unclear what would happen if one had a ticket but no reservation.

Trying to buy a seat reservation from a ticket office was a nightmare. The Prague ticket office staff would sell a reservation for a direct train from Prague to another country (e.g. Austria) but not for a journey entirely in another country. The only solution was to book it online via Swedish Railways (SJ) website, which was actually quite easy. However, at Copenhagen main station the staff were extremely helpful and provided reservations for multiple trains including a German domestic service, for a fixed fee — the one from Hamburg was not used (see the front cover photo to find out why). Despite what the EU may wish, there is no consistency in Europe.

In Oslo everywhere looked remarkably clean. However, it was necessary to go to a retail outlet to buy one-hour transport passes (the 24-hour ticket was unsuitable for a short visit) and contactless was not supported (again). I wanted to experience the trams, within the one-hour limit, but there was no information on the metro giving interchange points. However, the information screens (right) are superbly designed: attractive and clear. It was obvious that 'Nå' means now. The standard of blue background for departures and green for arrivals was only in use in a few countries. The Scandinavian countries generally used white text for their local language and yellow for English, and this was on almost everything.



Complimentary refreshments are provided on trains in Sweden and Denmark but not in Germany. Interrail gave first class lounge access in Denmark but not in Germany.

On the Copenhagen to Hamburg train, the electronic carriage numbers were reversed between the train arriving and passengers boarding, so that a lot of passengers had to walk from one end of the train to the other, causing confusion.

**City transport:** The trams are unidirectional in Prague, Gothenburg and Amsterdam requiring a turning circle at ends of lines, unlike Britain where they are all bi-directional (apart from the historical Blackpool trams). The length varied from three segments up to seven and were often joined together. Several cities still have non-accessible trams with high steps. A big inconsistency was how to pay. On some you tapped in at the tram stop and on others you tapped in on the tram (it even differed within the Netherlands). Contactless bank cards were generally supported, although if you were over 65 it might be free and over 60 it might be discounted, so it was worth buying a 24-hour pass in Budapest, for example. But the new Copenhagen tram system was a complete nightmare — it is not setup for a foreign tourist who simply wants to do one tram ride. Working out the price was a challenge, discovering that the line went through four zones. But purchasing a ticket without a 'reisekort' smartcard seemed impossible — contactless bank cards and paper tickets were not supported. There was no option but to travel without paying and hope for the best.

**Conclusion:** It is easy to criticise public transport in Britain and claim that it is the worst in Europe. However, it seems that every problem occurs somewhere on the European mainland — it's just that not every other country suffers from all of problems that Britons experience. Part 2 will look at good ideas for GBR to replicate.

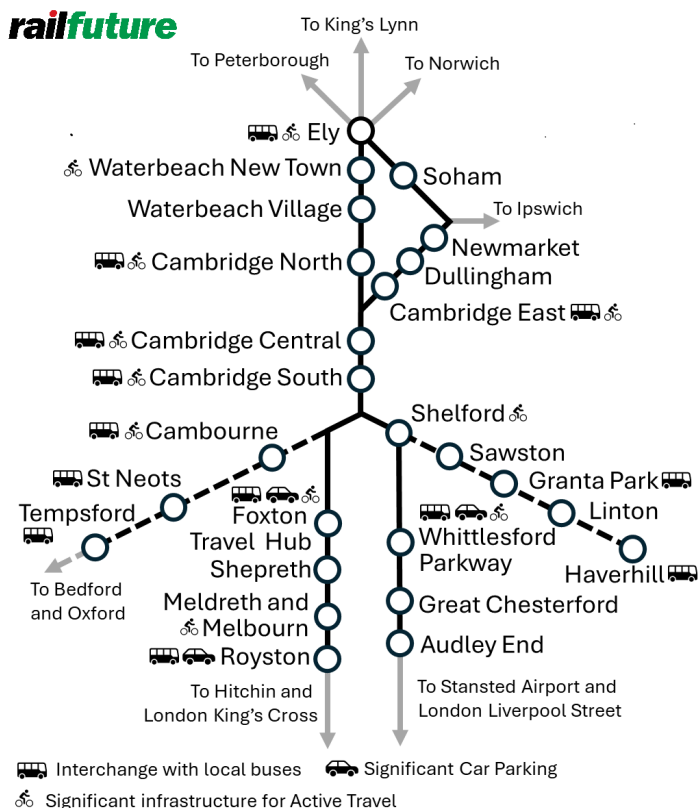
# UNLOCKING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF CAMBRIDGE'S RAILWAY – A CAMBRIDGE METRO?

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

On 27 July 2025, Cambridge's central railway station turned 180 years old. In 2024, it handled over 12 million passengers, 7% more than the previous year, making it Great Britain's 13th busiest station outside London (see busy platform, right). That number will keep rising as Cambridge and its surrounding market towns grow, especially with the surge in jobs near key railway stations. The railway's speed and capacity allow people to commute safely and efficiently without necessarily relocating their home to Cambridge.



**railfuture**



## Missing links in the existing railway

In this article, we look at how the railway network can be enhanced by providing new links, as indicated by the dotted lines and additional stations in the graphic on the left.

## New stations mean more people can use the railway

Two new stations illustrate how better access to rail unlocks its potential.

Cambridge North, which opened in 2017 close to the Science and Business Parks and Cambridge Regional College, now serves 1.4 million passengers annually. 200,000 of them travel to Cambridge's central station alone, a short journey the consultants did not anticipate.

Cambridge South, scheduled to open on Sunday 28 June 2026 (see [page 18](#)), will serve the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

This growing site already hosts 24,000 jobs, 18,000 daily visitors and 33,000 residents within 2km of the new station. Long Road Sixth Form College, the Perse School and Cambridge Academy of Science and Technology also nearby, enrol 4,000 students. Together, Cambridge North and South stations will add around five million more footfall annually.

To meet this demand, the railway has delivered longer, faster and more frequent trains. Twelve-coach trains, now common, can carry up to 1,800 passengers. On the Royston line, four such trains run hourly, offering ample capacity for future growth. From Ely, at least four trains an hour carry almost half of all passenger traffic along the A10 corridor to Cambridge. With smart planning, Waterbeach New Town, set to be larger than Ely and Waterbeach village, can be well served by rail.

## South Cambridgeshire stations are currently underused

But are we making the most of what we've got? In South Cambridgeshire, seven villages have stations – Foxton, Shepreth, Meldreth, Ashwell & Morden, Shelford, Whittlesford and Waterbeach. Each offers at least two trains per hour into Cambridge during peak times. These stations are valuable assets but need upgrades: step-free access, better walking and cycling links and sufficient car and

cycle parking. Some of these, particularly those close to principal roads and bus corridors, should become high-quality travel hubs serving not just their villages but nearby communities. We note that although the draft Local Plan allocates no new homes within the settlements containing these stations, it is now government policy and guidance to do so.

### **A future Cambridge-area metro system**

There are also clear gaps in the railway infrastructure that need to be addressed:

- The Newmarket Line was twin tracked until the mid-1980s, when one track was lifted as an economy measure and the line lost much of its capacity. The remaining single track can now only handle one (often overcrowded) train each way per hour. Restoring the second track (together with a reinstated short piece of track at Snailwell, see image below, to the north-east of Newmarket) will allow the four trains an hour needed to meet the latent demand from Newmarket, Soham, Kennett and Bury St Edmunds (see image at the end of this article). Newmarket station must also be redeveloped to serve properly such an important town and an increased number of trains and users.

- A Cambridge East Station – on the Newmarket Line – will be possible once twin tracks are restored to serve thousands of jobs nearby along Fulbourn Road at ARM Holdings, Peterhouse Research Park, and Capital Park plus nearby residents. We suggest that any Cambridge Airport redevelopment be linked to this station by some form of mass transit along Gazelle Way. We note that consultants have suggested a station for the redeveloped Airfield off Barnwell Road – a poor site in the view of Railfuture East Anglia and many others.

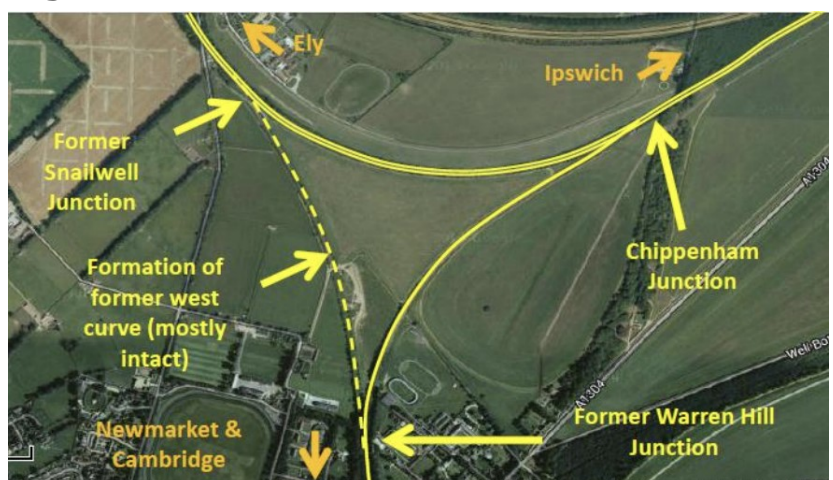
- Haverhill, growing fast but very poorly connected to Cambridge, will benefit from restoring its rail link. Studies show that the former railway route from Cambridge is still viable and once restored has the potential for over 2,000 morning peak trips to Cambridge. A direct train would cut journey times (typically over an hour in the morning and evening peaks) to 25 minutes and serve all major employment sites along its route as well as the schools near Cambridge’s three stations.

- East West Rail promises five trains per hour into Cambridge South and Central stations. Combined with existing services, these should continue across the city to Cambridge North, Waterbeach’s stations and Ely; to Cambridge East and Newmarket stations, effectively creating a high-capacity Cambridge Metro – a frequent, city-wide rail network using infrastructure that exists and will be upgraded.

### **The railway enables sustainable growth**

Cambridge’s railway is a powerful enabler of sustainable growth. Much of it is here now but to unlock its full potential, we must invest in access, connectivity, and land use planning that aligns with the opportunities rail provides.

Image on the right is an annotated aerial view of the Snailwell Curve, referenced in the text above, from Chris Sutton on Flickr.



*This article first appeared The Cambridge Independent and was commissioned by the Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance.*

# **EWR AND ST NEOTS – AN UPDATE (JUNE 2026)**

**BY TOM WATTS**

Back in RAIL EAST 202 (June 2024) I discussed the potential for an additional station on the new central section of East West Rail to serve the town of St Neots; a 'missed opportunity' under the then current plans. As a quick recap, the new line is planned to skirt the eastern side of St Neots between the A428 and the under construction A421 extension; a station on this section would support the ongoing development of almost 4000 new homes in the Wintringham area as well as providing the existing population of approximately 36,000 with a much-improved transport link to the major regional centres of Cambridge and Bedford.

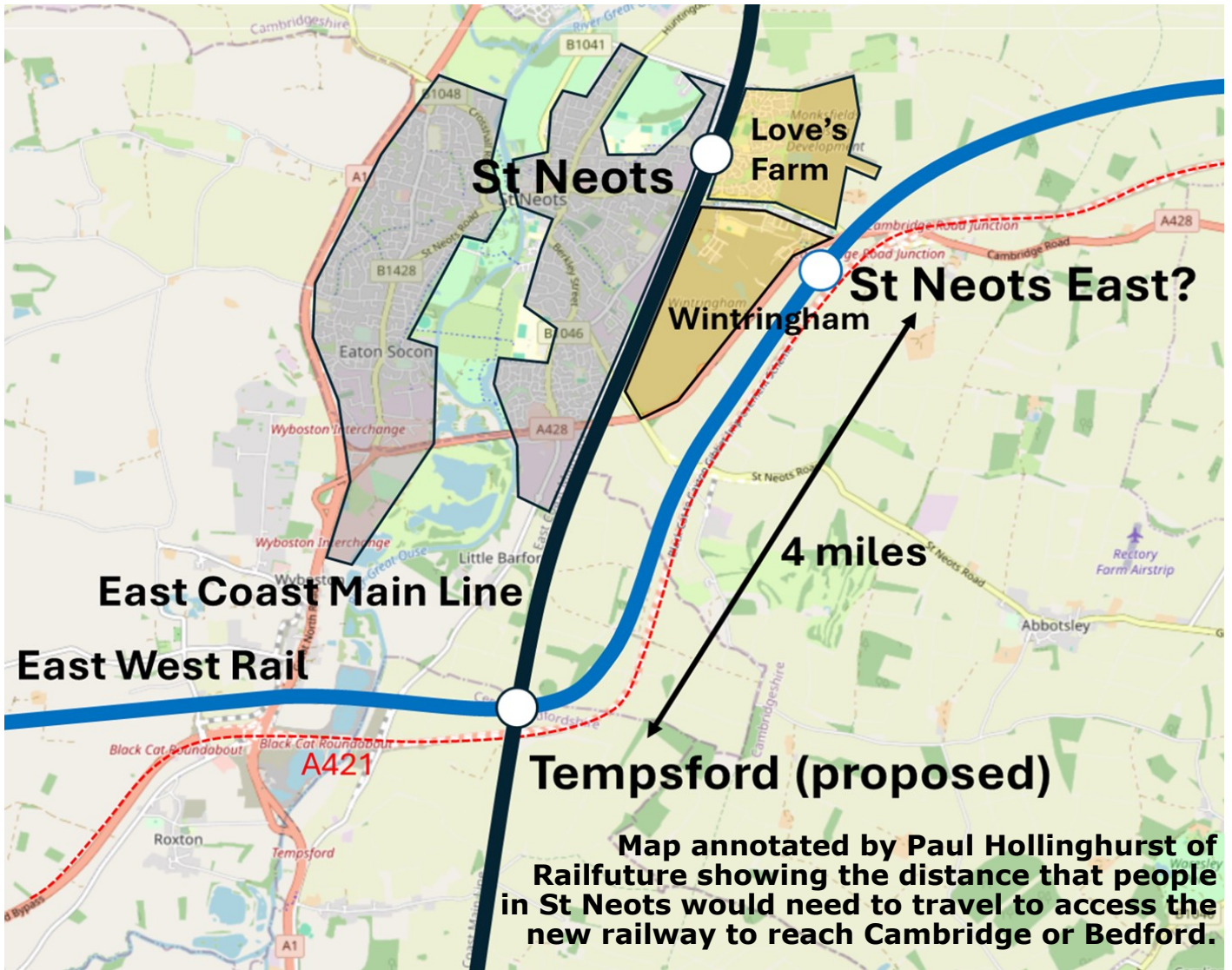
Since then, I have been working with colleagues in Railfuture East Anglia to make the case for such a station and have been pleasantly surprised at the amount of support for the idea from local politicians right up to Combined Authority level. Enough noise was made during the 2024 consultation – with both Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and the CPCA explicitly stressing the need to leave provision for a future station as an absolute minimum – for EWR Company (EWRC) to acknowledge that “respondents felt that the new railway should serve St Neots directly to benefit its residents and reduce car travel” in their May 2025 summary of feedback from the consultation.

However, despite such strong local support for a better connection, the East West Rail Company's 'You Said, We Did' update published in November 2025 (YSWD) rejected the idea of a station at Wintringham, claiming that such a station “would not be expected to bring sufficient benefits to make up for increased travel times and the construction disruption.” This was of course disappointing to hear, particularly as any journey time increase would be negligible for an electric-operated line and would surely be an acceptable trade-off for adding a possible 40,000 people to the catchment of EWR.

Equally disappointing is the report's 'How the railway will serve St Neots' section, which simply restates that EWRC “would promote active travel routes to the new station at Tempsford from the area of St Neots as part of its door-to-door connectivity plans to encourage walking and cycling from nearby communities”. HDC's 2024 response raised concerns about the lack of detail on these vague active travel links, and it is frustrating to see no change on that front. The distances involved in walking, cycling or even driving between communities in St Neots and the new Tempsford station will instead push residents of St Neots to simply drive instead of making the lengthy journey to the station – and given that ECML service between St Neots and Tempsford will be half-hourly compared to the planned 5 tph EWR service, interchanging at Tempsford for EWR services would still result in increased journey times and mean that St Neots would not see the full benefits of the new line.

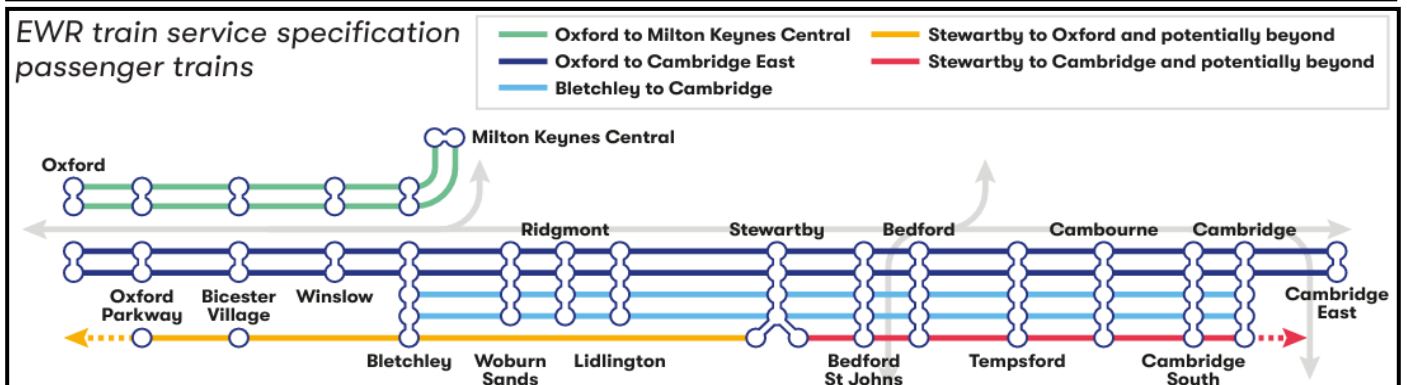
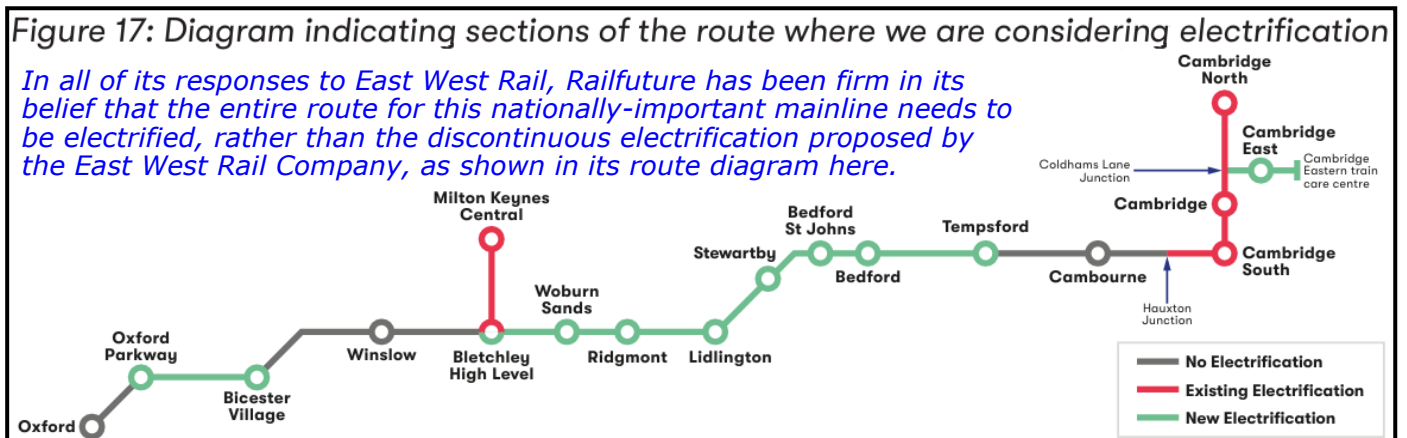
A fairly bleak situation then, especially at a time when road traffic between St Neots and Cambridge/Bedford is likely to increase with the completion of the A421 extension. However, there is another potential option for the town: CPCA Mayor Paul Bristow is championing a north-to-east link between the ECML and EWR at Tempsford to facilitate a new Cambridge-Peterborough service, as mentioned in RAIL EAST 207. If implemented this new service would provide St Neots with a single-seat journey to Cambridge, eliminating the need to change at Tempsford.

There is a silver lining in that the YSWD report concedes that there is nothing in the current plans precluding addition of the station in future; however, it is clear that the case for it already exists, and if EWR's goals of connection and sustainability are to be met then connecting St Neots is vital to those ends.



Railfuture's St Neots East leaflet can be read at [www.railfuture.org.uk/display4376](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/display4376).

Below are two diagrams from the EWR Company's consultation documentation.



# THE CASE FOR IMPROVING BIKE CARRYING ARRANGEMENTS ON TRAINS

BY JOHN THOMPSON

First the good news. Leisure cycling is currently enjoying a boom in Britain. By providing good facilities for bikes on their rolling stock, operators can help boost the economies of the areas they serve. Because leisure cyclists carry less with them, they tend to spend more than other tourists. Also, while one might chuckle, it's a serious point that cyclists generally have healthy appetites and thirsts! In particular, footfalls for many quieter rural stations could be increased, because many offer quick access to quiet country lanes.

Two train operators have realised the good cyclists can do for the tourism economy. ScotRail is using withdrawn class 153 units to link up with its current rolling stock to form cycle carrying carriages with a capacity for 20 on its Highland Explorer routes. Also, Transport for Wales has adapted class 153 units on the Heart of Wales line to carry 12 bikes. Of course, they have the rolling stock to make the adaptations, which Greater Anglia (GA) doesn't. However, if it was possible for GA, I think the East Suffolk, Bittern and Gainsborough lines would especially benefit. Ultimately, I believe there should be carriages specifically for bikes and larger luggage, but I accept that if it ever happens it's a long way off. However, in relation to the Long-Term Rolling Stock Strategy Review (being developed by the Department for Transport and Great British Railways), I've made the point personally to the Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander. I also pointed out that when renationalisation is complete it would be bizarre if there are varying capacities for bikes, making many long distance journeys needlessly complicated. If the government wants Great British Railways to help the economy as much as possible, it is surely in its interest to improve the capacity for bikes on trains for the reasons I've outlined.

Focussing on GA, overall, I consider it to now be the best operator for bikes on trains. However, I have concerns on points the management seems intransigent about. They relate to the tip-up seats in the cycle spaces (photo, right) on the new fleets and the tendency for passengers to put luggage there. I realise it's not just GA rolling stock, but I question the need for tip-up seats in cycle spaces. Yes, some peak-time services get very packed — but it's my observation that people often use the tip-up seats because they are quick and handy, rather than because there is a shortage of seats elsewhere.



Similarly, passengers put luggage there because, if there are no bikes, they see a convenient empty space. The small notice above the seats with a cycle icon rarely gets noticed and even the large icons on the windows don't appear to register. If they do, it's questionable whether many consider it important. What takes the edge off the enjoyment of travelling by train with my bike is that when joining a service at an intermediate stop, I don't know what to expect at the cycle space — and if the tip-up seats are occupied, what response I'll get when I explain I've got to put my bike there. In any case, it's not a nice thing to have to do, especially if, for instance, the passengers occupying the seats are elderly with mobility problems.

GA management advice is that if anyone was difficult

we could point to the small notice and the bicycle icon on the window. With someone determined to be difficult, I doubt that would carry any weight. I argue there should be a prominent notice explaining it might be necessary to move and/or remove luggage if bikes are brought on board. There could also be a notice indicating the correct place to store large luggage. However, I suspect that GA is concerned about complaints from the majority of customers, who aren't cyclists, and that it doesn't like too many notices on its trains because it spoils their overall ambience.

At principal GA stations there are notices and public address announcements advising that bikes "must" be stored in the designated space and that on inter-city services they "must" be reserved (photo of station poster, right). Frankly, I think it's a bit much to be repeatedly told what we "must" do if we find we can't because the space is taken up by other passengers and/or luggage. Especially so on inter-city services because surely, if cyclists have reserved spaces, they have the right to access them. On one such service, I saw a notice indicating luggage could be stored in the cycle space if the train is busy. I consider that to be ridiculous, especially as passengers may have their own 'convenient' definition of "busy". GA informs me that it expects conductors to monitor the cycle space and that managers have instructed them to do so. Unfortunately, it's my observation that in general this just doesn't happen.



*John Thompson is a member of Railfuture living in Lowestoft as well as a committee member of ESTA. He is also the regional representative for Eastern England on Cycling UK's Cycle Advocacy Network. All photos in this article by the author.*

## CAMBRIDGE SOUTH STATION OPENS ON 28 JUNE 2026

In RAIL EAST issue 209 (February 2026) on page 23, we mentioned that Greater Anglia's trains had been unexpectedly, and prematurely, advertising train stops at Cambridge South. The opening date was officially confirmed on 11 May, and was reported by many news outlets, not just local but also national newspapers (e.g. the Guardian). The station will be the first officially labelled with the GBR brand (photo from DfT, right).



Railfuture has received reports of Greater Anglia (GA) promoting the station at various places, including Cambridge United Football Club. Moreover, it is pleasing that organisations served by the new station are also actively promoting it. On its Facebook page, the Royal Papworth Hospital posted the following on 20 May:

We are really excited that the new Cambridge South railway station will be opening soon.

Located just a two-minute walk from our hospital, the new station will see services commence on Sunday 28 June. Cambridge South will provide regular services for our patients, staff, visitors, local residents and other employees here on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

There will be up to nine trains per hour to central Cambridge, with direct connections to London, Birmingham and Stansted Airport, as well as international rail services via St Pancras. During peak hours, up to 20 services will call there.

The new station has been built thanks to more than £250 million of government funding, alongside £5 million contributions from AstraZeneca, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Some of the comments to this post have been really heart-warming as well:

- "I have never been so excited about a train station. I've worked out that it's going to cut a significant chunk off my travel time"
- "I live 10 minutes walk' from Cambridge North station as I have numerous hospital appts throughout the year I am very much looking forward to not having the hour-long bus journey there!"

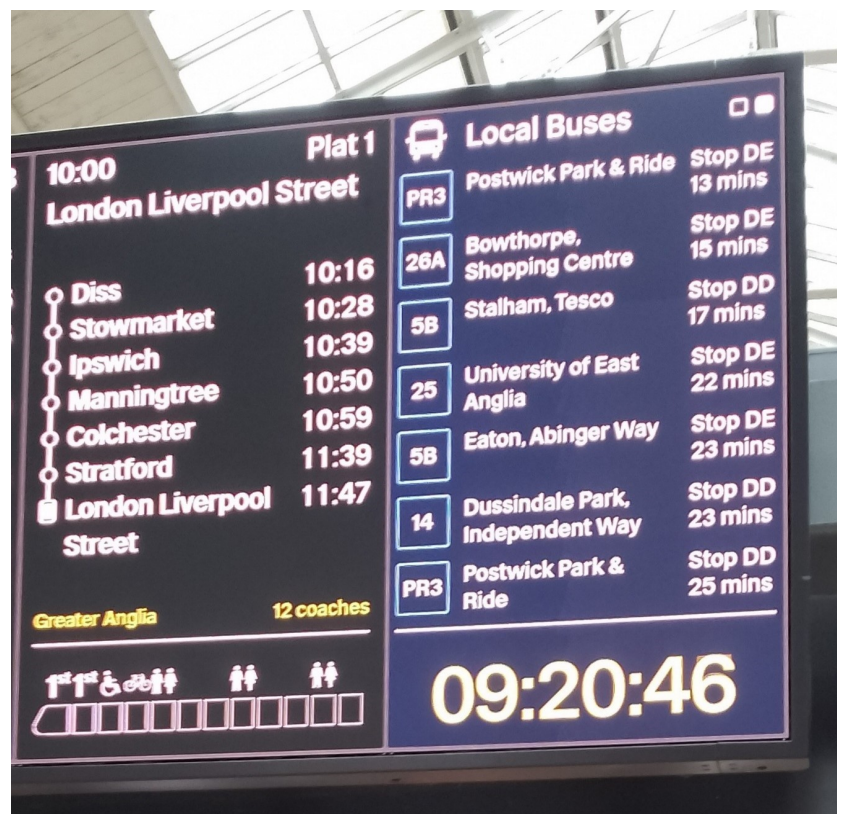
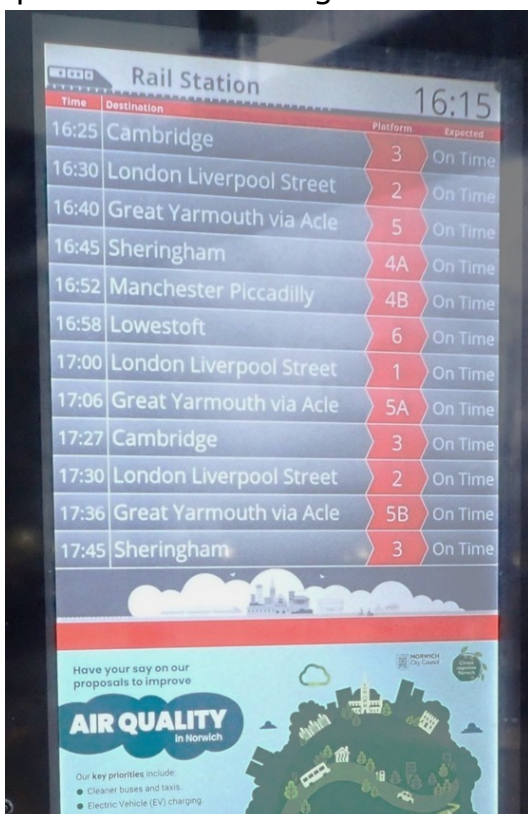
# “INTEGRATED TRANSPORT” – SENSIBLE POLICIES BUT PATCHY IMPLEMENTATION

BY DAVID HURDLE

What does the familiar phrase “integrated travel” really mean? Through bus/train tickets? Buses and trains timed to connect with each other? Taking connections, they are important in Sheringham where I live. We are at the end of a branch line from Norwich, the Bittern Line. For travel on to, say, Holt, Blakeney or Wells you need to get a bus. So, trains at Sheringham do not just serve the town but enable onward bus journeys to other towns.

My friend, James Thomson (who lives in Holt), and I have been trying to get buses and trains to connect where possible. The operator Sanders has changed the 44 service to and from Holt on Sundays so that the hourly buses and hourly trains do now connect, or did until May! Now trains arrive at 38 or 41 minutes past the hour and hourly 44s leave at 43 minutes past – too tight for a realistic connection. From Holt it’s better, with the 44 arriving in Sheringham at 34 and a train leaves at 41 or 44. But it’s not so good during the week – and Coasthopper’s connections with trains are poor, with a bus leaving for Wells just as a train arrives or three minutes before it, and on Sundays 1-3 minutes after it, so you need to run fast!

Taking the provision of bus and train information there are some recent good signs (pun intended) at Norwich station. There is now train information at a bus stop (see photo below left), and bus information inside the station (at the ticket gates, see photo below right). And a new bus information digital display has just been provided at Sheringham station.



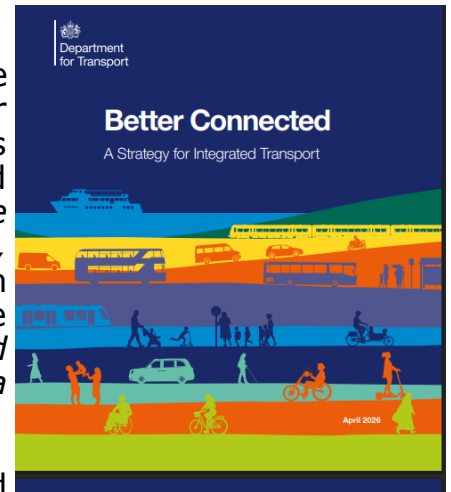
The policies are all there. In 2021 we had the first-ever Department for Transport (DfT) National Bus Strategy. It stated – “... for easy connections between modes, bus services should be timed to connect with trains”. That same year the National Rail Delivery Group’s Sustainable Stations guidance was also crystal clear – “Where possible, consider aligning timetables between bus and train services”.

Reflecting the above DfT strategy’s goal of Better Integration, the Norfolk County Council’s Bus Service Improvement Plan is very clear on connections:

“Integrated Transport Network: Seamless integration between different modes of

transport is essential for promoting multi-modal journeys and reducing reliance on private vehicles. We will work closely with transport partners to streamline connections between buses, trains ....”

There are plenty more good policies. On 2 April 2026 the DfT published 'Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport' (front cover pictured right), which is 92 pages long as a PDF file. Public consultation and research had found that people wanted "Journeys that are joined-up, with frequent services, aligned timetables, smooth interchanges and integrated ticketing...". An associated DfT policy paper had an aim of more people taking the bus because – "Buses are better integrated into the wider transport system and it's easy to make a journey using different transport modes".



Finally, Greater Anglia has recently launched 'Integrated Transport': <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/travel-information/journey-planning/integrated-transport>. It has some worthy aims and the new Integrated Transport Partnership in Hoddesdon is encouraging: <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/about-us/news-desk/news-articles/new-branded-bus-links-hertfordshire-community-london-in-integrated>

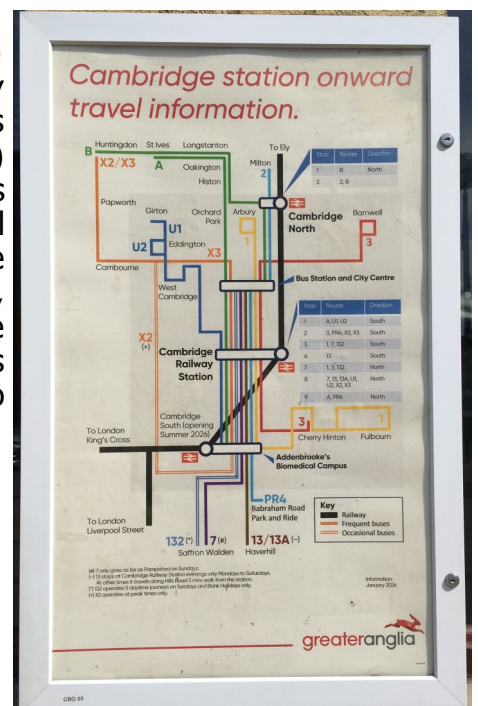
**So, the policies and aims are there; now we just need to implement them, to see the action.** Quite simply, with good connections more people will use public transport. Of course, if the train and bus operator were one and the same, I guarantee services would connect. Witness this sign (right) when the Great Western Railway (GWR) ran feeder buses to its trains from 1903 to 1933.



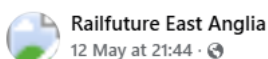
I'll always remember the first day of my career in 1964 at London Transport when my boss said to me – "We're not in business to run buses, m'boy, we're in business to carry passengers." Come on operators, talk to each other and get more passengers!

David Hurdle is a Railfuture member and a former transport planner who has written various books. RAIL EAST's editor, Peter Feeney, is eager to receive articles from all of its readers, not just Railfuture members.

On the subject of integrated transport, particularly providing bus information at stations, Railfuture was delighted to discover recently that Greater Anglia (GA) had printed 'onward travel information' posters incorporating the map drawn up by Railfuture's Paul Hollinghurst at both Cambridge 'Central' and Cambridge North stations (see poster board at Cambridge station, right). Produced early in 2026 it says that Cambridge South opens in 'summer 2026' – if Greater Anglia gets in touch with Paul he'll gladly update the map; no charge, as GA already does Railfuture a few favours!



A reminder that Railfuture East Anglia has a Facebook page — [www.facebook.com/railfutureeastanglia](http://www.facebook.com/railfutureeastanglia).



Delighted that the onward travel poster designed by our own Paul Hollinghurst is now on display at Cambridge and Cambridge North Stations. The railway stations have regular bus services, and this will help passengers find their connections.

# ST EDMUND RETURNS – LAUNCH OF THE LATEST COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

BY PETER FEENEY



Greater Anglia's latest Community Rail Partnership (CRP) — its tenth — was formally launched at an event held at New Green Community Centre in Thurston near Bury St Edmunds on 31 March 2026. And appropriately for that location, attendees were informed that, following a competition attracting around a thousand entries, the official name of the new organisation is to be the St Edmund's CRP — Edmund, ninth century king of the Angles, antagonist of the marauding Vikings and later revered in the Middle Ages as a Christian martyr.

The launch event formed the inaugural meeting of the stakeholder group drawn together to help the CRP develop local links and propose projects for the future. Representatives of a range of community and voluntary groups, as well as elected members and officers from the councils helping to fund the CRP attended. Railfuture East Anglia was represented, as was the local rail user group, MARPA, a long term campaigner for the CRP. A number of station adopters from across the route also contributed to what was a very positive and lively event.

Tracey Harding (pictured), chair of the CRP steering group and CEO of the tourism promotion organisation Discover Newmarket, welcomed everyone to the event. Jonathan Denby from Greater Anglia outlined GA's long-term commitment to the CRP concept and emphasised how the St Edmund's CRP would be building on strong foundations, with excellent trains, reliable services, ever-growing passenger numbers – and an enthusiastic team of adopters serving all stations within the new partnership. The input from the Community Rail Network was from its regional support officer, Colin Burcombe, who outlined the "four pillars" of the rail partnership philosophy and stressed the huge variety of projects the new CRP had the potential to exploit in bringing the railway and its communities together. His presentation highlighted the significant social value a CRP could bring to those communities. Lesley Rayner, project officer for the St Edmund's CRP, then summarised work to date and next steps, including further contact with relevant organisations and the development of a logo, website and social media presence.



In a wide ranging discussion session that ended the formal part of the launch, there were questions about how the CRP would make itself known along the route beyond the organisations comprising the stakeholder group. Profile raising, both directly and through the stakeholder network, was recognised as the key early priority as a work plan for the CRP was developed.

Early signs suggest the arrival of the St Edmund's CRP is widely welcomed – a promising sign for future partnership working with communities along the line.

*Editor's note: Lesley Rayner will be one of our guest speakers at the Railfuture meeting to be held in Ipswich on 13 June 2026. For further information, please see [page 4](#).*

## ACCESSIBILITY AT STATIONS

RAIL EAST issue 209 (February 2026) featured the new stainless steel footbridge at Stowmarket, which had just been installed. Although the stairs are in use (and the temporary footbridge has gone), sadly, the lifts are still not in service. A repeat of Royston, it seems.



# **SORRY WE'RE FULL – CONGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE A CHALLENGE FOR RAIL FREIGHT**

**BY PHIL SMART**

The saga of the East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable reached its inevitable, if protracted, conclusion with the recent publication by Network Rail's Advanced Timetable Team of their Capacity Analysis declaring *congested infrastructure* at three locations.

The December 2025 timetable, the result of many years of negotiation, collaboration and compromise between the infrastructure provider, passenger and freight operating companies, recognised that there had to be a trade-off between capacity and performance reliability. So far, it has held together better than many in the industry had predicted, but it is not a plan for the long term.

While existing capacity for freight has been maintained, it only manages this with the tightest of junction margins and there is no capacity for growth, let alone the need to meet a growth target of 75% by 2050! The ECML is not just an end-to-end route from London to Scotland, it has many interfaces with cross country services and freight traffic which have to cross the route in order to meet market demand. The impression given in the report is that "without these it would all be fine". One of the three areas identified as 'congested' falls within the Railfuture East Anglia area.

## **Huntingdon North Junction to New England (Peterborough) North Junction**

This is probably the biggest challenge of the three. Freight services, particularly those to/from the port of Felixstowe, have to cross the ECML. To the south of Peterborough this is not a problem as the freight route passes beneath the ECML from the west side to the east along the March line. Traffic from the West Midlands joins the ECML at Helpston Junction (roughly 6 miles northwest of Peterborough) using the parallel up and down Stamford lines, traffic from Leeds or Doncaster from the North cannot use the ECML during the day and instead uses the 'joint' line via Lincoln. Neither route is electrified. The dive under at Werrington allows trains to avoid conflict with the ECML altogether but the demands of freight operation mean that many freight services have to access the freight terminals to the east of the ECML between Werrington and Peterborough. This is the legacy of past times when it was the site of New England locomotive shed and is the site where facilities for the freight operators who need to refuel and maintain locomotives and wagons are situated. Between New England and the West Midlands, freight has to cross the flat junction at New England North. For a slow-moving freight train of up to 750m in length, this requires a gap in the timetable – something rare on the busy ECML. Imagine crossing a busy dual carriageway. The same applies when accessing the March line, where up and down fast lines must be crossed at Spital Junction.

The report admits that there is "no simple or cost-effective option to ease congestion based upon reduction, or combination of (passenger) services within the 2025 timetable structure. The only service specification-based option which could facilitate more efficient capacity utilisation and ease congestion in this section is one which seeks to restructure the route-wide pattern of long-distance services". Given the challenge of drawing up the December 2025 timetable, few would fancy embarking on this. The report does comment that "a step change in the use of electric traction could reduce the need for freight services to cross the Spital and New England Junction ladders to access New England yards for re-fuelling or maintenance". Both the Felixstowe to Birmingham and Peterborough to Doncaster via Lincoln lines feature in Network Rail's *Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy*, but while Railfuture would welcome such a move, there is no funded programme of electrification planned any time soon.

Investors in terminals, wagons and locomotives need certainty that capacity will be available for them to obtain a return. This report identifies the weaknesses in the network, but the nation must play its part in funding network enhancements. 2050 will be upon us before we know it.

*Phil Smart works for the Rail Freight Group. This piece is based on an item in the Group's Newsletter.*

## ON-BOARD TROLLEY SERVICE BY JERRY ALDERSON

Few would have been surprised that the experimental catering trolley that Greater Anglia (GA) launched on its Norwich-Stansted trains in autumn 2025 (GA photo, right) was discontinued in January. The economics rarely stack up. However, GA has brought it back, operating from 18 May.



With some Norwich-Stansted services being very crowded, especially between Cambridge and Ely, the trolley often got stranded. Wastage and pilfering should be quite low, but the staffing costs are high, so it may require 15 sales per hour (one every four minutes) generating a profit in excess of £1.50 to cover staff, with pension, NI, holidays and illness factored in — and that's before allowing for unproductive time off the train, such as loading and transporting the trolley. It is hard to believe that the trolley will not be loss-making and therefore vulnerable to being axed again. A retired person operating it independently as a sole trader may be willing to work for less and they would have a real incentive to sell, whereas employees do not. Until April 2006 Great Northern services (then wagn) had an independent trolley service on the Fen Line and it was well used.

A problem with trolley services is that people expect extortionate prices, and often buy refreshments before boarding instead. With no disrespect to train staff (GA or from any other operator), there is an art to selling: it needs to be proactive, not reactive and is suited to an outgoing personality. Nervously wheeling a trolley past passengers who will almost feel guilty by asking questions will lead to failure.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

Please send articles for possible inclusion in RAIL EAST to Peter Feeney, who collates all submissions and prepares them for the newsletter. Good quality photos or graphics really are essential in order to make RAIL EAST visually attractive.

All submissions by **28 August 2026**, please, but articles covering late news will be considered just before sending to the printer two weeks later.

RAIL EAST is formatted by Jerry Alderson, but from the November 2026 issue (number 212) RAIL EAST will have a new look and a new logo too.

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## RECEIVING RAIL EAST BY POST OR ELECTRONICALLY?

Thank you to Railfuture members who have agreed to receive RAIL EAST by email. This helps to keep Railfuture's costs down and so spend funds on rail campaigning.

You can be emailed a copy of RAIL EAST on the same day that it goes to the printer, so you will receive it more than a week before other people. To switch to receiving it by email, please contact Lloyd Butler, who manages our database, at [renewals@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:renewals@railfuture.org.uk). Your co-operation will be appreciated.

The latest RAIL EAST is always at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/rail-east/>.

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## JOIN RAILFUTURE — FOR A BIGGER, BETTER RAILWAY

Railfuture is funded entirely by the public, who use the railway. This means that it can stand up for their interests; hopefully RAIL EAST proves this, with its justifiable criticism (plus much-deserved praise — Railfuture *promotes* rail travel, after all).

Annual membership fee is **£20** (£22 for joint membership); under 26 years can join for just £14. Join online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> using a credit/debit card or PayPal — the £10 'paperless' option requires a direct debit mandate.

# **railfuture** East Anglia

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Also see <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Contacts>

## **MEETING DATES AND VENUES**

**SATURDAY 13 JUNE 2026**

St Mary's at Stoke  
Stoke Street  
**IPSWICH**  
IP2 8BX

**SATURDAY 26 SEPT 2026**

No meeting but there will  
be a guided visit to Greater  
Anglia's Crown Point depot.  
Limited to 12 people.

**SATURDAY 28 NOV 2026**

Mill Road Community Cent.  
6 Hazell Street  
**CAMBRIDGE**  
CB1 2GN

A flyer for our meetings is always at: [www.railfuture.org.uk/east/meetings](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/meetings).  
This includes a map of the venue and directions from the station.

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