

RAIL EAST

Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of the Railway Development Society

Number 79
February 1993
25p Free to members

PRIVATISATION

A novel enclosure with this issue is a railway postcard. However, rather than depicting a quaint scene, it notes some of the problems most likely to hinder the passenger as a result of privatisation. Do please send it to your MP. Just fill in your name and address, the name of your MP, add a stamp - and post it!

ST IVES LINE - NEW STUDY ORDERED.

The campaign to re-open the Cambridge to St Ives railway took an important step forward when Cambridgeshire County Council announced a new study into re-opening the line. The study has the support of the local district councils and follows intense pressure from the RDS and others to use the route to reduce the City's traffic problems. A petition with over 2200 signatures was presented to the Council in January. The Branch has met with several councillors and MPs to put the case for re-opening and to answer their questions and concerns.

The first stage of the study will review the data collected for the abandoned light rail project. This will assess the number of people who would use the service based on the results of interviews carried out for the LRT scheme. This work should be complete by April. If this shows that the rail re-opening is viable then a more detailed study will be carried out. The Branch, welcoming the new study, has issued a checklist of items for inclusion plus an updated cost estimate of £6.2m. With BR and local councils bereft of cash, the project must depend on government and EC funding.

RDS MEETING CAMBRIDGE NOVEMBER 1992

Concern over the future of the St Ives line, and the prospect of an entertaining talk from guest speaker Barry Flaxman, drew over 70 people to this meeting on a dolefully damp and dismal afternoon.

Mr Flaxman started by taking us back to when began his railway monitoring, nearly 50 years ago, when in 1943 he formed the Southend Travellers Association. Back in those days the pressure was for new rolling stock and a more regular timetable. How novel! His membership of the TUCC began in 1974 taking over the role of chairman during 1980.

Far from being just a complaints body, the TUCC confers a great deal with BR on service quality, timetables, facilities at stations and the like. But its power is inadequate, and a common response from BR or the Government is "that's not in your brief!" Despite this the TUCC still exercise significant influence and certainly played an important role in initiating the Kings Lynn electrification project.

About the proposed privatisation of BR Mr Flaxman had few kind words: such RDS concerns as loss of overall strategy, increased bureaucracy, and uncertainty about investment funding are all shared by the TUCC.

With his retirement from the TUCC imminent and his great understanding of railway operation on offer, the RDS would do well to act on his hint and give him a high profile in the Society.

REGIONAL RAILWAYS USER GROUP FORUM - In November Regional Railways invited the RDS and representatives of East Anglian Rail User Groups to Norwich to discuss their rail services. The morning session comprised a presentation about the activities of Regional Railways in East Anglia. By the time you read this the single-car Class 153 Sprinter will have appeared on the scene, and by May will, hopefully, have ousted the remaining vintage diesel multiple units. Further improvements are planned to track and signalling but, as ever, are utterly dependant on the finance available. Nothing of significance was said about bicycles on trains, Lowestoft station, and 'real-time'(!) information on stations.

Poor promotion of rail services was certainly high on the list of criticisms, and was duly noted. A couple of weeks later, 1000 copies of a new leaflet promoting the use of the train to go Christmas Shopping arrived. These were quickly distributed to homes in the March and Whittlesea area. And RDS members will do this again if RR want to promote something else - only next time we hope it will be a trifle warmer! Offers of help to the Editor, please. Further meetings with RR are proposed every six months.

LEAFLET STUDY - After much investigation into the amount of rail information included on official tourist leaflets, the Branch has concluded that things could be much better. Although many leaflets mentioned rail, few contained details of times, or on the proximity of stations. The Branch is writing to many tourist attractions pointing out that, for those without personal transport, public transport information is vital.

SOHAM - East Cambridgeshire District Council has given its backing to plans in our Rail Strategy to re-open Soham station and introduce a direct service to Cambridge via a new section of track at Newmarket. The Branch had contacted the Council to explore ways to progress the scheme.

SUDBURY - Rail users are unhappy about plans to relocate Sudbury station to make way for a new by-pass. The plans will mean that the station is less convenient for the town centre. Passengers will be forced to use a new subway under the road to reach the station which has raised fears about safety. The Sudbury-Marks Tey Rail Users Association has taken up the issue with the Transport Users Consultative Committee.

CROSSINGS UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT - A level-crossing accident on the Beccles by-pass in January, led to the usual calls in the press for BR to "do something". The accident was caused by a car waiting at the crossing being hit from behind by a van that was going too fast; yet again confirming the fact that over 90% of level crossing accidents are the result of road-user error. It also poses a very simple question : why should rail users have to suffer because of bad driving? Such accidents cause widespread disruption to services, with scarce rolling stock consigned for weeks to workshops for repair. Where a level-crossing accident has been caused by a road user, insurance or the Department of Transport should foot the bill. Not British Rail!

RAIL SOLUTION TO HELP RED CROSS - The Potter Group in Ely has recently used Railfreight to send 50,000 mattresses across Europe to Belgrade as part of an emergency relief package. 50 loaded wagons were dispatched from the group's sidings at Ely with the first arriving in Belgrade just six days after the initial call from the Red Cross. Railfreight was an enthusiastic partner, providing the traction and staff who took the train as far as Dover.

BRANCH AGM

The 1993 Annual General Meeting of the East Anglia Branch will be held at Bury St Edmunds Library on Saturday 27 February starting at 1.45 pm. The meeting should finish by 4.15 pm.\

Agenda

1. Chairman's welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Chairman's report
4. Secretary's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Election of Officers :
 - i) Chairman
 - ii) Vice Chairman
 - iii) Secretary
 - iv) Treasurer
 - v) Sales Officer
 - vi) Minutes Secretary
 - vii) Membership Secretary
 - viii) Press Officer
 - ix) Committee Members
7. Appointment of Honorary Auditor
8. Motions
9. Branch President's closing remarks
10. Bob Osbourne : Rail Development in Scotland - A Pictorial Report

Nominations for Officers and Committee and any Notices of motion must be in the hands of the Secretary by the 20 February duly proposed and seconded.

The Wakefield Address

The Branch has had another busy and successful year. The local network itself has seen many developments, some rather less welcome than others. Meetings have been many, including regular dialogue with BR as well as much greater contact with Councillors and Members of Parliament.

The issues have been many. The threat of Privatisation though of national concern, has inevitably absorbed increasing amounts of Branch energy. With the Parliamentary Bill now published it is evident that our response must be intensified in order to modify this potentially disastrous piece of proposed legislation.

Rail Freight is under severest threat at the moment, with a projected drop in tonnage to 90 million in 1994 from the current 135 million tons. Freight from Kings Lynn Docks, Cib-Geigy, Duxford and Metal box, Wisbech may not survive until summer!

Our monitoring of local rail services is as lively and informed as ever. Regional Railways Cross-Country services have been under particular scrutiny. We were especially critical of poor timekeeping and the decision to annex the service to Stansted Airport. We are continuing to press for radical improvements to local services through Bury St. Edmunds and the Thetford.

Network SouthEast continues to provide largely reliable services in our region reinforced this year with the successful introduction of electric trains to Kings Lynn. Our greatest concern however remains NSE's inability to offer rolling stock suited to long-distance journeys.

Last February was particularly significant for the Branch as it marked our 20th Anniversary and the publication of our new Rail Strategy for East Anglia. The media coverage and general reaction was immensely encouraging. Later this again proved true when the Branch published an up-dated leaflet about the St Ives to Cambridge line. There is little doubt that this helped galvanise the County Council into ordering a new feasibility study. For the latest news on this project you'll have to attend the AGM on February 27th.

Our Branch newsletter, *Raid East*, now turns up on a regular basis. As its production costs have been reduced substantially we are in a position to consider expanding the content but, and this is a big but, it all hinges on you sending us as much news, comment and information as you can.

This year is certainly not expected to be a quiet year. Far from it! I hope all members will be active, especially over the question of Privatisation where there is great scope for everybody to contribute. A happy and productive year to you all.

Peter Wakefield, Branch Chairman

REGIONAL RAILWAYS FLIES OUT OF STANSTED - From May of this year the service to Stansted Airport is to be drastically cut back. RR say that patronage of trains between Cambridge and Stansted is so sparse that the current timetable cannot be continued. The move has been condemned by the Airport who are seeking advice on how to fight the decision. In a press release Stansted Airport claim the service had become an embarrassment to them through its chronic unreliability. The Branch has written to both parties urging them to continue negotiations, and has also suggested that a shuttle service linking the Airport with Norwich or Peterborough might be less vulnerable to delays. Incidentally, by comparison, the Network SouthEast service to Liverpool Street conveys nearly a quarter of Stansted Airport's customers.

WEST ANGLIA / GREAT NORTHERN NEWS - Recent proclamations have received a mixed reaction from rail users. Well received was the news that the new electric service has increased Kings Lynn line traffic by a healthy 20%. Although very appreciative of the new service, the Fen Line User Association suggested one or two minor changes which, happily, are to be implemented with the May 1993 timetable.

Less welcome was the annexing of Sunday station stops between Cambridge and Audley End. The Branch and local councils have complained to NSE pointing out that Whittlesford, in particular, is well used on Sundays especially by visitors to Duxford Air Museum. A limited service, with alternate trains stopping at all stations, has been suggested to NSE. Also under threat are some peak hour stopping services on the Cambridge to Royston route. Last year's 'Meldreth' leaflet, delivered to homes in that area, highlighted the convenience of rail for getting to work, with its peak period half hourly service. This decision will merely compel more commuters to swell the congestion on the roads.

October saw the introduction of the Penalty Fares scheme on West Anglia; NSE tell us that the resulting drop in tickest evasion has been accompanied by a welcome, but not entirely suprising increase in ticket sales. When a similar scheme was implemented on the Fenchurch Street 'Misery' line it produced £400,000 in fines, and an extra £4m in revenue during the following year. With a £35m estimated loss through ticket evasion, NSE need to repeat this success if money for investment is to be found. The scheme is due to embrace the Huntingdon route about now!

PASSENGER'S CHARTER-FIRST YEAR RESULTS

Season ticket holders on the InterCity route to Norwich and Regional Railways Cross Country Services will be able to get discounts on their tickets as the service on these routes are below the discount threshold level set in the Passenger's Charter. It is difficult to see performance on these lines improving without major new investment. Locomotives on the InterCity route are now over 25 years old and need replacing. As discussed in the last Rail East this is unlikely for many years. In addition, the line south of Colchester is near to full capacity and InterCity trains have to share tracks with slower NSE services giving little scope to make up any lost time. The Cross Country services face different problems. The route has new rolling stock, however there are many temporary speed restrictions caused by poor track and trains are often delayed awaiting connections at stations.

The full figures for lines in East Anglia are as follows. Target figures in brackets.

ROUTE	PUNCTUALITY	RELIABILITY
InterCity Anglia	86.2% (90% in 10 mins)	99.2% (99%)
RR Cross Country	79.0% (90% in 10 mins)	98.3% (99%)
RR Anglia local	89.5% (90% in 5 mins)	99.3% (99%)
Great Northern	92.4% (90% in 5 mins)	99.0% (99%)
West Anglia	91.3% (88% in 5 mins)	98.8% (98%)
Great Eastern	89.6% (86% in 5 mins)	98.9% (99%)

PASSENGER CHARTER 1993 - Targets for this year are unchanged except for the West Anglia route, here the punctuality standard increases to 90%. With particularly deep interest we await the Government's prediction for improvement post privatisation!

FUTURE EVENTS

- Saturday 4 April NENTA: Special train from North Walsham, Norwich, Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Ely & Peterborough, to York and Stanthope
- Saturday 24 April NENTA: Special train from North Walsham, Norwich, Thetford, Ely and Peterborough, to the Festiniog Railway
- Saturday 1 May RDS National AGM, Ashford, Kent. See next Railwatch for details
- Saturday 29 May NENTA: Special train from North Walsham, Norwich, Ipswich, Bury, Ely and Peterborough, to the Cumbrian Coast
- Saturday 19 June RDS Branch meeting in Ipswich.
- Saturday 25 Sept. RDS Branch meeting in Norwich
- Saturday 20 Nov. RDS Branch meeting in Cambridge

Venues and speakers for the Branch meetings will be confirmed in future editions of Rail East.

GREEN TRANSPORT WEEK - June 19 to 27 is to be a week of nationwide activity to promote environmentally friendly means of transport: train, bus, bicycle and foot. RDS East Anglia are mounting exhibitions at Thetford and Felixstowe libraries during this period - and indeed elsewhere, if members care to organise them. It is also hoped to use the week to promote our By Rail books, and discussions have been held with our publishers to make this effective.

LOWESTOFT STATION - Associated British Ports have gone very quiet about their idea of buying the land on which the station stands and forcing BR to cut back the track by half a mile. Meanwhile the East Suffolk Travellers Association has published a further leaflet to keep the issue in the public eye.

At the station itself refurbishment work resumed at the beginning of November and worthwhile changes to the Booking Hall and Courtyard are really beginning to take shape and colour.

RAIL EAST NO 80 - As always your contributions are extremely welcome. In fact, if you overwhelm us with material Editor Dibben and his lackey Burton might even produce an enlarged, bumper edition.

BRANCH OFFICERS

- Chairmen:** Peter Wakefield, 43 High St, Oakington, Cambridge, CB4 5AG
- Vice Chairman:** Peter Lawrence, 75 Marl Pit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN
- Secretary:** Nick Dibben, 24 Bure Close, St. Ives, PE17 4FR
- Treasurer:** Lewis Buckingham, 25 Drury Rd, Colchester, CO2 7UY
- Membership:** Clara Zilahi, 31 Wimbotsham Rd, Downham Market, PE38 9P
- Sales Officer:** Chris Milnes, 25 Thetford Way, South Wootton, PE30 3TG
- Press Officer:** John Page, 5 Kingsway, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4HB