

Rail East

Number 76

June 1992

25p Free to members

Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of the Railway Development Society.

NEW RAIL STRATEGY LAUNCHED

The branch's revised Rail Strategy for East Anglia was officially launched at our 20th AGM in Ely. The report outlines how our rail network should be developed in the future. Included in the strategy are calls to reopen lines to St Ives and Wisbech, a new East West rail link, a route from Stansted to Braintree, suggestions for new stations, and for further electrification. The Strategy has been widely reported in the local press, and made the leading story on the front page in several papers. RDS General Secretary Trevor Garrod was interviewed on BBC Look East and branch secretary Nick Dibben likewise on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire.

1000 copies of the strategy have been produced and copies have been sent to MPs, County Councils and other interested parties. So far about a dozen MPs have replied, typical remarks were "read with interest" and "I am a keen supporter of the railways". What these MPs will do to progress the ideas in the Rail Strategy remains to be seen.

Those members who attended the AGM will already have copies of the strategy. For those who were unable to attend a copy is enclosed with this Rail East. When you have finished reading it, please send it to your local Councillor or MP asking what action they intend to take to progress any local proposals in the strategy. Please send copies of any useful replies to Nick Dibben.

Remaining copies of the strategy will be sold at BR open days etc. at £1.00 each to help us to recover costs. Many thanks to all those involved especially to Phil Eldridge for producing such an impressive looking document.

20TH ANNIVERSARY AGM AT ELY, 22ND FEBRUARY 1992

The launch of the Rail strategy was one of the many highlights of our 20th Anniversary AGM held at the Ely maltings on 22nd February. 25 special guests from BR, Councillors and industry joined 55 RDS members for a buffet to mark 20 years of rail campaigning in East Anglia. A special cake had been donated by a member which had a rail map of East Anglia, including all the lines we want opened, created in icing on the top. (*If anyone has a photograph of the cake, please could they send it to Peter Wakefield*). A photograph display, showing some of our past successes and proposals for the future was mounted in the buffet room. The main speaker at the event was David Burton, NSE's group director north, a last minute replacement for InterCity director Chris Green who was unable to attend. In his talk, David Burton outlined some of the many achievements of NSE since it was formed including the go ahead of the King's Lynn electrification, a scheme considered impossible a few years ago. David Burton described our Rail Strategy as a very impressive document that should be essential reading for MPs. David Burton has since been moved to the Parcels Sector of BR and we wish him all the best in his new job.

The second speaker at the AGM was Cllr. Guy McGregor of Suffolk County Council. His talk covered the increasing role played by County Councils in rail services. He outlined some of the projects undertaken by the County Council such as leaflets, supporting evening services and the reopening of Melton station on the East Suffolk line. The Council were disappointed that BR had not asked for financial help in providing a long line information system on the East Suffolk Line.

The day was a great success, and Branch Chairman Peter Wakefield would like to thank all those involved in making it so.

KING'S LYNN ELECTRIFICATION

Further delays have occurred on the scheme pushing back the completion date to late August/early September. This due to changes in safety rules on junctions and signalling introduced by the government. As a result, bi-directional running on the Peterborough lines at Ely North Junction will not take place, although signals have been installed for this. Also, the North Curve which allows trains from Norwich/King's Lynn to run direct to Peterborough can only be used in one direction. It is worth noting that despite the fact that nearly 5000 people are killed on our roads each year, new laws on road safety are few and far between.

The Queen Mother will still visit the area at the end of July, not to open the scheme as had been intended, but to mark the end of the work at Ely and to open an electrification exhibition at King's Lynn.

FELIXSTOWE BRANCH

The Victorian station canopy at Felixstowe has been repaired following a campaign by the local user group ESTA (Felixstowe). Rail freight Distribution director Tim Hansford, during a visit to the area, indicated that the branch could soon be electrified. The line has heavy freight traffic to the container port at Felixstowe, and electrification would avoid the need to change from electric to diesel locomotives at Ipswich. Local residents are pleased as they have often complained about the noise from diesel locos on the line. Whether the project would lead to electric passenger services on the line is not clear. Services are currently operated by Regional Railways, but it might be sensible to extend the existing Network SouthEast services from Ipswich to Felixstowe.

ON DISPLAY

As part of National Environment Week (May 16 - 24) the branch will have a display at the offices of Cambridge City Council. The display will highlight the role which rail can play in improving our environment, and our campaign to reopen the St Ives line. Rail user group ESTA will have displays at various libraries during the same week.

A further opportunity to show how railways can help improve our environment will come at the Earith School summer fair to be held on the Saturday 20 June. We will have a stand at this event which is being organised by Chris Milnes. Offers to help on the stall to Chris please.

GENERAL ELECTION 92

As in previous elections, transport policies played only a small part in the election debate. This is despite the fact that the promise (threat?) of privatisation of BR was meant to be one of the main issues in the Conservative manifesto. Perhaps a NOP survey in the Independent newspaper, that showed that by a majority of two to one electors did not think that BR should be privatised put them off.

Many branch members wrote to their local candidates during the campaign to ask for their views on rail issues. Among those who replied and were then elected were, Malcolm Moss (Cambs NE) who confirmed that he "would continue to support the reopening of the March to Wisbech line". Sir Anthony Grant (Cambs SW) was reported in the local press as being in favour of the reopening of the line to St Ives. Trevor Garrod wrote to Conservative candidates asking their views on privatisation. Most candidates did not reply or simply said they supported the idea. Only Jim Paice (Cambs SE) gave a considered response, he said "I do not think much will be achieved simply by privatising the existing system.... revenue support would continue to be necessary for many services and should continue at least at existing levels".

The most interesting letter came from the Prime Minister John Major which gave some details of a system to franchise route to private operators who would be subject to quality standards. He said that subsidies will continue to be provided where necessary, through ticketing will be made compulsory and that a National Timetable will be produced. The letter leaves many questions unanswered, and the matter will be progressed both by the Branch and RDS nationally. Still with privatisation Peter Wakefield was interviewed on BBC local radio on the subject and we placed adverts in the East Anglian Daily Times and the Eastern Daily Press which attracted nearly 50 replies.

Following the election, one of our local MPs John McGregor was appointed Secretary of State for Transport. The Branch is trying to arrange a meeting with the new Minister to discuss our Rail Strategy and BR's future structure.

The points raised in the Prime Minister's letter was confirmed in the Queen's speech at the state opening of parliament. The following day Nick Dibben and Chris Burton were interviewed on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire to give their reaction and also to review the comments on the proposals in the national press. (Is this the start of a great new radio double act)!!

LEAFLETS

Responding to the item in Rail East 75, Clara Zilahi has offered to co-ordinate a survey of non-BR promotion leaflets which mention rail services. So do, please, send her any examples of leaflets produced by tourist attractions or local businesses, whether they contain rail information or not!

One example of a leaflet which does refer to BR services is that produced by the Bure Valley Railway. This narrow gauge line, runs on the former BR route from Aylsham to a point adjacent to Wroxham BR station - a fact clearly indicated in the leaflet.

IN BRIEF

RDS RAFFLE - Raffle tickets were sent out with the last edition of RailWatch. The draw takes place on the 18th July and the first prize is £400. Proceeds will go towards various reopening campaigns. Tickets will be on sale at the Colchester Meeting and at the Earith Fair.

CYCLES ON TRAINS - Branch member John Thompson is organising a survey on the use of cycles on trains as part of national bike week. Copies of the questionnaire can be obtained from John at the following address:- John Thompson, 136 Dell Road, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 9NT. Please enclose a SAE.

GREAT EASTERN - The branch has been invited to meet with the route manager of the Great Eastern division of Network SouthEast. The meeting will take place towards the end of June and if members have any points they want to raise, could they sent them to Nick Dibben.

RAIL EAST 77

The next Rail East will be published at the start of September. We hope to have articles on the Norfolk Rail Policy Groups report, developments on the Peterborough to Spalding line, and progress on the Wymondham to Dereham line. Other articles especially from rail user groups are most welcome and should be sent to Nick Dibben by August 10th.

FUTURE EVENTS

Our next public meeting will be at the Wilson Centre, Barrack Street, Colchester on the 6th June starting at 2 pm. The hall is close to Colchester Town station; turn left outside the station into Magdalen Street, continue along this road into Barrack Street. The hall is on the left. It's about 10 minutes walk from the station. In the first part of the meeting there will be discussion on the effects of the Government's proposals for the railways. This will be followed by a talk on the East Anglian Railway Museum by its chairman Mike Stanbury. The museum is located adjacent to Chappel and Wakes Colne BR station and exists to demonstrate a 100 years of local railway history. There is a collection of rolling stock and other railway items which are housed in the former station buildings. The museum has full facilities for visitors and is open 364 days a year.

For those unable to get to Colchester on the 6th June, Transport 2000 are holding a reopenings conference at the St Martins Hall in Bedford on the same day. The cost is £5 including lunch, further details from Jason Berryman, tel : 0234 355628.

Other events:

Sat 20th June

Sat 19th Sept

Sat 21st Nov

We have a stand at the Earith School Fair

RDS Branch meeting at Assembly House, Norwich

RDS Branch meeting Cambridge

Speakers at the branch meetings are to be confirmed, but we hope to have someone from Norfolk County Council at the Norwich Meeting and a representative from the TUCC at Cambridge.

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