

# RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of Rail Future

*railfuture*

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## Central Trains to be divided

Following an announcement of the intention to split Central Trains a year ago, the Government has issued details of the new arrangements. From 2007, they will be:

- A new West Midlands franchise will cover existing Central Trains local services around Birmingham and the existing Silverlink services to London and the Bedford to Bletchley route.
- Local services around Nottingham and Lincolnshire will be combined with the Midland Mainline franchise to create a new East Midlands franchise. The Norwich to Liverpool service will be included within this group.
- The existing Stansted Airport to Birmingham route and some other longer distance Central Trains services will be added to the Cross-Country franchise currently operated by Virgin Trains.

To add further confusion to the situation, the Government has indicated that other existing operators may be asked to submit bids for some routes within the proposed franchises. For example, Chiltern Railways could take on some of the West Midlands routes. Of more importance to East Anglian rail users, is the possibility that the Norwich to Liverpool service could be split at Nottingham with the Trans-Pennine franchise taking over the northern part of the route.

Railfuture President Peter Lawrence told the media that rail users would be concerned about the loss of through services and that East Anglia needed, and should be getting, better rail links with other regions rather than facing cuts.

## Branch boards ACORP event

As part of the ACORP Community Rail Event at the end of September, the Branch had a stall at Great Yarmouth station over the weekend. New display material in the form of 4 A1 sized posters were produced for the event explaining what Railfuture was about and our aspirations for the future of the rail network. During the weekend we handed out many leaflets and were able to talk to a number of passengers about the local train service. On the positive side, many passengers had noticed an improvement in train cleaning and there was praise for the attitude of railway staff. But they expressed concerns about overcrowding and poor connections. The Branch has sent these issues to 'one'.

## Ideas for cement

CEMEX, the owners of the Barrington cement works near Cambridge are proposing to extend the quarry and to increase output from 0.3 to 1m tonnes per year. Part of the scheme includes upgrading the existing rail connection to the Cambridge – Royston Line. At present the site receives coal by rail. The plan is to use rail for some of the other raw materials and to send a proportion of the cement by rail. The Branch has met with CEMEX.

The new December timetable will see major changes to the West Anglia route from London Liverpool Street to Stansted and Cambridge. There will be a new service linking Stansted Airport and Stratford, and the Stansted Express trains will make additional stops at either Harlow or Bishops Stortford providing better links to the airport as well as more seats for London commuters. Overall an extra 3000 peak period seats will be provided. Through trains to Ely and Kings Lynn will be maintained. The new timetable follows an extensive consultation earlier this year and many of the comments made by rail users appear to have been included in the final timetable.

### Freight at Norwich Branch Meeting

Members at our October Branch meeting in Norwich heard Mike Young from Norfolk County Council talk about rail freight within the county. Mike also has responsibility for road freight and was able to give a general view as to what companies are looking for when moving goods. Reliability rather than speed or even cost was the key issue for most firms. One freight logistics firm has suggested that lorries spend around 12% of their time stationary in congestion. This gives an excellent opportunity for rail, but the rail industry must improve its delivery to obtain the level of consistency that companies required. Around Norfolk, coastal shipping was taking traffic from both road and rail as it was congestion free.

The entry of new firms had helped keep the rail freight industry competitive. There was also a need for more freight terminals owned by private firms that could be used by all the rail freight companies similar to Johnston terminal near Eccles Road by both EWS and Freightliner.

Norfolk County Council was protecting sites for future freight terminals and was also protecting old railway track beds against other development. There was an aspiration for freight to return to Kings Lynn docks and also extending the line to serve the new outer harbour at Great Yarmouth. One concern for the county was that the number of train paths for freight could be reduced to make way for more passenger trains.

### Race track station?

The owners of the motor racing circuit at Snetterton near Thetford have announced plans for a major upgrade of the site including a new business park, and hotel. The site is close to the railway line between Harling Road and Eccles Road stations and the existing station at Eccles Road could be upgraded or build a totally new station. The cost of new stations means an upgrade may prove more realistic. The other issue will be to persuade the train operators to stop there as the existing station has only a limited service designed to take workers to/from Norwich. The developers have invited the Branch to a site meeting to discuss the plans.

### Here and there

As more people are using Central's City Link services from the region, the train operator has announced that from December additional coaches will be provided.

**Additional Sunday services** will run between Norwich and Great Yarmouth from December. Acle and Lingwood will get trains on a Sunday for the first time in many years.

The route between **Clacton and Colchester** has been named the Sunshine Coast route. Fortunately, the sun was shining when the name was unveiled! 'one' has announced continued growth on the **Norwich to Cambridge service** with 600,000 passengers being carried in a year.

Cambridgeshire County Council are progressing plans for a new station at **Chesterton Junction** north of Cambridge and hope to submit funding applications next year.

Information from a draft report on the **East -West rail link** suggests that 10 times as many people would use a rail service than a bus. The final edition of the report is awaited from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

### Dates for your diary

**Saturday 10th December: East Anglian Branch meeting** at Little St Mary's Church Hall, Trumpington Street, Cambridge. The meeting will start at 14.00.

Jerry Alderson has offered to arrange for some refreshments. These will be on sale from 13.00. Do come early if you can and have chat with other members.

**Saturday 6th May 2006 - Railfuture National Annual General Meeting** in Swindon.

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