

RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of RailFuture

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WANTED - A NATIONAL RAIL POLICY

The plans to turn Railtrack into a 'not for profit' trust following the collapse of the company will have pleased many people. There are however many key questions that the Government needs to answer if progress is to be made. For example, reports on Railtrack performance highlighted the lack of engineering expertise at senior level within the company. How will this be addressed? There appear to be few ministers or senior civil servants with engineering experience. If passenger train operators are asked to take over the track, is this compatible with short-term franchises and how do the rail freight operators fit in? There is also concern that the private sector will not want to invest in the railways any more. The list goes on.

Although the talk in the media about which parts of the industry should be scrapped or merged may be interesting, they ignore one simple fact that has contributed to the present problems - this country does not have consistent a long term transport policy. Government reports talk about reducing the need for travel and the end of "predict and provide" where extra capacity was provided to meet future demand. Recent plans for massive road building tend to contradict that. How does this affect the

railways? There is a large element of predict and provide in plans for new high speed routes or double deck trains and new tunnels under London for commuters. On the other hand, an hourly train service between Ipswich and Cambridge and other branch lines is about providing basic access for local people and trying to encourage modal shift away from cars. Another example is the new stations being built in Liverpool, which have enabled people in some of the most run-down areas to gain access to jobs. Which schemes are more important? Without a proper policy, there is a risk that all the money will go on high profile projects with little for local schemes that could have a major impact on people's lives.

What needs to be done for East Anglia on the railways? There are a number of schemes that have general support from councils, rail users groups and industry. On rail services, there is a need for new trains for the London to Norwich service, and hourly services on all the branch lines. On infrastructure, there is support for the East-West rail link, more capacity for freight from Felixstowe and other ports, and upgrading the West Anglia route. The upgrade of the East Coast Route is the only project where the scope is subject to debate.

After the General Election in June, the Prime Minister said the Government had a clear mandate to deliver better public services including transport. So what progress will be made on the above schemes by the time of the next election? RailFuture considers it is not unreasonable to expect the new services including East-West phase 1 to be in-place and construction work well under way on the infrastructure projects. Our concern is that much time and money will be wasted waiting for Ministers to decide if they want short or long franchises, sorting out new contacts etc. Action is needed now!

WAGN News

Ticketing

WAGN have announced that from Monday 15th October, European rail travel tickets will cease to be available from Cambridge station.

Refurbishment

WAGN repaint class 317s in new livery. WAGN Railway have started repainting its older Class 317 electric units that were originally built for the Bedford - St.Pancras electrification scheme in WAGN's new purple livery. The interior has also been refurbished. Unit 317312 appears to be the first so treated.

More services for Anglia?

Following the introduction of extra services between Ipswich and Cambridge this year, Anglia Railways is putting together a RPP bid to increase the service to hourly. At this stage it is not clear if the extra services will be all stations or limited stop in an attempt to encourage people out of their cars. This is very welcome news as extra services on this route have been a key Branch campaign.

Anglia have confirmed that their new Cambridge-Norwich service to be introduced next year will include stops at Attleborough. A new draft timetable is being circulated and includes an early train to Cambridge and a return journey that gets to Norwich before 08.45. It has not been possible to provide clock-face departures. Progress is being made on the order of 4 new Class 170 diesel trains for this service, the trains could include first class seats.

The Norwich to Great Yarmouth multi-modal study has backed plans for a half-hourly service between the two towns. The study also includes station improvements and new local feeder buses. It has not backed total dualling of the A47 road, there will however be local improvements. More details are on the study web-site: www.a47study.co.uk

Members are asked to back the report by writing to Norfolk County Council MMS, Planning and Transportation Department, FREEPOST NC22093/8 Norwich NR1 2BR. The deadline is 21 November 2001.

SRA at Branch Meeting

At the Branch's Ipswich meeting on 29th September Richard Stuart from the Strategic Rail Authority spoke to around 20 Railfuture members. Briefly, the SRA:

- * hope to have a package of ideas for the West Anglia Route Modernisation (WARM) by end of the year.
- * recognise merit in East-West link, but says that Bedford-Bletchley service RPP bid was not very good. New trains pushed it over the limit.
- * says East-West must serve Milton Keynes but there are pathing issues on the West Coast Mainline.
- * are currently looking at key junction capacities on Felixstowe - Nuneaton route. Ely is not a big problem, but single track section at Soham is. TPWS will enable some of the present signalling restrictions to be removed increasing capacity.
- * are waiting instructions from Stephen Byers on Franchise replacement/extension for East Anglia.

There was then a discussion with questions from the floor. After the vote of thanks to Mr Stuart, there was a short business meeting dealing with Branch matters.

Stations

Ipswich Car Park

The new multi-storey car park, built at a cost of £3 million in conjunction with Railtrack and Ipswich Borough Council, has been completed on time and was opened on 8th October 2001.

There are 435 parking spaces - an increase of 190 spaces - with CCTV monitoring, regular patrols from Anglia Railways staff and customer service help points around the parking area. Executive parking is also available which includes valet parking. Cycle parking is being increased to 120 places at the same time.

Waterbeach car park

The SRA has announced that it will be contributing £92,000 to fund an extension of the car park at Waterbeach. It currently has 40 parking spaces, and there were plans to increase it to 60, but now a further 38 spaces will be added making 78 in all. CCTV, disabled parking and further cycle parking will also be added.

Braintree Branch

A further RPP application has been submitted by Essex County Council to upgrade the Braintree branch. £8.63m will provide a passing loop at Cressing and extended platforms at other stations. This will enable longer trains and a more frequent service to be provided.

Rail Safety

Improvements planned for level crossings in Great Shelford. Railtrack have pledged to improve safety at the level crossing in Hinton Way, Great Shelford, following a claim by the Shelford Parish Council that it is dangerous. Vice-chairman Charles Nightingale said: "The crossing includes steps which people could easily trip over, plus rubber matting which is slippery in the winter and when it rains. The passenger gates on to the station platform have also been tied back and if you stood there with your child they would only have to run about 10ft and they would be on the railway line."

A Railtrack spokeswoman said "We are planning to put down a non-slip surface and are making sure the surface is level so there are no tripping hazards. With the gates to the station we are replacing them with a new, self-closing gate. There is no timetable but we are working on the plans now."

"Whistle boards" have been put up at the village's other crossing at Granhams Road asking train drivers to sound their horns to warn people when trains are approaching the crossing at night. Railtrack had been told by the HSE to place them at all level crossings.

The Branch welcomes contributions to Rail East. Short articles are particularly welcome. Material for the next edition should reach Nick Dibben by 5th January 2002.

Great Eastern news

Bargain offer

First Great Eastern are offering "Fabulous Fiver" tickets to the over 60s. For £5 they will be able to travel to anywhere after 1000 on GE services but not from Liverpool Street between 1645 and 1915. The tickets can be bought at any staffed FGE station on the day of travel and are valid for one day. The offer ends on 23rd November.

Guide dogs

A young puppy which will be trained as a Guide Dog needs to be become accustomed to being in many different environments. As many blind people travel on trains it is very important for guide dogs to be able to help their owners with this. First Great Eastern is giving the puppy walkers who look after the young dogs for the Guide Dogs for the Blind the opportunity for them to take the young dogs on trains by donating free travel.

Cyclemark 2001

Anglia Railways has been named 'Best Train Operator' in the 2001 CycleMark Awards sponsored by the Strategic Rail Authority and managed by the cycling pressure group 'Bike Rail'. Additionally, Jonathan Denby, Anglia Railways' corporate affairs director (who spoke at Railfuture's Norwich 2001 branch meeting) has been commended in the 'Best Individual' category for his positive attitude and work as a strong advocate of cycle-rail integration. The awards were presented by The Rt. Hon. John Spellar MP, Minister for Transport.

Rail literature

The Rail forum have updated their useful 16-page "Facts and figures" booklet which gives lots of statistics about how successful conventional and light rail is in the United Kingdom. The booklet includes projections of growth.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 17th November - Branch meeting in Cambridge - Little St Mary's Church Hall, Trumpington Street, starting at 1400.

Saturday 24th November - Peterborough & Norwich Rail Users Annual General Meeting - The Maltings, Ely at 1115.

Saturday 24th November - Fen Line Users Association Annual General Meeting - The Maltings, Ely at 1400.

Saturday 27th April 2002 - National RailFuture Annual General Meeting in Cardiff.

YOUR help is urgently needed

Branch Chairman Peter Wakefield is standing down from the post at the next AGM. Peter intends to spend some time teaching in South Africa. Nominations for the post of Chairman are therefore invited. In addition to chairing the Branch committee and public meetings, the role also involves writing letters on rail subjects, dealing with the local media and representing the Branch at various functions.

We also need a new Press Officer. This involves keeping an updated list of media contacts and the issue of press releases and posters for Branch meetings.

Anyone interested should contact Nick Dibben for further details. Access to e-mail is considered essential for both positions.

Railtrack re-organises

Railtrack is to create a new Eastern Region. Railtrack, in a change to an area management structure, that is to merge the Anglia & London North Eastern Zones to create an "Eastern Region", essentially a re-creation of the old British Rail Eastern Region! There will be 4 areas within this region, each with their own maintenance contracts:

- * East Coast Mainline
- * London North Eastern Central (presumably lines in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, County Durham and the Tyne & Wear area)
- * Thameside, West Anglia & North London lines
- * Anglia, Great Eastern & c2c lines.

As a footnote to this story, there is expected to be a delay to the establishment of the not-for-profit company favoured by the Government. When the company is finally established there may be further changes.

Anglia parcels service

Anglia Railways and GOfers Logistics Management have joined forces to provide a same-day delivery service. The new service will provide GOfers customers with station to station and door to door delivery services. Initially it will be available on trains from Norwich to London Liverpool Street, including Diss, Stowmarket, Ipswich and Colchester. It is planned to extend this service across the rest of Anglia Railways network.

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