

RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of RailFuture

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Au revoir at last - or my challenge to the Branch

It has been 18 months, since I announced I was going to do “voluntary service overseas” — well, 11th February 2002 is when I eventually depart — to Lichinga, the capital of Niassa province in Mozambique. There is a railway terminating there, and it needs re-opening after war damage, but I think I'll avoid that one.

So now, a few thoughts about what needs to be done here!

It is difficult to know where to start, so I'll keep this to what I expect you to achieve by my return for the Branch Annual General Meeting in 2004! If the Government aim of more "modal shift" is to be achieved the railways of East Anglia need expansion along the lines we have always called for, the bare minimum must be:

- * Re-opening Cambridge-St Ives-Huntingdon-Bedford-Oxford
- * Re-opening March-Wisbech
- * New link between Stansted and Braintree
- * Passing loops on the East Suffolk line
- * Freight depots for the Ipswich and Norwich areas
- * Double track to Kings Lynn
- * Grade separated junctions at Hitchin and Peterborough

It's not a long list is it? But without acceptance of the need for these enhancements, rail really will not be able to play its part in our ever growing region. It is important that the policy makers in our region understand the true nature of rail and not let the opportunities slip away, for example the mis-guided busway scheme for St Ives. At privatisation, we called for the East Anglia to have one operator with safeguards for rural routes. There has been much good work from Anglia and Great Eastern, but how much better would it have been as one company with the West Anglia route tagged on. The SRA is probably right to reverse the split of operators, so lets call louder and more insistently for all our other ideas to be put in place. Do not be afraid to say we are right, and plug away at the media, the councils, regional bodies and the SRA.

See you all in 2 years.

Peter Wakefield

SRA publishes the Strategy for the Railways

In the Briefing Note for Eastern England on the SRA Rail Strategy published on 14th January, much is a repetition of schemes that have already been announced e.g. new Norwich - Cambridge service and the installation of the TPWS. It is often unclear which, if any, of the projects will proceed.

There are a number of minor infrastructure improve-

ments to increase capacity of the rural branch lines. Progress will be subject to meeting value for money targets. Extra platforms at Cambridge are included as part of the West Anglia route upgrade but there are no clear commitments.

On the freight side, upgrading of the routes from Felixstowe, Ipswich and North Thameside are mentioned, and freight should benefit from a

number of grants.

Extremely disappointing is the lack of mention of the East-West Rail Link and new stock for the London-Norwich service, although the later was mentioned when the SRA announced plans for the new Anglia franchise.

There will be a debate on the SRA plan at our Branch A G M in Bury St Edmunds on 23rd February.

10 years on

Ten years ago in February 1992, the Branch published "A Rail Strategy for East Anglia" which set out our ideas on how the region's rail network should develop. On the back of the 4 page leaflet there was a map titled Network 2002. So how many of have our ideas been turned into reality?

When it comes to station and line reopenings, the answer is disappointing as no new stations have been opened in the area in the last ten years. There has however, been progress on our call for every rural route to have an hourly service. Additional trains are now running on all our rural lines and new applications for Rail Passenger Partnership funding to fill in the gaps are being prepared by Anglia Railways.

The Rail Strategy, talked about planting seeds of ideas for future development. It is in this area where the Branch has been most successful. In 1992 many thought we were daft, and that there was no future for the railways. Today, the idea of an East-West Rail link or better services on rural lines is now widely accepted.

Tucked away in the Strategy was a sentence that many had perhaps forgotten about, until it recently re-appeared in the news. In 1992, we called for a single operator for the region's railways (We suggested it be part of Network SouthEast). Just before Christmas, the SRA announced plans for a super-Anglian franchise.

The ideas in the rail strategy are still valid, and our outgoing Chairman Peter Wakefield has listed many of them in his farewell comments. Let's hope we don't have to wait too long for our other ideas are accepted!

SRA announce Anglia franchise

The Strategic Rail Authority has signalled its intention to combine the Anglia, Great Eastern and the West Anglia Route into a single franchise from 2004. The existing Central Trains routes in East Anglia are unaffected. The SRA say that having one operator serving Liverpool Street station in London will make better use of track and platform capacity.

In the past, the Branch has expressed fears that such a franchise would neglect the rural routes and concentrate on

London commuter services. The SRA has responded to these concerns by insisting that the franchise has a separate regional office and management team for the rural lines. It has also stated that it will start the process of buying new trains for the London - Norwich service for the new operator to adopt when they take over.

The announcement has been welcomed by First Great Eastern, who have stated that they will bid for the new franchise; Anglia Railways

In brief

A new seat at Halesworth Station to commemorate the rail campaigning work of **Ian Carter** has been selected. The seat will cost around £600 and so far £350 has been raised. Further contributions should be sent to the Branch treasurer Lewis Buckingham.

A survey of 150 passengers on the new Felixstowe line Sunday service carried out by the East Suffolk Travellers Association has shown that nearly a third are travelling to stations beyond Ipswich.

Hull Trains are talking to Railtrack about a 10 year access agreement. Once signed, Hull Trains would order new 125 mph trains and increase the frequency initially to two-hourly and then hourly.

Railtrack is to move many of its staff out of headquarters and into the offices of the track contractors to improve monitoring of both costs and quality.

Central Trains has started a three month trial of stopping 3 car class 170 trains at Whittlesea station. Special safety approval is needed as the platforms are shorter than the required length.

have also indicated that they are planning to bid. National Express, the owners of West Anglia Great Northern have said that they will not be making a bid. The Stansted Airport service was not mentioned in the announcement.

Anglia's aspirations

At the end of January, Anglia are expecting to make a Rail Passenger Partnership bid for funding of 6 new trains and for the introduction in the autumn of 2003 of 60 new services including substantial increases of services on the Ipswich - Cambridge route and doubling the frequency Monday to Friday of the services from Norwich to Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. Better evening and Sunday services are also planned for most lines. The East Suffolk line would see 2 extra services if the bid is successful.

In welcoming this bid, the Branch still looks forward to much improved frequencies on the Ipswich to Peterborough route and hopes that the opportunity will be taken to introduce a clock-face interval service on all routes.

Mista needs help

The Mid-Suffolk Travellers Association (MiSTA) are in urgent need of members (including RailFuture members) living in the Ely/Cambridge-Ipswich corridor willing to take an active role on the committee. MiSTA Secretary Allan Hayman & Chairman John Ibbetson stood down at the MiSTA AGM on 20th October (John agreed to stay on as Chairman until the end of December). If you can help please contact John on (01359) 241086, or write to MiSTA, 66 Eastern Way, Elmswell, Suffolk, IP30 9DP if you can help.

St Ives line update

Transport Minister Sally Keeble has given an initial approval for the findings of the A14 Multi-modal study including the guided-busway. The response to the announcement was many reminders in the local press, including several from RailFuture members, on the general shortcomings and lack of information about the busway proposals. The Minister has given the County Council six months to submit a full scheme for consideration. Given some of the key issues, this deadline will be hard to achieve. It is also worth noting that the Government did not give approval to the Luton busway project, claiming lack of information, when it announced local transport spending before Christmas.

The reaction has prompted one local newspaper, The Hunts Post, to start a "Boot the (misguided) bus scheme". In a front page editorial it noted "We cannot see how this particular proposed public transport system will benefit this area...we have yet to find anyone in this district who is completely convinced by it." Even the inventor of the guided bus technology, Arthur Henderson, who now lives in Cambridge supports the rail re-opening.

Keep those letters going to councillors and the local press.

Mid Norfolk Railway

The Mid-Norfolk Railway has completed the purchase of the section of line between Dereham and the end of the track about a quarter of a mile beyond North Elmham Station. This increases the length of the line to 16 miles making the MNR the longest preserved railway in East Anglia, and in the top five in Great Britain. The purchase was greatly helped by a grant from Breckland District Council.

Rail East by e-mail

The next Rail East will be published in June. A number of members have inquired about receiving Rail East via e-mail. This would save on postage and you would get your copy much more quickly. If you are interested in this arrangement, please send an e-mail to the Secretary at nick.dibben@ukgateway.net. Please include your RailFuture membership number. Postal delivery will continue.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 23rd February: East Anglian Branch Annual General Meeting at 1415 at Bury St Edmunds.

Please see back page of this edition of Rail East.

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

Branch Annual General Meeting

You support is requested

The 2002 AGM of the East Anglia Branch of the Railway Development Society will take place on Saturday 23rd February 2002 at Bury St Edmunds Library starting at 14.15.

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Our guest speaker, John Brodribb from STEER (Sustainable Transport in the Eastern England Region) will lead a discussion on the SRA's new rail plan.
4. Minutes and matters arising from the 2001 AGM
5. Branch Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Election of Branch Officers and Committee:
 - Chairman
 - Vice Chairman
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Sales Officer
 - Membership Secretary
 - Press Officer
 - Other members of the committee
8. Appointment of auditor
9. Motions
10. General discussion of the SRA's new rail strategy
11. Date for next meeting

The Library is situated in Sargeant's Walk between St Andrews Street and St Johns Street and is about 10 minutes walk from the station. The meeting is timed to suit arrival of trains from Cambridge and Ipswich and should finish by 16.30.

Nominations for Branch Officers and Committee or motions should be sent to the Branch Secretary by 20th February 2002 duly proposed and seconded.

BRANCH OFFICERS

Chairman: Peter Wakefield

7 Hollymount St Matthew's Street, CAMBRIDGE, CB1 1QD

Vice Chairman: Ivan Ivanovitch

3 Elm Drive, Offord Cluny, ST NEOTS PE18 9RN

Secretary: Nick Dibben

24 Bure Close, ST IVES, Cambs PE17 4FR

Tel: 01480 495101

Treasurer: Lewis Buckingham

25 Drury Road, COLCHESTER CO2 7UY

Sales: Chris Milne

25 Thetford Way, South Wootton, KINGS LYNN PE30 3TG

Press Officer: Ken Burton

23 Abbeygate, THETFORD Norfolk

Membership Secretary: Clara Zilahi

31 Wimsotsham Road, DOWNHAM MARKET, Norfolk, PE38 9PE

Editor of Rail East: Tony Albert

Hunterswood, Ipswich Road, Holbrook, IPSWICH IP9 2QT

E-mail: rail.arabati@btinternet.com

From down under

This edition of Rail East has been put together in the Far North of New Zealand.

Here...

The road lobby is ferocious...

The road transport industry and the equivalent of the Highways Agency is advocating 60 tonne lorries...

Cut throat competition for freight includes coastal shipping...

Some recently sold long distance services have been axed...

The government and local authorities have spent millions of dollars buying back the desperately run down Auckland suburban services...

It is hoped to develop these into a light rail system penetrating the centre of the city...

And...

It is hoped to restart at least one of the long distance rail services.

WAGN fined

West Anglia Great Northern has been fined £10.5 million for having "the worst punctuality record in the region". Peak time WAGN trains came bottom of the trains-on-time table for London and the South-East from April-October 2001.

The Branch welcomes contributions to Rail East. Short articles are particularly welcome. Material for the next edition should reach Nick Dibben by 15th May 2002.