

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA 1972-2012



Ely Station 1972

40 years of Action -
40 Years of Progress

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Back in 1972 we were the Railway Invigoration Society with about thirty members. Now we are Railfuture East Anglia with around three hundred members and many more affiliates in local rail user groups.

In the 1970's railways in our region were a drab, underfunded affair, with the threat of contraction constant. Our policy then and now is to put positive proposals to local government, MPs, Ministers of State, civil servants and the media. We ran campaigns and formed line user associations/groups, which still exist.

These campaigns were for improved trains, services and facilities, such as those on the Norwich to Sheringham route in 1975, when British Rail used our survey results. This route today is better in every way. Similarly, we campaigned for the current direct, fast hourly services to the Midlands and Northwest, emphasising that passengers dislike changing trains. Traffic growth continues apace on these routes. The old, slow, shabby, diesel multiple units were eventually replaced with fuel-efficient, customer-friendly trains on East Anglia's rural, secondary and some mainline routes. Our constant call nationally 'for better' has in many ways lead to the highest passenger usage ever.

We also press for better integration with local bus services, together with enhanced local train connections at key nodes such as Ely, Cambridge, Ipswich, Colchester, Norwich.

Our regional development continues, so we strongly support the plan for new stations in north Cambridge, named Cambridge Science Park, and at Soham. Although we successfully campaigned for the rail link to Stansted

Airport north through Cambridge and Ely, we still promote extending eastward to Braintree and Witham linking the airport to the Chelmsford and Colchester areas.

Back in the early nineties, we highlighted the local business need for our important regional towns with freight-only rail connections to be returned to the national passenger rail network. To publicise this, Railfuture chartered very popular trains to Aylsham, Dereham, St Ives and Wisbech. We won the argument for a high quality public transport link from Cambridge to St. Ives which turned out to be a guided busway instead of the railway preferred by the public. Our Branch continues to press for the vital Wisbech re-opening. At Dereham our charters helped establish the Mid-Norfolk Railway, a privately owned heritage line which also takes freight for the Army and provides facilities for the national railway via its link at Wymondham. A similar link at Sheringham, this time with North Norfolk Railway, was successfully re established, again with our active support.

The biggest success for us, is the recent government announcement of funding of the first stage of the East-West Rail Link, from Oxford to Bedford, now also to be electrified, this is the result of twenty years of campaigning not least with a consortium of local authorities. The link will foster the growth of this

corridor of high-technology industry and we wish to see it extended to Cambridge and East Anglia.

We have actively encouraged businesses to rent redundant buildings at unstaffed, isolated stations. User Groups, like East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA), have enhanced this by adopting stations which they tidy up and tend, a policy being emulated elsewhere by newer user groups.

Action by Railfuture and ESTA helped retain Lowestoft station in its current convenient location, against pressure from developers to use the site. For years we constantly argued for an expanded service over the Lowestoft to Ipswich line, requiring a passing loop at Beccles: this has now been authorised and construction has begun.

Railfuture has always favoured electric trains and for which we campaigned hard. From 1985-1991 this bore fruit as overhead-wires moved north to Cambridge (from London King's Cross and Bishop's Stortford); also to Braintree, Harwich, Ipswich, Kings Lynn and Norwich, plus the East Coast Main Line from Hitchin northwards. Extensions to Felixstowe and Sudbury are now our aim, as well as the route from Ipswich to Bury St. Edmunds, Cambridge, Ely and Peterborough. The present electric services are incomparably better than their predecessors.

London Crossrail, an east-west link from Essex through central London to Heathrow Airport, and Thameslink, a north - south link from Cambridge, and Peterborough, southward through central London to Gatwick Airport, and other towns will greatly improve connectivity in our region, they will interchange at Farringdon. We are asked to submit regular comments on the proposed future services.

'Volume and velocity' are the watchwords of railfreight with transfer from road to rail a cornerstone of our Branch policy. Rail privatisation has created three well-funded, dynamic rail freight companies plus several smaller ones. We continue to promote freight by rail to business and rail companies alike and currently are lobbying hard to make sure that as much of the huge volumes of materials needed for any new power generator at Sizewell will be carried by rail. Along the Felixstowe branch more track is needed to ensure rail garners maximum business from the thriving Port of Felixstowe and the emerging container port in the Tilbury area. If you know of a prospective opportunity for rail freight, please, do contact us at: peter.wakefield@railfuture.org.uk



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So, where to now; what are we working for in tomorrow's railway?

Our priorities are:

- To press for **simpler fare structure** regardless of method of purchase, and lower fare increases.
- **Norwich to London services:** capacity south of Colchester seriously impedes a fast 90 minute schedule from Norwich. We will continue to lobby the authorities to achieve this along with greater reliability at the earliest possible date.
- **Capacity in general:** we are keen to see the operational 'pinch-points' across our region removed; of these Trowse Swing Bridge at Norwich and the northern approaches to Ely are probably the two most serious constraints. The latter is now earmarked for improvement. Cambridge to Newmarket (and Ipswich) needs more double track and a general 90-100mph maximum speed to reduce journey times and raise reliability.
- **Shorter journey times:** good for the passenger, and also the train operator who may be able to squeeze-out more daily revenue earning mileage as a result. We press hard for the reduced infrastructure costs which would make this possible.
- **Hubs:** more local stations should become a transport hub with facilities for bus services, as well as taxis, cars and bicycles.
- Although standards overall **have improved immensely**, too many stations are still inadequate and unwelcoming, with no waiting rooms and shelters to offer protection from the elements. Wherever feasible we seek staffed stations, as a well informed human presence is reassuring to most passengers.
- Peak hour **overcrowding** is still excessive on several routes so we continue to press for increased capacity
- Our region has much to offer **visitors** from continental Europe and further afield in which the railway has a significant role to play. The ferry service from Hook of Holland to Harwich International Port is a traditional link from continental Europe and must be promoted to enable it to play a fuller role in the economy of East Anglia.
- We advocate new and **re-opened railway routes and stations** to meet demand and changing demographics, such as: Wisbech to March; Cambridge - Bedford; Stansted Airport - Braintree.



Would you like to get involved with our work? Yes?
Visit our website at: www.railfuture.org.uk
Or write to:
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