

RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of RailFuture

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Class 360 - a great way to travel

On Friday 27th September, First Great Eastern launched their new class 360 trains with a non-stop journey from Liverpool Street to Ipswich taking 54 minutes. Although this did not break any records (due to the number of temporary speed restrictions imposed because of the state of the track), the smooth and rapid acceleration of these trains was well demonstrated. On board were many civic dignitaries, representatives of the SRA, the press and media, as well members of User Groups.

The arrival of the class 360 trains on the London to Clacton and London to Ipswich routes heralds a big change in the quality of passenger comfort. Air conditioning is the most obvious improvement but the coaches have been designed to use the maximum width possible to give a very spacious feel. The seats align with the windows; the carpeting gives a good impression. The announcements, using the latest GPS technology, are supported by visual displays. Gone are the miniature destination displays on the front of so many modern designs: there are large displays on the front and on the sides of the train. There is even more leg room - although not a great deal - which can only be good news for those who have endured knee crushing encounters on the class 321.

These trains show that commuters can enjoy a greater degree of comfort on a busy railway.



Class 360 ready for the launch

Photo: Tony Albert

First Great Eastern is to be congratulated on the timely introduction of trains which show what can be achieved. We now look forward to the time when the track will be in much better shape and the trains will achieve their full potential.

Unanswered questions about the St Ives busway

A discussion organised by the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Civic Society on the proposed guided bus system between Cambridge and Huntingdon highlighted the faults and gaps in the scheme. The lack of information on some key issues means that many

believe that the Government is unlikely to give funding approval when it announces the amount of money it will be giving to local authorities in December. Among the issues raised by the public were concerns about the predicted number of users, doubts about

the quality of the buses, what impact the new bus lanes would have on the trees and hedges and how effective the integration with existing buses would be. Those present at the meeting indicated strong support for a rail scheme and the CAST.IRON proposal.

Everyone's railway - the SRA trumpets railway strengths

The Strategic Rail Authority has issued an important document called Everyone's Railway, the wider case for rail. The 70 page report explains the significance of the railway network to the UK in terms of the economy, safety, environment and social exclusion. There are examples of recent railway successes including many from East Anglia such as the new Cambridge to Norwich service, passenger growth on the Bittern Line and freight from Felixstowe Port. Some of the key points made in the report are:

- Railway cannot be a solution to all of Britain's transport problems - it is best at high density commuter services, fast longer distance services between main centres and high volume freight flows.
- Rail also has a part to play in rural areas providing improved access to jobs and services, encouraging tourism and providing a permanent transport connection valued by rural communities.
- The often quoted figure that rail has just 6% of market share is misleading. Most journeys are less than 5 miles for which rail is not the obvious choice (but neither are 6 lane motorways). In the many transport corridors rail is significant. For example nearly 80% of London commuters and over 50% share on inter-city routes, and 75% of solid fuels travel by rail.
- Despite media reports about service cuts, there are more passenger trains running today than a year ago.
- Safety - more people die on the roads each day, than rail passengers in a year. The number of rail accidents has fallen by 80% since 1967 and continues to fall.
- Journeys by road are getting longer. For example, Cambridge to Ipswich along the A14 is expected to be 20 minutes longer in 2006 than in 1996 and that excludes journeys into the city centres. Rail can provide an alternative.
- Reference is made to the GNER travel calculator which shows that rail can be both quicker and cheaper than either car or air for many journeys.

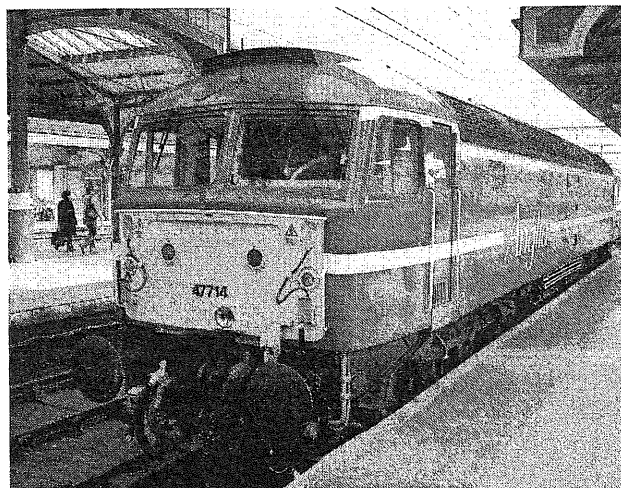
The report concludes with the SRA's agenda. The short term priority is to tackle costs while improving performance and reliability. In the longer term, the railway must deal with rising demand and changing travel patterns.

The SRA has produced a very positive document about the role and future of the railways. It is a pity that it has received so little coverage in the media. Railfuture has asked the SRA to consider producing a summary document which can then be distributed to a much wider audience.

Anglia's locomotives

The hired class 47 locomotive that usually serves as "thunderbird" at Colchester has been repainted in Anglia Railways colours. The "thunderbird" duties include acting as a rescue locomotive should another locomotive fail, but it can also be used for work such as the extra trains for the Lowestoft Air Show.

Anglia Railways have leased more class 90 electric locomotives for use on the Norwich to London services. Being more modern as well as more powerful, these locomotives have proved more reliable than the class 86 locomotives that they replace. The extra power is useful when trying to recover lost time. The picture opposite shows one at Liverpool Street.



Anglia's repainted class 47 at Norwich

Photo: Anglia Railways

A better deal for passengers

Around 80 rail users representing Railfuture, various rail user and environmental groups and regular passengers met in Ely on October 4th for the Rail Passenger Council for Eastern England (RPCEE) conference titled "A better deal for passengers". The conference opened with a presentation from RPCEE chairman Derek Langslow on the current issues facing the region's railways and the work the organisation has been doing on station surveys. Many stations had been inspected with the train operators and local authorities. A series of action plans had been agreed ranging from the simple relocation of information boards to make them more accessible, to longer term projects such as new footbridges and lifts for disabled passengers. Chris Austin from the SRA outlined the Case for Rail (see opposite page) and highlighted the improvements that had taken place on the railways. Using Ely as an example, he showed the improvements to train service frequency and reduced journey times that had taken place to all destinations over the last 20 years.

RPC National Chairman Stewart Francis urged delegates to unite behind the case for rail being put forward by the SRA and noted that the goodwill of the public towards the railways was fast running out. He also called for railway performance targets to be more passenger focused. Delegates were also asked to indicate their priorities for improving train services and station facilities within the region.

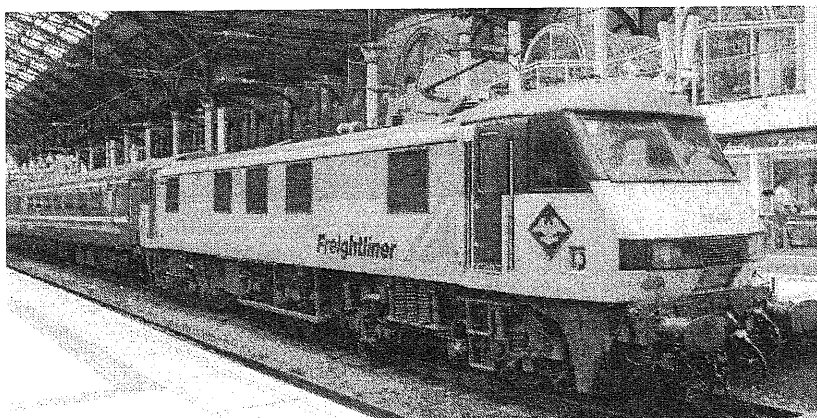


Photo: Anglia Railways

Dates for your diary

Saturday 22nd November at 10.30 am - Branch meeting in Cambridge at Little St Mary's Hall. Speaker will be Tony Brown from Central Trains.

Saturday 22nd February 2004 at 2 pm - East Anglian Branch Annual General Meeting in Bury St Edmunds. We hope to invite the winning franchise bidder to provide a speaker.

Norwich - Cambridge success

More than half a million people have travelled on Anglia Railways Cambridge to Norwich in its first year of operation. Starting in September 2002, the hourly direct train service linking two important regional centres in just 70 minutes has been well used right from the start. Each day around 1200 people use these trains and this figure is nearly a third above the predicted numbers. The success of the service shows what the railway can achieve. An example of a quick win for the railway, it was just six months between the initial announcement by the SRA and the start of the service.

Given the success of this train service, Railfuture, other user groups and local authorities are renewing their calls for improvements to the Cambridge to Ipswich train service.

The Branch welcomes contributions to Rail East. Short articles are particularly welcome. Material for the next edition should reach Nick Dibben by 3rd January 2004.

Snippets is an e-mail newsletter for members of the East Anglia Branch of Railfuture. To receive a copy, please send an e-mail to: jerry.alderson@virgin.net asking to be added to the list. Remember that Jerry needs to know if you have changed your e-mail address or you will not receive a copy.

Franchise extension

The SRA has agreed a two year extension to the Central Trains franchise operated by National Express. The franchise will now run until 2006 when a new franchise will start following competitive tender. Under the deal, existing train service levels will be maintained and a number of short term improvements introduced. These include a new staff training centre, better passenger information by giving key staff portable data terminals and investment in equipment and people to improve train cleaning.

The SRA is also talking to WAGN about a similar two year extension to the franchise for the Great Northern route. The West Anglia line will become part of the new Greater Anglia Franchise next year.

The SRA is expected to announce the winning bid for the Greater Anglian Franchise before Christmas which should give sufficient time for the franchise to be in place in April 2004.

Branch Meeting

Our next Branch meeting will be in Cambridge on November 22nd at the Little St Mary Church Hall, Trumpington Street, Cambridge starting at 10.30. The guest speaker will be Tony Brown from Central Trains. There will also be an update from CAST. IRON Chairman Tim Philips.

New freight service

G B Railfreight has launched an innovative new container train service from the Port of Felixstowe to the Midlands that will remove thousands of lorry trips from the A14. The daily service, which began on 20th October, will run from Felixstowe's North Terminal to ABP Connect's recently expanded Hams Hall Railfreight Terminal near Coleshill. Unlike many other container services, the train is open to any shipper and does not rely on long-term contracts. The train has a capacity for 66 containers and should remove 20,000 lorry trips from the A14 per year.

On brief

In the Eastern Daily Press Business Awards, **Anglia Railways won the Business Development Award** for its new Norwich to Cambridge service. The judges said the introduction of the new link was highly unusual in the railway business.

Cambridgeshire County Council say that plans for a **new station at Chesterton** north of Cambridge are progressing well. Network Rail are currently reviewing the cost of the scheme whilst the County and City Councils are developing a planning brief for the area.

The SRA is to publish a guide on the process needed to build new stations. It is intended to be used by both local authorities and campaign groups. The document will set out the information required by those seeking new stations to enable the SRA to make a proper assessment.

The SRA has announced a number of **improvements to facilities at 20 stations** in East Anglia generally on the Great Eastern and West Anglia routes. New waiting shelters, toilets, CCTV and other information systems are to be installed in a package worth around £6 million. The stations included in the package within the Branch area are: Audley End, Clacton, Colchester, Colchester Town, Downham Market, Elsenham, Manningtree, Marks Tey, Newport, Shelford, Whittlesford and Wivenhoe.

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