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Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

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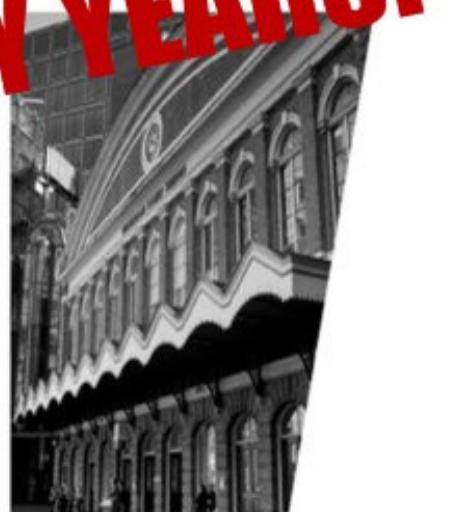
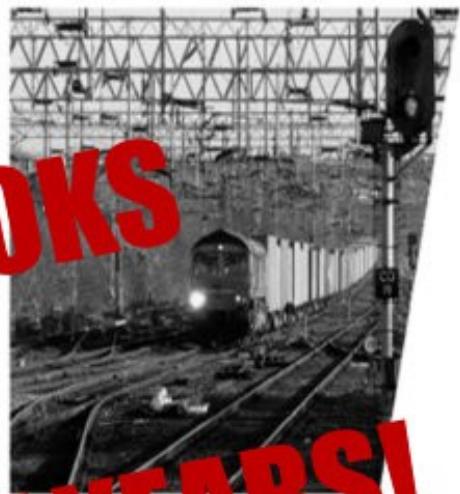
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Draft for Consultation

Anglia: Route Study
Long Term Planning Process



COVER STORY

Network Rail published in early November its view of East Anglia's rail infrastructure needs over the coming three decades. Ambitious crystal ball gazing? Maybe; but for too long we lamented the short-term mindset of rail supremos, politicians and civil servants; so let us be thankful for this extensive draft strategy inviting our response. There is much exciting reading within its 145 pages ultimately confirming the relatively few, though expensive projects, whose completion would most greatly improve our railway from every aspect: various works between Ely Station and Ely North Junction; a return to double track over the River Wensum at Trowse; several miles of at least three tracks northward from Chelmsford; likewise on West Anglia from Cheshunt northward for several miles, and increased speeds from Norwich and Ipswich through to Peterborough.

This report covers many more projects most of which include an approximate price, and all to be found through this link;

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/anglia-area-route-study-draft-for-consultation.pdf> You may feel some ideas have been given short shrift, or ignored altogether. Either way, let us know what you think via letter, email, 'phone or at forthcoming Branch meetings. Your view is the fuel for our Branch which will be responding to the report by the appropriate date (3 February 2015). So do make your observations to our Secretary well before then. This way our response should reflect the views of many. CB

News round-up

AIMS AND HOPES FOR THE NEXT GREATER ANGLIA FRANCHISE

The Branch, with input from the London and South East Branch and local rail users, has submitted our aspirations for the future Greater Anglia Franchise. Developing the ideas included in the East Anglia Rail Prospectus produced by local authorities and enterprise partnerships, we have called for the franchise to include new rolling stock and additional services across the region. Priorities include new rolling stock for the London to Norwich route that would both increase capacity and reduce journey times, and extra units to deal with growth on local routes. With respect to additional services, the priority is an hourly service between Ipswich and Peterborough, the last route in our area without an hourly service. We have also urged a third fast service between London and Norwich and the introduction of half hourly trains on most rural routes. The Branch has stressed the importance of improving the overall journey experience with the introduction of smart ticketing, better information, especially about disruption, and station improvements.

The Government will start a formal consultation on the new franchise early in the new year with invitations to tender going out later in the year. The new franchise is expected to start in 2016.

IT'S OUR TURN! (REPORT ON THE BRANCH MEETING IN NORWICH 27 Sept.)

The next Greater Anglia passenger franchise must include requirements for new rolling stock and additional train services, so said Greater Anglia Managing Director, Jamie Burles, our enthusiastic Guest Speaker.

Addressing our Norwich Branch meeting in September, Mr Burles noted that the current short term franchise and extension had made it difficult to justify investment, much needed to serve a growing region. This resulted in daily overcrowding on most routes and many rural services with slow journey times between key centres.

As East Anglia made a net contribution to the Treasury with the Greater Anglia franchise as an unsubsidised, premium payer, it was therefore right that significant investment should be made in the railway. However, Mr Burles warned that unless this investment was part of the franchise specification, bidders would be tempted to go for the cheaper "vanilla flavoured low cost" franchise just to please the Treasury. He added that government officials involved in franchise awards were thankfully beginning to understand that the wider economic benefits from improving rail services and the passenger experience, needed consideration.

Essential investment included new trains for the London to Norwich service with high rates of acceleration to achieve the desired journey time reductions, and replacement or refurbishment of the London outer suburban fleet of Class 317/321 units. Additional stock was also needed for rural routes to reduce overcrowding and increase frequencies. Infrastructure improvements were also vital on the main routes into London and between Felixstowe, Peterborough and beyond. The way Network Rail managed maintenance needed to change to allow for earlier and later trains each day.

Mr Burles accepted that the franchise had, like some soccer matches, been a game of two halves; initial improvements had been over-shadowed by recent problems with the track and signalling. The bad weather last winter had also affected train maintenance schedules in turn impacting performance. The poor performance of the Felixstowe line was a major concern. Measures were being put in place to deal with these issues, exemplified by on-hand maintenance staff at Liverpool Street station able to respond to problems more quickly.

In the remaining time of this franchise, Greater Anglia are still carrying out improvements; including extra trains between Cambridge and Stansted

Airport, new smart-card ticketing in some areas and extra cleaners. Branch members welcomed the positive approach to the future and the Branch will be writing to the Department of Transport with our expectations of the new franchise. ND

SEAMLESS TRAVEL VIA HARWICH INTERNATIONAL PORT

Trevor Garrod tells us that Abellio Greater Anglia's rail/sea/rail Dutch Flyer ticket has survived the recent changes in the Netherlands, where it is now necessary to use an OV-Chip card for your train or bus journey in many cases.

If you book the Dutch Flyer (which for £45 can take you all the way from, for example; Lowestoft to Maastricht), you receive a "disposable chipcard" valid for one day, and can check in and out with it rather as you would with a London oyster-card. Stena Line also sell these on the ferry for 16 Euro but to buy a ticket from an automatic machine if you are only making a short local journey when you land.

Meanwhile, the other scheduled ferry from Harwich, to Esbjerg in Denmark, was withdrawn by DFDS at the end of September. It had become less convenient for foot passengers, with a taxi ride or 20-minute walk from the quay to the station in Esbjerg, and passenger numbers had also been falling because of competition from low-cost airlines. However, this autumn there have been reports that a new company will start operating the route in April. Railfuture's International Group is keeping an eye on the situation and hopes that, if a new ferry company enters the market, it will also be integrated with the trains. TG

MEANWHILE... you can also go to the Continent by Eurostar. If you do so between now and the end of June, remember to complete Railfuture's questionnaire. It is available on our website or you can obtain a paper copy from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. A report will be produced in the Autumn of 2015. TG

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

ESTA has published the results of its August survey of local train and bus services. Members were asked to complete a questionnaire about a train or bus journey they made during that month, and 100 responses were analysed.

On the trains, a high level of satisfaction was recorded with many journeys, but three areas for improvement stood out:

1. A breakdown of Oulton Broad swing bridge and overrunning engineering work at Ipswich caused widespread disruption and this was not handled well by the train operating company.

2. Some on-train announcements are better than others, but complaints that the Southwold bus connection at Halesworth station was not announced still arose, despite previous promises that staff would be asked to do so. TG

3. When asked if they would like the Ipswich-Lowestoft trains to be faster or more frequent, an overwhelming majority of respondents called for faster trains. The doubling of frequency in the past four years has brought more customers to the line. The priority now is seen as increasing the line speed.

A 17-page report of the ESTA survey has been sent to local operators and politicians. TG



MELDRETH, SHEPRETH AND FOXTON RAIL USERS GROUP

Susan Vandeven reports that "the first weeks of Govia's new franchise have seen efforts to carry over and nurture some of our campaign's key successes in the First Capital Connect era. However we are well aware that under the new 'management contract' framework that governs the new franchise, we may need to make our case to the Department for Transport for the retention of some of these schemes."

"First and foremost, free and reduced parking charges have transformed empty car parks into well-used ones and our 50% 16-19 student discount fare has seen a modal shift to rail, among local sixth formers. The population explosion of Greater Cambridge means greater congestion on our roads, and therefore greater interest in making journeys by sustainable transport, often multi-modal. We are encouraging passengers with bicycles to avoid peak time trains or to leave a bike at stations on both ends of their journey.

To this end, a County Council-owned car-shaped bicycle rack is now in place at Shepreth Station, making the point that one car park space can accommodate up to ten bicycles."

"We're delighted that Larry Heyman from Govia Thameslink has recently joined our local A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign, and that planning for combined rail and cycle journeys being approached from a joined-up perspective."

"The anticipation of the Thameslink service in a few years' time is prompting



planning for changes to level crossings, and a welcome upgrade of the Shepreth Station Level Crossing has been announced by Network Rail. Plans for a second full barrier level crossing in Shepreth, barely a quarter of a mile away and also within the residential village, are questionable as it is felt this could create new problems including new risk taking. We've put our concerns to NR and will be meeting on site to discuss. Again, good channels of communication are so important." SvdV

CAMBRIDGE SCIENCE PARK STATION UPDATE.

Alan Mayes tells us that "Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council will be consulting the public on options for the development of the Cambridge Northern Fringe East area immediately West of the new Cambridge Science Park Railway Station scheduled to open in May 2016."

"The area already includes the Cambridge Science and Business Parks and other offices. The new station will enable the development of new offices and housing in the area. The public will also be invited to make suggestions for the final name of the new station. AM

BRANDON STATION

Many who travel between stations on the Cambridge to Norwich route cannot fail to notice the increasing number of users at Brandon station. In no small part this is because of the efforts of "Friends of Brandon Station". (FOBS). These volunteers have worked tirelessly on the gardens and brightened the otherwise boarded-up windows of the station buildings with well designed murals.

So it was very sad to learn that FOBS feels it is unable to continue, for various reasons, and has since ceased to exist. We greatly thank FOBS membership for truly effecting change for the better at Brandon, and wish they and the station a very good future. PW/CB

NEWMARKET HERITAGE CENTRE FOR HORSE RACING AND SPORTING ART

Newmarket, Suffolk, is renown universally as the "home" of horse racing. Its stables, training, exercising, and the big-ticket horse sales at Tattersalls make for an exciting place for many to visit. This they do without even venturing to the beautiful race tracks on the edge of town, with their grand buildings and adjoining paddocks for 250,000 people, who arrive for the race days.

With such a rich heritage it is no surprise that there is an excellent museum in

the centre of town enshrining that history and excitement. At the turn of the year, the BBC reported that: "Work has begun to turn a former stables in to a "Home of Horse-racing" heritage centre. Newmarket's National Museum of Horse Racing: <http://www.nhrm.co.uk/>, will relocate from the High Street to the Palace House & Stables, becoming the National Heritage Centre for Horse Racing and Sporting Art. Funding has come from Forest Heath (£1.3m), Suffolk County Council (£1m), the Heritage Lottery Fund (£4.25m) and private individuals and trusts."

The trustees of the museum could have located to a site well outside the town, but wisely decided to keep it in town to enable it to be accessed by public transport as well as by car. In doing so they have utilised a disused stables, a derelict Rothschild Yard and paddocks, which are being restored and will provide a home for the Retraining of Racehorses charity. This will enable visitors actually to see race horses close at hand.

The grade II-listed Palace House is the remaining part of the palace built for King Charles II in 1671 and will be incorporated to provide an art gallery for artworks from the existing museum, the British Sporting Art Trust and Tate Britain. Finally, a quality space will be provided for the 8000 artefacts from the existing museum. It will be a major new cultural attraction for the UK and expects to attract around 60,000 visitors a year after it opens in 2016.

Inevitably this leads us to Newmarket station and the current train service. In spite of promises to create better facilities nothing has happened to improve shelters and the general passenger experience. It is utterly basic and devoid even of a ticket machine. And the service remains only hourly.

Car parking is full all day with more spaces badly needed. There is scant information at the station about race days or even how to get to the courses. We shall continue to campaign for the train operator, the councils, and the horse racing industry to work together on a plan to improve matters. We've had the half promises; the time to act is now. PW

BURY ST EDMUND'S

A door into the building was revealed on the Cambridge bound platform some time back exciting expectations that a waiting room was about to be provided. Nothing of the sort occurred for a long time but we understand that funding may have been found to bring the up platform buildings back to life. So, the hundreds of daily passengers may view the prospect of winter once again with a little more relish.



IPSWICH

Work has started on rearranging the station forecourt

www.railfuture.org.uk/east.html

to improve access to the various railway entrances. The station appears to be operating at capacity with platform space constricted for both trains and users. Grid-lock constantly threatens. But good news reached us on 20 November to say that Ipswich Yard has at last reopened to freight, after a severe delay to completion.

Ely(see photo)

A station that is experiencing severe over crowding in the peaks when several very crowded trains can arrive together. Promised work to expand exits has not materialised. Car parking is impossible off peak. The ticket office is often closed causing great confusion to those trying to access the railway.

MARCH

The last train to March from Cambridge leaves at 21.00. That's the last train to Peterborough too. Surely Arriva Cross Country can run a very useful later service from Stansted to Peterborough and return to Cambridge?

Ticket issuing is still difficult at Ely, March, Thetford, Bury St Edmunds, and Manningtree.

CAMBRIDGE

Chronic overcrowding of the ticket hall continues. Posters promise relief but oddly mention only half the numbers who actually use the station ie:those starting their journey. For the 'lost' 4.5 million users leaving the train, and in spite of repeated calls for information displays about onward travel to be accurately modified, it still appears to be beyond the capabilities of all concerned to get to grips with this irritation and in so doing, solve it! CB/PW

Remember: Branch Meeting, Saturday 6 December, Peterborough. See back page

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATES

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL STATES ITS INTENT

Cambridgeshire CC updated the draft of their "Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire" with a November 2014 edition, and it's more good news as the rail prospects continue to increase. The complete item is offered at: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Cambridgeshire>

Some highlights from this are:

- 1) A reopened railway from March to Wisbech with 2 trains per hour from Wisbech, 1 going to Cambridge and 1 to March
- 2) New stations in the Cambridge area at Addenbrooke's, Fulbourn, Cherry Hinton as well as Soham, and further afield at Alconbury
- 3) A potential reopened railway to Haverhill with an hourly service from Cambridge stopping at Addenbrooke's, Shelford, Sawston, Granta Park, Linton and Haverhill, although a guided bus has not been ruled out.
- 4) Cambridge and Bedford linked by the East West Rail central section with a new 'A1198' Parkway Station.
- 5) Norwich gets a half hourly service to Cambridge, with alternate services going through to Oxford on East West Rail. Also a train every 2 hours to Peterborough avoiding Ely, but including a stop at March.
- 6) Services from East Anglia running beyond Peterborough to Leicester and Birmingham, and Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds.
- 7) The hourly Ipswich to Peterborough attaches to the Stansted service to Birmingham at Ely.
- 8) East West Rail is shown as carrying 4 tph, with 2 terminating at Cambridge Science Park, one through to Norwich and one to Ipswich.

Our active lobbying will be constantly required. But, if completed, this list will certainly transform East Anglia's rail network and timetable very much to the customer's benefit.

But where Cambridge is concerned the truth is that the present configuration of track, signalling and platforms couldn't begin to cope with these additional services'.

Still, it does make a solid starting point for Railfuture East Anglia to campaign for the proposals to become reality, hopefully translating to similar results right across the region.

These include pushing the Wisbech reopening, and East-West Rail Central Section schemes towards a government go-ahead in the very near future. This would help to fend off the threat of a guided busway from Cambridge to Haverhill, and ensure constant progress with new stations and service frequency increases with each new franchise.

Once again I suggest a look at: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/anglia-area-route-study-draft-for-consultation.pdf> it says much about the background. PW/CB

HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE PETERBOROUGH JOINT LINCS AND EAST ANGLIA BRANCH MEETING ON 6 DECEMBER IN PETERBOROUGH MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, PE14 1LF, JUST 5 MINUTES FROM THE STATION. KICK-OFF AT 13.30 HRS

Wisbech Rail Reopening Campaign



Progress with the plan to reconnect the large town of Wisbech to the national rail network continues apace. We quote from the press release that followed the launch of a six page brochure outlining the benefits the railway will bring to the town..."A campaign to re-open the rail line between Wisbech and March is firmly on track after CEOs from Anglian Water and some of the region's biggest businesses joined forces yesterday (13 November) with Stephen Barclay MP, Steve Count leader of Cambridgeshire County Council, John Clark leader of Fenland District Council, RailFuture and local councillors to launch Wisbech's Infrastructure for Growth lobby.

The train line would connect Fenland to the employment powerhouse of Cambridge and be 'an economic game-changer' delivering huge benefits of job creation, by attracting business and investment to the local area. It would also bring benefits to Cambridge and county: with affordable homes just 40 minutes commute away, pressure reduces on the pricey city housing, expanding Cambridge's employment market and reducing road congestion.

The Infrastructure for Growth lobby is the latest development to come out of the 'Wisbech 2020 Vision' - a wide-ranging strategy to transform the Fenland town spearheaded by the leaders of the county and district councils, the local MP, backed up by the town council plus local business and community groups.

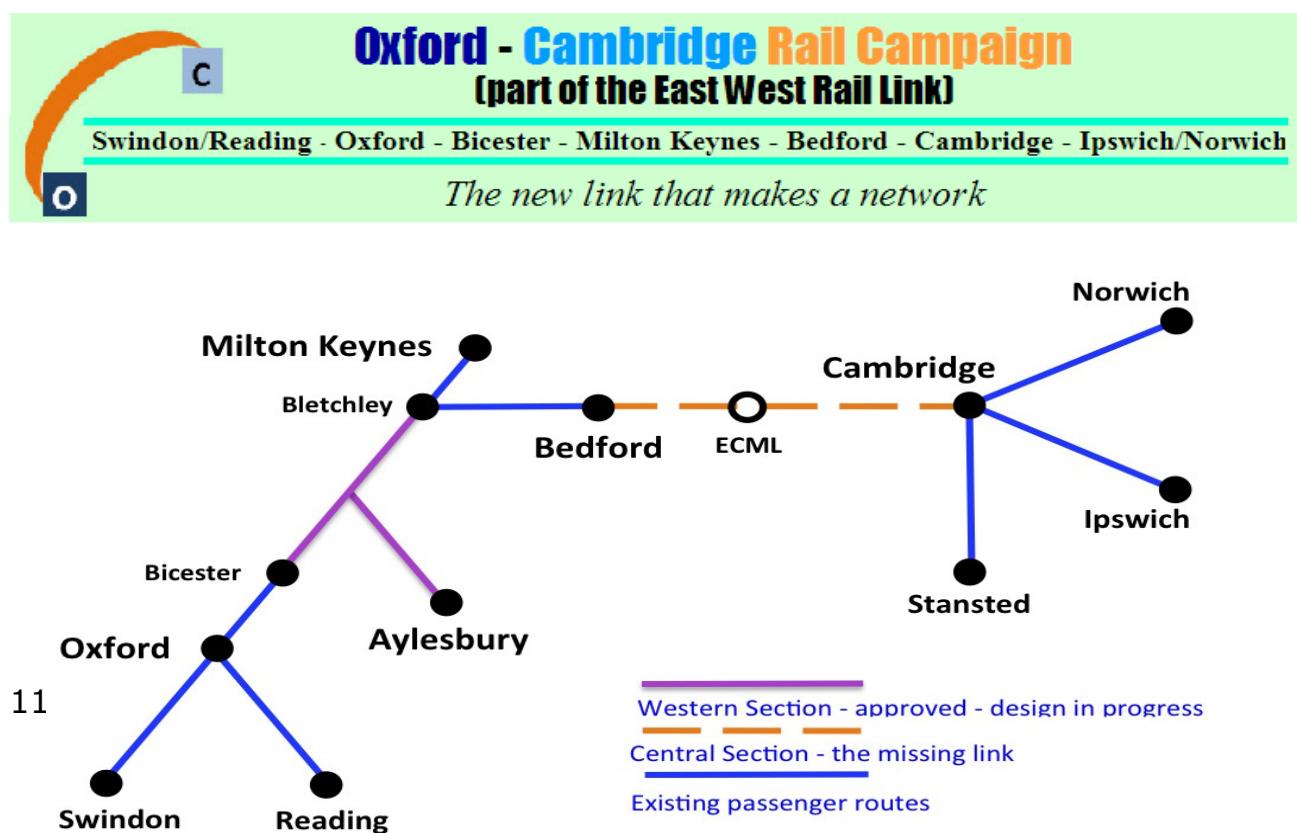
It is the first time major businesses in the East of England have taken the lead on the rail campaign, adding commercial expertise and economic weight for consideration by Government in February/March next year when funding for transport schemes is likely to be available.

Anglian Water's CEO, Peter Simpson, has taken a leading role in bringing several major businesses to the table. It's hoped this support from major employers will fast-track progress. Peter said: "Wisbech is at the geographical centre of our region, and when we started looking at some of the challenges it faced, we asked ourselves what we as a company could do to help. We could see the opportunities and we were anxious to help 'up the ante'.

The 15 year contracts we have with our supply chain partners means we're well placed to link up stakeholders and organisations which specialise in delivering large infrastructure schemes just like this -to create the best possible plan, drive down costs and support the councils in presenting the strongest business case possible to the Government."

Fenland District Council Leader Cllr John Clark commented: "Re-opening the rail link from Wisbech to March – and thus creating a direct link to Cambridge and Peterborough – would undoubtedly be the single most important factor in transforming our local economy. It would bring more jobs, more homes and more business into the district.

That in turn would boost local people's incomes, raise the aspirations of our young people and create more opportunities for them in the future. It would be, as the document we are publishing today says, a real 'economic gamechanger'. "It is something that the people of Wisbech are demanding as their right. For too long, Wisbech and Fenland have been side-lined from the rapid growth we have seen elsewhere in Cambridgeshire." PH



EAST-WEST RAILWAY: CONFERENCE

On the 10 November the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the East West Rail Link held an update conference at the Institute of a Civil Engineers situated in George Street in London....just close enough to the House of Commons for MPs to rush off and vote, if needed.

Patrick O'Sullivan, the Project Manager, who has been with the project for eight years, chaired the meeting, which reviewed progress to date. Iain Stewart MP and Julian Huppert MP, Andy Milne and Graham Botham of Network Rail, Ann Limb of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership and the Chairs of Delivery Boards, Cllr Rose from Oxfordshire and Cllr Bates from Cambridge-shire all made very positive statements.

Iain Stewart MP, APPG Chair, gave a very upbeat summary of progress using by way of analogy the now world famous WW2 Bletchley Park, it being close to London and to Cambridge and Oxford but now, rather than just being specific to those centres, the proposed new main line is becoming a national strategic project. He reported that the Secretary of State is most interested and has visited progress at Bicester. Additionally, the recently published Arup report has found economic benefits that double original estimates 'paying back' in five years. He noted that with one change of train, 45 of 61 UK cities might be accessed, a connective potential increasingly recognised. It is this very connectivity that our original report of 20 years ago highlighted

Andy Milne- Network Rail (EWR) described progress with the Western Section and Chiltern Railways Evergreen3 Oxford-Bicester-London Marylebone project. He called it EWR Phase 1 and it is well under way, with the Bicester Chord nearly complete, double track for 90-100mph line speed being laid onto a wider formation, and re-signalling (to be based at Marylebone). Embankment reconstruction and crossing closures also progressing.

Oxford Parkway station in north Oxford is under construction with the relocated stone siding in place and being used to receive ballast daily. Rebuilt bridges and flood relief schemes are under construction to a much higher standard than on the original line. Work is on time and on budget.

Phase 2, Bicester to Bletchley: a £9m contract has been let to Parsons Brinckerhoff to update the original Atkins study and consider all the DfT enhancement proposals. In September, Network Rail met potential alliance providers and suppliers, with tenders being due at end of 2014 and a subsequent announcement in summer 2015. The project's scope is due to be finalised within eight months all aimed at opening this new national electrified

mainline in March 2019.

Three major deviations from the original Act of Parliament have been identified necessitating a Transport and Works Act (TWA) Order to authorise them. Footpath closures permissions need to be obtained, with consultations underway and initial orders sought in early 2015.

Network Rail met with councils to discuss consents, vibration and noise concerns in early November. The aim is to get as many potential problems solved before the TWA process is embarked upon. Network Rail has a team of 48 working on EWR with oversight by a senior management team

Julian Huppert MP, who is the APPG Vice Chair, spoke next. He said that EWR is not just the 'Varsity Line' nor even Boris Johnson's 'Golden Triangle', emphasising Atkins report which showed that EWR is part of national strategic route that appreciably reduces the need for travel via London to make connections. He pointed out the need to identify service options and cost benefits, reminding us that Deputy PM (his boss!), Nick Clegg suggested the potential for Garden Cities along EWR. He awaits eagerly the next set of Network Rail route study results.

Graham Botham, Network Rail (Strategic Planner) took to the rostrum and reiterated that the Atkins report for The East West Rail Consortium, provided a clear economic case for the central section of EWR, with rail promoting economic growth.

Phase 1 study provided the "Conditional Outputs" of tentative services. Those with "Very High" and "High" benefits are to be examined further. Network Rail is progressing Phase 2 with EWR Consortium with outcomes fed into their long term planning processes. Thereafter, Government will decide if funding is available.

In August, a 'Route Workshop' was held with 20 route corridors considered and subsequently whittled down to seven. Those seven remaining broad options will be further reduced to three and ultimately, the vital single proposal. The aim is to align the best cost benefits with economic growth. The process involves reviewing service options, constraints, costs, stakeholder views and economic benefit. The aim is to include a scheme in CP6 (2019-24) funding bid.

Mr Botham's talk was fascinating but he resolutely refused to "draw a line on a map". He did state that freight from Felixstowe was an important consideration. Well...all this has not stopped us drawing a line on a map, so go to our Secretary Paul Hollinghurst's informed 'doodles' at:
<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+East+West+Rail> It will then be interesting to see to what extent our and NR's analysis do in fact coincide.

Ann Limb, SEMLEP Chair was very enthusiastic describing how pleased SEMLEP

is with the progress of EWR. Success has been due to the work of MPs, councils, MK Partnership, LEPs, DfT and Rail industry. Again the point was made that EWRL has developed into a national project with international benefits with links to ports, particularly on the East Coast. She stressed yet again that connectivity is vital to growth in SEMLEP region. She reiterated the point that the Arup report highlights £73m economic benefits. The region has huge growth potential within sciences, the high technology industry and research, with the high end motor industry research being vital. SEMLEP is very supportive of EWR.

Questions and Answers followed that included anxieties about the possibility of TWA delays. Network Rail explained that it plans to use existing powers where and when applicable and consult extensively before the TWA process to minimise opposition, for example with footpath closure public consultations. We were reminded Milton Keynes did not figure in COS options for Central Section although NR replied that MK is seen as "on the corridor".

Other questions were as under:

Q. Will there be a station at Steeple Claydon where EWR crosses HS2?

A. Passive provision is to be provided. (It would seem that Buckinghamshire CC see its provision as part of HS2 mitigation).

Q. What is the future of Bedford-Oxford services once those to Cambridge are restored? A. Graham Botham noted no route or service pattern have yet been chosen.

Q. Felixstowe port continues to expand: should EWR have a role? Should the New Anglia LEP have influence?

A. Network Rail will consider freight options as part of current route study. EWR could mean enhancements are not needed elsewhere. The Study needs to take into account other planned developments and Network Rail's brief from DfT stresses potential for rail to unlock development.

The end of the meeting saw Cllr Rose (Oxfordshire CC), Chair of Delivery Board (Western Section thanking everyone involved and expressed his delight to see the project coming out of the ground with for example, Oxford Parkway station opening in 2015. He also stressed the importance of the Central Section.

Finally and fittingly, the baton was handed figuratively to Cllr. Bates (Cambridgeshire CC), who is the Chair of the Delivery Board (Central Section) since its inaugural meeting on October 30th. He commented that 'Partnership Working' has seen EWR progress and that restoring the link from Bedford to Cambridge will provide opportunities to further link with Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich and Felixstowe. On behalf of the EWRC, Cllr Bates presented a letter to Iain Stewart MP, addressed to Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, pressing for recognition in the Autumn Statement

of the case for Central Section. Mr Stewart enthusiastically agreed to personally argue the national significance and benefits of EWR when handing over the letter. PW

SUFFOLK RAIL CONFERENCE; IPSWICH, 14 NOVEMBER.

This proved another high-level very worthwhile meeting with an impressive roll-call including MPs Teresa Coffey, Ben Gummer and many Councillors.

The Minister for Roads, Transport and Planning, Claire Perry gave the Keynote Address in which she displayed a very good grasp of the rail problems confronting East Anglia, specifically the main line from Norwich through Ipswich to Liverpool St (GEML). She even noted the dilemma over building more diesel units by defining it as "a need". Speaker after speak rammed home the need of the local economy for fast, reliable, robust train services. Passenger Focus spokesperson Linda McCord neatly defined this as "not taking an earlier train, just to be sure"!

It was the Department for Transport (DfT) which proffered the biggest surprise when Johanna Randall, its Franchise Management and the new Rail Delivery Authority Specification Lead, declaring the next Greater Anglia franchise would be firmly focused on the traveller, its customer, and spoken with conviction.

"Be ambitious," she said, "be confident and trusting, not to say open, as never before. At the heart of the new franchise will be essential new rolling stock." More gasps at such wonderful news But she meant it. Johanna continued; "if you ask you will probably get."

"The passenger is to be at the heart of everything," it was stated, "ticket prices must offer better value and passengers *must* get a seat on a frequent train service, arrive on time and with better information. Services to be aligned to need."

In a short reality check Johanna did not hold back on the challenge all this held for franchisees: a big one. No one was heard to disagree. In fact every one was by now almost certainly a touch punch-drunk with euphoria, and at a railway meeting too! "Links to communities must be strengthened with the station as a local hub of activity....The theme must be trust....trust, and much more."

AGA Managing Director, Jamie Burles in his address reiterated virtually all of this strong message.

And then we turned to freight and Maggie Simpson of the Rail Freight Group, speaking passionately for its proper place on the network, reflected in its national significance at ports like Felixstowe. The fact that bottlenecks at Ely and Leicester had still not been resolved by Network Rail invigorated Maggie Simpson to stress the vital need to complete the Felixstowe to Birmingham upgrade. The 'slippage' of work at Leicester and Ely 'bottlenecks' to 2019-24 only confirmed indecision on funding within NR. This must change. In the current control period £80m is allocated to this route with £30m to double tracking more of the Felixstowe-Ipswich route. Until the latter is addressed little extra traffic can be accommodated. As for freight paths on the GEML, these were not going to be relinquished any time soon. Ms Simpson also noted the need to accommodate 1m tons of aggregate and steel needed for building Sizewell C Nuclear Power station. Rail freight companies with local authorities must plan for it, with the East Suffolk Line a beneficiary of any money spent.

Paul Harwood, Network Rail, an author of NR's Anglia Route Strategy. then spoke to the relevance of this to proceedings. He confirmed that Ely was the most serious bottleneck in the network. Doubling the tracks at the junction will make little impact on capacity, more imaginative solutions need to be developed and options are being scrutinised. He referred to the Anglia Route Strategy already referred to on Pages 1 and 2.

Patrick O'Sullivan from the EWR Consortium finished the conference by underpinning much of what you have read thus far. All in all a thoroughly illuminating and motivating gathering. Well done Suffolk CC. PW/CB
Once again *a more comprehensive account can be read in our on-line edition at: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+> Ipswich Friday November 14th 2014. This was a very useful meeting at which the booklet demonstrating the business case (in summary) of 'Norwich in 90' project, was presented to the world.*

Cllr Graham Newman

Claire Perry MP Cabinet Minister for Roads, Transport & Planning, gave the keynote opening address. She showed an understanding of the issues regarding the GEML and saw the need for an upgrade. In a subsequent upbeat interview with Eastern Anglian Daily Times, she further demonstrated the dilemma facing East Anglian railways by referring to the need to build more diesel multiple unit trains.

Ben a Gummer MP, Thérèse Coffey MP, Mark Pendlington Chair NALEP all ably demonstrated the need for a robust and frequent train service to serve the people and economy of there region. Linda McCord of Passenger Focus further emphasised this point...the need for a reliable service...one that you did not have to take an earlier train than you really needed "just to make sure".

Johanna Randall, Franchise Management and the New a Rail Delivery Authority, Specification Lead, DFT, presented her Department in an entirely

different light to that which we have become accustomed....the next Greater Anglia franchise will be one that is firmly focused on the needs of the user. She made several jaws gape, including mine, when she said of the new franchise: "be ambitious; Be open as never before; Be confident and trusting: If you do not ask you probably will not get(!) The franchise will be all about what the passenger needs and we want you to build a relationship with us to enable us to deliver the future.

The Passenger is at the heart of everything.

The price of train tickets must offer better value for money, passengers must always get a seat on frequent trains and arrive on time with better information.

She went on to talk of the challenges for the franchise:

Services aligned to need,

Rolling stock,

Corporate and social responsibility.

Diversity and skills.

Links to communities must be strengthened with station being as local hub of activity....The theme must be trust....trust.....and much more.

Jamie Burles MD AGA reiterated this strong message emphasising the need for stakeholders to really address this call when pitching for passenger needs above all else in the new Greater Anglia franchise.

Maggie Simpson of the Rail Freight Group, spoke passionately about the need for freight to be given proper space on the railway as serving Felixstowe in particular, is of national importance. She stressed the completion of the Felixstowe to Water Orton upgrade was vital but issues about funding of particular bottlenecks at Leicester and Ely still have not been resolved in NR. Electrification both for passenger and freight trains right across the region from Felixstowe to Cambridge and Birmingham is imperative. Until the Felixstowe branch is doubled little extra traffic can be squeezed onto the network. Interesting, she put the freight industry case that we should not expect it give any paths up on the GEML.

Ms Simpson further stressed the need to plan for the building of Sizewell C power station...1,000,000 tons of aggregate will be needed let alone all the cement and steel. Rail must plan for it with the East Suffolk benefitting from any money to it.

Paul Harwood, from NR spoke enthusiastically about 'Expanding and Improving the Rail Network'. He is one author of NR's Anglia Route Consultation....see piece on page xxx. Railfuture will respond to this consultation which you hpcan find at this link..... Please let us know what you think when you have read it.

Patrick O'Sullivan from the EWR Consortium finished the conference by telling delegates much of what you has been written on page. PW/PS

VIRGIN/STAGECOACH LAND NEW FRANCHISE.

Too late to catch the printed version of Rail East came the announcement that the Stagecoach/Virgin consortium had landed the prized new franchise, wrong footing practically every pundit prediction. The current EAST COAST logo will give way to VIRGIN TRAINS EAST COAST on trains and publicity material from March 2015. This despite Virgin actually owning a mere 10% of the franchise against the 90% of Stagecoach. They have worked together before though, and very effectively.

Thus far in rail franchising Stagecoach has always judged the financial package fairly astutely, yet one is taken aback by the average yearly profit (sorry, margin) of around £400m expected over the 8 year agreement. £225m was the premium to the government year ending last March, which might possibly creep to £250m when this year's figures emerge in around 9 months time. But we shall see, of course.

Virgin have to oversee the transition into daily service of Hitachi's new IEP intercity rolling stock between 2017 and 2020, no minor challenge. With these new trains will come an extra 12,000+ seats not least serving Middlesbrough, Huddersfield, Stirling and Lincoln for the first time by a *franchise holder*. So marketing is going to have to be very sharp to fill many of these new seats, pay the most expensive ever monthly lease charges, and, pay the contracted premium to government.

One puzzling aspect of the Transport Department's press release is the statement that by IEP,to quote: "*journey times from London to Leeds reduced by 14 minutes, and from London to Edinburgh by 13 minutes.*" Are they suggesting there is no scope for saving time over the 207 miles further on from Leeds? Or are the stopping patterns changing radically? Not a like-for-like comparison surely? Again, there is still much to learn about this new franchise and just how tight the template has been set by government.

Certainly we wish to convey our congratulations to Stagecoach/Virgin for reeling-in this much sought after franchise, and wish them good fortune in delivering all that they promise, especially the "better passenger experience". And that must include those of us joining their trains at Peterborough and Stevenage, especially the latter. May more long distance sevices call there – in both directions!

At least Peterborough now has extended canopies on the new platforms, the absence of which we had long complained about. Who says lobbying doesn't

work? CB

A CHALLENGE TO US ALL: RAILFUTURE'S FUTURE.

In October Railfuture held an 'away-day' in Birmingham for its directors, heads of branches and heads of national groups (such as Passenger and Freight). The aim was to create a strategy for Railfuture over the next five years, through a list of priorities. A professional facilitator was employed to make the day as productive as possible.

There's no doubt that Railfuture has been very successful in several key areas in the last few years. The East Anglia branch demonstrates the scale of our successes really well through our dogged determination over two decades to reopen the East West Rail Line. Our Wisbech reopening campaign has engaged with politicians and the rail industry and generated movement like, well, a runaway train. We are worthwhile – that's for sure.

However, one of our national problem areas is a lack of members . Without a large, expanding membership we will lack the funds and skilled volunteers to increase and improve our campaigning. So, our number one priority for the next five years is growth, year on year.

Railfuture is perhaps a victim of its own success. It's easy to form a protest group but much harder to spur people on to campaign for improvements to what is, generally, a fairly good rail system in East Anglia. There have been many improvements in the network recently and more are coming, along with newer trains, more frequent services and destinations. Some might wonder if Railfuture is still needed. The answer, as many of our members experiencing a less than perfect service will say, emphatically yes!

So if you are reading this but not yet a member, please do join. Unlike regularly increased train fares we have discounted our membership fees, down from £21 to £18 (£14 for concessions).

If you are a member please try to encourage someone else to join. We need each member to persuade just one non-member to join.

Perhaps you could buy someone a year's membership as a Christmas present. Bring them along to a branch meeting. If you attend one of our national conferences (Newark and Bristol in 2015) perhaps you could take a friend with you – these occasions trigger a membership discount.

*This you can do online at www.railfuture.org.uk/join, paying by credit card, debit card, or PayPal account. You can also download a membership form at www.railfuture.org.uk/DL292 or just send a cheque for £18 (£14 for seniors, students, unwaged) with your name and address to **Railfuture, 6 Carrall***

Close, Brant Road, Lincoln, LN5 9

Material, as ever, welcomed for edition 165 the deadline for which is Monday 19 January 2015. Please, if you have relevant pictures, do send them; even as prints as they can be scanned. As a guide, a file size of no more than 500k is perfectly adequate.

Meanwhile, our best wishes for a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas and a very good 2015.

Railfuture

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Railfuture

6 DECEMBER

PETERBOROUGH

(Jointly with Lincs Branch)

*Museum and Art Gallery,
Priestgate, Peterborough*

PE14 1LF

*Start 13.30.hrs (Note earlier
than usual start time.)*

Branch Annual General Meeting

***28 February 2015 in Bury St
Edmunds at Friends Meeting
House, IP33 1SJ***
Starting at 14.00 hours

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