

raileast

THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH
www.railfuture.org.uk

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Welcome to our summer edition of RailEast, and though slightly smaller than last time, it probably reflects a relatively fallow period in railway news from our area. Nevertheless, some significant things have occurred since we last wrote to you, as you will read here
CB

BRANCH MEETING: Ipswich 21 June 14.15 hrs

Once again we will be gathering in the Ipswich Institute Reading Room and Library which is at 15 Tavern Street. IP1 3AA is the post code if you choose to search out a map on the internet. We were hoping to entice an East Anglia specialist from Network Rail to speak, but no, it seems its hierarchy is set on organising a special meeting for stakeholders and users, such as RailFuture. As yet there is no date or venue for this. However, at our Ipswich gathering we plan to feature the projected Felixstowe line improvements, updating you on the current state of the game.

RailFuture Rail Passengers and Campaigners National Conference: 5 July 2008

This rather wordy title masks the promise of a well run, stimulating meeting, in the Guildhall, Salisbury. The speakers include writer and retired BR manager, Peter Rayner plus Philip Dominey of South West Trains. To these luminaries will be added speakers on Using the Media; Transport in Wiltshire; and contributions from campaigners around the area. The vital question-and-answer session is also timetabled. The Fee is £10 for members and £12.50 otherwise. Full details are at <http://www.wellho.net/railfuture>. Alternatively, email Graham Ellis on graham@wellho.net or telephone him at 01225 708225. If you thought Ely was good, Salisbury aims higher!

Dibben's Crystal Ball:

Our Secretary, Nick Dibben, has been crystal ball-gazing of late; right through to 2057 in fact! The result is a distillation of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) report, "Billion Passenger Railway", a rather encouraging read www.atoc-comms.org .

By the end of 2007 the railway had reached 30 billion passenger miles, 1 billion past the previous record, way back in smoke-encrusted 1946 when the railway was about twice its present size. This was when the 'Jazz Trains' (so called because the doors were painted different colours to delineate class of travel) timetable of around eighty years ago, could run 24 steam hauled trains per hour into Liverpool St and take a mere ten minutes to unload, reload and depart. Enfield was 31 minutes and 17 stops from Liverpool St. Remarkable, even in hi-tech today. And such were the joys of cheap (and discardable) labour that Brunel's wonderful railway converted 177 miles of broad gauge track to standard gauge in a mere weekend. No engineering overruns then.

In looking forward the report inevitably hits flaky ground but does try to address general issues such as increased population, expense of oil, energy efficiency and links between cities. Transport consultant, Jim Steer, contributes a fireside list of possible up-to-2057

developments, including:

- More high speed routes mixing new construction with upgraded existing routes
- Extension of electrification, especially between our main cities
- A second channel tunnel rail link
- Rail tunnel to Ireland
- Oxford to Cambridge rail link
- Stansted to Colchester rail link
- Non coastal route from Exeter to Plymouth
- Dedicated freight routes

Many of these are already being studied not least to discover how engineering costs might be appreciably reduced, an absolute pre-requisite for all major projects. But it is good to see the railway industry at last adopting a decidedly positive stance toward developing the network. The key question is, as ever, how will Government respond? After all, its finances are currently between Northern Rock and a hard place. And still heading south after £2.5 billion was recently borrowed to placate the overtaxed low paid. ND/CB

Good News From FOBS (Friends of Brandon Station):

Stephen Dean writes to tell us that Brandon station is wreathed in justified optimism at the moment: Network Rail (NR) is leasing the building to them for a 'modest' rent until 2010, which will be supported by a Lottery grant plus contributions from Forest Heath and Breckland Councils. Inside's "a bit grim", says Stephen, and they haven't yet dared to check the roof! Only minor work can be undertaken for the moment, with serious restoration pending a feasibility study which Keystone Trust has already begun.

NR will take back the property if a funded restoration project isn't on offer about eighteen months hence. As to how the restored building might be used, the ideas are many. So if you have professional expertise which might benefit FOBS, and/or you know of any project-hungry millionaires of a thoroughly generous disposition, Stephen and company are eager for your call or email at: stephendean@decanimusic.co.uk or 01842 815372

Meanwhile FOBS are not sitting back awaiting good fortune: on learning that Gresley Pacific 'Bittern' would be passing through on 4 May, en route to Norwich, they set up a marquee in the car park furnishing refreshments to the onlookers, the profit from which went to the FOBS Fund. Good publicity generated a worthwhile crowd with thoroughly worthwhile income. And there's a car-boot sale to come, they hope, on 6 July. So do support them in any way you feel you can. This station could become a really attractive place for rail travellers, as indeed it ought to be.

The website is: <http://www.brandonstationfriends.com> CB

Breckland Line Priority:

After relaying the track between Sheringham and Cromer, Network Rail (NR) had intended to continue the work and complete Cromer to North Walsham by 2009/10. But not any more. The real priority is seen to be the Breckland Line route from Norwich to Ely, which carries about twice as many passengers each day and is beset with fairly recent speed restrictions. So said NR supremo, Ian Coucher, in a letter to Norfolk MP, Norman Lamb. As a result Cromer to North Walsham is deferred to at least 2011. Meanwhile, Norwich to Ely track renewal has already begun with signalling and level crossing work starting next year. For more details read on. CB

Norfolk Rail Alliance:

This meeting, attended by Peter Lawrence, offered up some very interesting facts and figures. Apparently, reopening a line costs an average of £10M per kilometre, according to Network Rail; (which compares rather well with the price of extending the A46 past Junction 16 of M40, which is officially £22.2 per kilometre). NR also run a discretionary fund of around £200m out of which £45m can be extracted each year. As in all non-road scheme assessments, estimated losses of Fuel Duty to the Treasury sit in the debit column.

As to projects in progress: Norwich Royal Dock will be wired, NR say, by this June, so that rolling stock won't have to vie for space at heavily congested Crown Point depot. Also completed by June will be the W10 clearance for 9'6" containers from Ipswich to Ely.

Modular ERTMS signalling (which is the combination of the European Train Control System with a satellite-based Global System for Mobile Communications) is planned for the Norwich to Ely route along with a very pricey automation of the many level crossings, all controlled from one signalling centre. There is a question mark though as to whether the current diesel units furnish enough electricity to power ERTMS. Anyway, 2012 is the completion target and the work will raise the route line speed and its capacity significantly from the 75mph/six trains per hour present standard. And that's something we all wish to see.

An additional influence, and a probably contentious one, is that bi-directional signalling over Ely North Curve should be operational at some point in 2010. We say "contentious", because this would of course allow EMT to skip the Ely stop. Even so Norwich to Peterborough could be down to 85 minutes or less, with the existing two stops, instead of the present 93 minute average? As yet, who knows....but we, and I suspect, East Midland Trains (EMT) certainly hope so.

Talking of Ely, there would seem to be the strong prospect of imminent track renewal at Ely North Junction where a 20mph speed restriction was imposed a couple of months ago. Adding this to the equally severe speed restrictions over the two bridges, has made the exit northward from Ely, for nearly two miles, very time consuming and aggravating congestion. Fortunately this restriction applies only to northbound services. PL / CB

EAST-WEST RAILWAY: Although the current news is almost wholly good, there is one lamentable morsel: Cambridgeshire County Council has opted out of the East-West Rail Consortium. But, to quote Winston Churchill on the perennial curse of politics, "events, dear boy, events" could always conspire to reverse this decision.

Otherwise the news is good. The west end of the scheme, from Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford, might well start in 2009 despite the estimated cost rising 31% to £190M. A spur to Aylesbury will add £40m. The funding is almost at the point of being sanctioned and will largely come from the Government. All very exciting and optimistic.

The bit which really concerns us, though, is from Bedford eastward, which is the subject of a separate study due to be published shortly. Certainly the proposed Hitchin flyover for Cambridge-London route services is reputed to incorporate a spur for east-west trains from this route, although, so far, nobody has seen evidence of this on any drawing. The construction of the bridge itself still does not have a starting date. So it is essential we keep the eastern end of this imaginative scheme firmly in the public domain, and on the original route via Cambridge onward. And we will. In the meantime, particular thanks to

Reg Little of Milton Keynes, for furnishing so much of this information. CB

Ticket Barriers:

As National Express East Anglia (NXEA) is committed to introducing such things at Ipswich and Norwich, it is worth noting some of the effects these barriers have had at Cambridge since their installation in January of this year.

At peak times people are queuing to get off the platform in such depth that it reaches right to the platform edge. For once this sounds like a real health and safety issue which, whilst unlikely to be replicated at Norwich, could very easily occur at Ipswich where the exit layout is similar.

Access to Cambridge station platform without a valid travel ticket is now forbidden. So no awaiting arrivals in the newsagent or enjoying a drink and a bite. Also, when the barriers were switched on the stand carrying pocket timetables and travel leaflets was left marooned on the wall a mere metre beyond. And it's still there. And there are still no other timetable racks on the concourse. Even on walking round to the advance ticket purchase office, you won't find any leaflets for First Capital Connect (FCC). And this is the company which generates most of the business at Cambridge. Not good.

And should you wish to see what Network Rail intend to do to your weekend service, NXEA have placed a very conspicuous and excellent panel just outside the entrance to Cambridge Station. Wonderful, except that it tells you absolutely nothing about the prospects for disruption on FCC or Arriva Cross Country, whose posters are only on the platform. Not a lot of use there. So beware when the Barriers get to your station. Meanwhile we are on the case so far as Cambridge is concerned. CB

Ticket Types:

In April Transport Minister, Ruth Kelly, announced a 'simplification' of the complex fares structure for which many of us had long hoped. Essentially tickets will come under the 'Full Price-Go Anytime', 'Off-Peak' or 'Advance Booking' categories. But this does exclude Season Tickets, Eurostar and special offers, which therefore still leaves quite a choice. RailCards will still apply. Full details on www.nationalrail.co.uk/simplefares

The View From The Chair:

Sunday timetables

Sunday is a busy day for travel. As we all know, many of our journeys are not well catered for by the railway, although we are promised better things to come by the Train Operating Companies and Network Rail.

One thing we could have without much difficulty, is a Sunday timetable that runs in the same times as the Saturday/weekday service. Why, for example, is the Cambridge to Norwich service in different timings on Sunday compared to the rest of the week? All very confusing. If it ran to the same timetable on Sunday, it would better connect with the Kings Cross services which do run in the same timings albeit with a slightly reduced service. Some services, such as that mentioned above, also need earlier starts to the day and be hourly right from the start. Your opinions please..... and "why not" NXEA? PW

Pensioner free travel on the buses

Most people I have met value the 'free travel' concessions on the buses. The system appears to be working well in most places. There is some concern that on some railway

routes revenue could fall away as pensioners switch away to adjacent bus routes. Personally, I have seen little evidence of this or even of greatly increased bus travel. However, it would be useful to have your observations from your neck of the woods. In parts of Wales, the Assembly Government has introduced the pensioner concession to some rail routes with great success.

In the correspondence columns of a railway journal, I read a letter that suggested the Pensioner Concession Card should act as a **free** 'Senior Railcard' for the national rail network, rather than the paid-for card in use now. To me, this seems a very good idea. Again, comments, please. PW

Station footfall / passenger counts

We have a plan to do passenger footfall counts at selected stations, initially in the Cambridge area. We need members to volunteer to give up an hour or so of their time once a year to enable us to do this. Names and phone numbers to me please, a s a p. PW
(Ed: please note related item further on)

Added value for some of our routes?

It is difficult to change the status quo on our so-called 'liberated' railway, but I wonder if some changes to one or two routes would add value to them. Yarmouth is a big and important town that has suffered greatly from rail rationalisation. Its present service might be even more useful if it were to be integrated with the Norwich to Cambridge service so that it became a Yarmouth – Norwich – Cambridge service, opening up a wider network with just one change. Maybe at least off-peak? *(Ed: wouldn't this mean a mix of Cl.170 and 156?)* PW

National strategic freight network

It is good to see that Network Rail is well on the way to putting into place a flexible national long distance, fully gauge cleared freight network. Included in it are 'our' routes from Felixstowe to London via Colchester and Newmarket/ Bishops Stortford; Cambridge/ Chippenham Jct to Ely and Peterborough northward via Grantham and via Spalding, the west Midlands and Northwest via Stamford plus Peterborough to London via Huntingdon and Hertford /Welwyn. PW

Aviation statistics

A new report entitled 'Trends in Global Aviation Noise and Emissions from Commercial Aviation' says that airlines alone will produce 1.5 billion tones of carbon dioxide into the environment by 2025. Worrying, because the entire EU of 457million people, currently 'only' emits 3.1 billion tons each year. So if we wish to 'save the planet', don't fly, take the train. PW

National Express East Anglia

I am not convinced that the name 'National Express' is a clearer/better name for a railway than the unlamented 'one' was. National Express seems to the common usage rather than National Express East Anglia. Railway company names should be regional/ geographical to give a link into their local communities. Northern; Southern; Southwestern; East Midlands; London Midland are as it should be. None of these mention Govia or Stagecoach etc.. National Express is neither national nor in many cases express. Recently at Kings Cross during an unplanned shut down of the lines out of Euston, (owing to yet another Network Rail foul-up), the station announcer sternly told the bewildered passengers arriving from Euston that they couldn't use National Express trains and should 'try' St. Pancras next door. National...?

So please, may East Anglia be emphasised much more on our trains, posters, timetables

and in announcements. PW

Peter, thanks again for giving us something to ponder, and maybe to act upon. CB

Count On It:

Although I'm not quite sure what LENNON represents as an acronym, I do know that it is the electronic system by which source and quantity of ticket sales is recorded. But it's in that word 'sales' that a problem arises: despite what the Train Operating Companies might insist, LENNON is **not** an accurate measure of just how many people get on or off trains at any one station. Railfuture's own counting sessions consistently confirm this.

Happily, today's technology can be harnessed to irrefutably back up personal observation. Although recording passengers getting on and off trains was always expensive using film, it is no longer so with the digital camera where results can be viewed on computer/tv screen, not to mention making a copy of the images to send to the Train Operating Company. Most camera models permit a moving video sequence which might make separating those alighting into the crowd waiting to get on, easier to count. Every shot will carry date and time details. No developing, and printing, and the posting cost is miniscule.

In this way you, single handedly if need be, can build up a visual dossier of exactly how many people actually do use a much valued station. Need I say more, except to invite you to get surveying and then send the results to our collator of such things, Branch Committee member, Peter Bayless, at peter.bayless@btinternet.com CB

Freight, Fuel Duty and HGV's:

You have doubtless seen and heard much about the protest of the haulage industry at the substantial hike in fuel duty in recent times. Perfectly understandable as many people fear for their job. But, as George Boyle of RailFuture Freight Committee reminds us: "It is imperative that any comment on the fuel protest includes the fact that, although HGV's on the continent pay less duty per litre of fuel, taxation hits them in other ways, eg. motorway access per kilometre and higher corporation tax. *On average*, UK road haulage taxation is slightly less than the European average when such factors are taken into account."

Of course, nowhere in Europe does HGV haulage pay pro-rata for all the direct costs it imposes on road systems, let alone indirect costs such as accidents and pollution. Clearly, if it did the implication for inflation might well frighten off most governments. What we seek as RailFuture, as we always have, is as-fair-as-possible competition between transport modes. This is still not the case. GB/CB

Lowestoft Station.

Trevor Garrod writes to tell us that on 12 April an excursion organised by Pathfinder Tours brought over 300 visitors to this prime Suffolk seaside resort, many of whom spent money in the town.

Taking full advantage of this visitation, The East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA) produced a special leaflet which was distributed on the train. As a result over 100 passengers signed letters to Waveney District Council opposing any plans to move the station.

The usefulness of the existing station with its long platforms was demonstrated again on 12 May when a football special left for London. The 9-car fully booked train, composed of modern Class 170 units, was hired to carry Lowestoft Town football supporters to the FA Vase Final at Wembley.

ESTA is willing to put some money into a survey of how many passengers would still travel by rail if the station were relocated. They are hopeful that other bodies including Railfuture Rail Defence Fund, will add their money to this venture. TG/CB

Out of Line...The Editor Rambles:

If rumour is correct (too often, not), the prospects for the Kings Lynn to Kings Cross route seem to be changing, as suggested in our last issue. First Capital Connect(FCC) / Thameslink appear not be the only game in town, with the Intercity Express Project(IEP) apparently gaining points for this route. Why?

Don't forget, it is a *very* prosperous route: Cambridge generates more journeys than any East Anglia station apart from Chelmsford. A bigger slice of this than one might expect is for trips north via Peterborough. Ely is increasingly growing its share of business in all directions, as are all Fen Line stations. And if the word that hitherto dare not speak its name in government circles, ***electrification***, is truly gaining acceptance by ministry mandarins, what price wiring up Ely to Peterborough and introducing a long distance option? Preposterous? Well, maybe.

At 58 miles from Kings Cross, Cambridge obviously doesn't warrant long distance rolling stock for a journey time around 45 minutes, not to mention being compelled to fork out a proportionately higher ticket price for the privilege. But what if the IEP were heading to or from the north of England, or Scotland? Now that would be a big selling point. It would also greatly enhance Ely as a passenger interchange and thereby dilute some of the station congestion at Peterborough.

As the Department for Transport (DfT) will certainly expect a return on the IEP investment, and as IEP stock will in any case have a depot near Kings Cross for East Coast-route services, what better wheeze for upping the returns than upgrading a well-heeled adjoining route to IEP status. And if FCC/Thameslink fills in the rest of the timetable with a slower, cheaper, outer suburban service to south of the Thames, then it almost makes sense. But whichever option government choose, we probably do not have long to wait to hear about it. But thus far all still very much *speculation* at the moment.

Conversely, to those of us still alive in 2020 or thereabouts, it might just be that the year 2008 will be sadly recalled as the highpoint of the Fen Line service to London in terms of speed, comfort, frequency, reliability and general good value for money. And will we forget the chronic overcrowding, don the rose-tinted optics and witter on about 'halcyon days'? Heavens, I do hope not. CB

Community Support at Alresford:

Fed up with ant-social behaviour at their station, the residents of Alresford , near Colchester, have bandied together to clean up their railway station, too often the focus of criminal damage. Over a recent weekend campaign, volunteers joined forces to return the station to its former glory with the aid of a £300 donation from National Express East Anglia (NXEA) and much hard work cleaning, scrubbing and sweeping.

One Parish Councillor's husband has adopted the station and now visits and reports at least monthly on its condition. And with all this cleanliness and flower-power the volunteers feel they are well on their way to reclaiming their station from yobbery. CB

Eco Towns:

Sorry about the phrase but it is obviously shorthand for new, ecologically sustainable, communities. Recently the Government published proposals for four such communities here in East Anglia. . They are at Coltishall (Norwich) Elsenham, Hanley Grange (Duxford), and Marston Vale in Bedfordshire. The background to these is quite detailed and much can be found at www.communities.gsi.gov.uk with comments invited to

ecotowns@communities.gsi.gov.uk Interestingly, the 14 person panel who will be scrutinising applications from potential developers, includes Stephen Joseph of Campaign for Better Transport (erstwhile, Transport 2000). CB

A Weight off Our Mind:

And it is wonderful to wind up this edition, literally as it goes to press, with the splendid news, announced in Parliament today, 3 June, that 60tonne/25 metre length trucks will NOT be allowed to operate on the UK road system. DforT concluded that longer and heavier lorries would pull business from the railway and increase CO2 emissions as well as placing unacceptable costs on our road infrastructure.

So thank you for your considerable input: all those emails and leaflets that RailFuture asked us to send and distribute appear to have had their effect. For the full details go to: www.dft.gov.uk/press and look for Ministers statements. Have a wonderful summer, or what ever this year tries to pass-off as one. CB

And here's where to write with all that news and comment, adverse or otherwise: Editor, Chris Burton, 79 Tenison Road, Cambridge, CB1 2DG | cfb79ten@googlemail.com 01223 352327. or Nick Dibben, see details below. Either of us would love to hear from you, especially you Eastern East Anglians! Deadline for next issue is Monday 2 September 2008

Dates for your Diary

BRANCH MEETINGS

IPSWICH Saturday 21 June 2008 at 14.15hrs: Inst.Reading Room and Library, 15 Tavern St, IP1 3AA

NORWICH 20 September at 14.15: Chapelfields Methodist Chapel, Chapel Field Road, NR2 1SD

CAMBRIDGE 29 November at 14.15: Little St Mary's Church Hall, Trumpington St, CB2 2QG

BURY ST EDMUNDS: 29 February 2009 at 14.00: Central Library, Sergeants Walk, St Andrews St, IP33 1TZ



the national independent voice for rail users

www.railfuture.org.uk

www.railwatch.org.uk

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