

Apologies!

Yes, if you were expecting a pre-Christmas edition, well, so were we; but events conspired! So fulsome apologies for any disappointment. By way of recompense we've expanded this edition by a fair few pages, all of which I hope you will find a worthwhile read. CB

Annual General Meeting: 23 February, Cambridge

Each year at this time we bring the forthcoming AGM to your notice. It is by definition the most important Branch meeting of the year, not least because *you* have the opportunity to question *and* change things, especially the committee which runs the Branch business. And change *is* needed from time to time to rejuvenate. So, if you would like to stand for membership of the Branch Committee, now is your chance. Peter Wakefield or Nick Dibben would love to hear from you, by telephone or email. New blood, especially people with enthusiasm who will truly be active, are always welcome. It might well be you! Full contact details are carried on the back page. CB

Little St Mary's Church in Little St Mary's Lane, Trumpington St, Cambridge is the AGM venue, at 14.00hrs, Saturday 23 February.

St Pancras for East Anglia!

As of 14 November 2007, you'd better believe it. A large tract of eastern England now has vastly improved connections, via Kings Cross, to the continent of Europe with the arrival of High Speed 1(HS1) at the superbly renovated St Pancras Station. A tremendous achievement, and just for once the whole British media seemed to agree. Indeed, your editor cannot recall at any point in his life such a barrage of good news and views about a rail project, already translating itself into markedly increased business for Eurostar. By 15.5% in fact during 2007. Marvellous. But it's certainly needed if the company is to show an encouraging return on the £5.8billion invested, let alone get near the original business projections. Happily, also contributing to the coffers will be South Eastern Trains, whose Hitachi 125mph new trains will soon be whisking the denizens of Kent into London at unprecedented speed along this beautifully engineered line. And maybe, even freight. Which leads neatly to CB

Another Eurotunnel 'Good News' Story

Although not so obviously beneficial to our region, you'll surely still be pleased to learn that recently Eurotunnel slashed its fees by up to 50% for Channel Tunnel railfreight transit. Already Railion(aka EWS), and Eurotunnel itself, are actively progressing plans for new railfreight services linking the UK with the rest of the continent. Indeed, EWS/Railion already propose to increase the very modest 25 services per week to 50 by the end of 2008.

It can only be a matter of time before other railfreight companies follow EWS and move into the trans-continental freight market. Slots in the timetable to thread these new services through the congested south east network is usually the constraint. Still, trade will have to be substantially increased before this becomes a real problem. In any case, there is active consideration of using HS1 for freight in 'quiet moments! So, we look forward to business blossoming for both freight *and* Eurostar.

Meanwhile the Government wants to retrieve some of the £6.1 billion cost it underwrote, by selling off London and Continental Railways (LCR). According to Rail Minister, Tom Harris, LCR would be split three ways: HS1, Eurostar, and land in the vicinity of Stratford and Kings Cross. The latter is valued at about £1.5billion. Although a bit early for firm bidders to emerge, Network Rail 'cooled' speculation that they wished to pitch for HS1, without actually denying it! But does anybody want Network Rail's focus on the 'big job' softened by HS1?? Surely not! With HS2 still in the political melting pot, Railfuture hopes that expertise honed by the highly successful HS1 project will not be jettisoned through this projected sell-off. CB

The Forgotten Line

Whilst rail passengers have much to be grateful for in this region, there is one main route which does seem to be in need of a touch of dynamic rejuvenation. I speak of Norwich to Ely (and onward to Peterborough and Cambridge). It's not that business isn't growing, it is; as Peter Wakefield (PW) notes elsewhere. But where is the prospect for sustained improvement?

Under great pressure to return maximum line speed to the 80-90mph that obtained over a significant bit of the route until early 2007, Network Rail recently heralded a two year programme of track renewals covering thirtyfive or so route miles, which is very good news. But it is only a start. This, a route of much ancient infrastructure, strives *now* to make a business case for renewal, let alone in a recession. RailFuture is alive to this and lobbying; and so can you by writing to your local MP, County Councillor and the like, keeping the route firmly in their vision. As a prosperous, vibrant area, Norwich and its hinterland warrant a fast, efficient rail link westward. Two-car diesel units limited to 75mph are not the answer. Helping the cause is the rapidly growing Norwich to Cambridge patronage which is approaching a business case for a half hourly service. However, Network Rail cannot consider such a timetable until the Ely North Junction bottleneck is resolved. CB

.....and further implications

It must be said, though, that EMT-East Midland Trains (who have replaced Central), genuinely *do* want to improve the service to the point where revenue for leasing more rolling stock is being generated. They have to, as the Franchise Agreement pivots on increased fare income and decreased subsidy. This is challenge enough in a period of economic growth, but this is not the forecast from the City! Equally challenged is the other new franchise, Arriva Trains Cross Country (Arriva CC), who have taken over the Stansted to Birmingham service.

Muddying further the prospect for expansion is the *possibility* of a reduction in the number of National Express East Coast(NEXEC) 125mph services stopping at Peterborough, in order to shorten journey times to Leeds and Scotland (See PW pages 6-7).

Amen to quicker trains, but if this means appreciably fewer *attractive* connection opportunities at Peterborough, our support begins to wain. We do not want to see the business case for improving the feeder-routes, and indeed, Peterborough station itself, diminished by reduced patronage. This is an important issue for the railway in East Anglia.

A similar situation threatens at Nuneaton where the Virgin West Coast timetable will offer far fewer connections with Arriva's Stansted to Birmingham timetable. Once again the 125mph service will be replaced by a 100mph 'stopper'! Or onwards to Birmingham for stations beyond Stafford to Lancashire, the Lakes, and Scotland.

At a Birmingham Department for Transport (DforT) briefing on the 2009/10 timetable, it was virtually conceded that in its planning only the revenue taken at Nuneaton was considered, not the far higher number of travellers actually using it as an interchange. One suspects Peterborough has fallen foul of a similar abstraction. Might we suggest DforT kick off by checking the tickets bought for East and West Coast services at Cambridge: we were reliably informed that during the GNER era Cambridge was its fourth largest revenue generator outside London!

But the devil is in the detail, as ever, and this is what we await in the form of draft timetables for discussion. We are already in discussion with those involved: Arriva CC, EMT, NEXEC and Department for Transport. CB

Ipswich to Peterborough Returns to Rail

After possibly the longest ever post-accident close-down in the UK, Thursday 20 December 2007 saw the new bridge over the Great Ouse, about a mile south east of Ely, brought into use. It was virtually six months to the day after the old bridge had been terminally damaged by a freight train derailment, the exact cause of which is still to be stated by the Rail Accident Investigation Board. Much of the lengthy delay was due to the bridge manufacturer already being fully booked with orders. Once the bridge components arrived installation was achieved in an admirably short space of time. £10m is reputed to be the total accident cost.

The first timetabled service over the new structure was a Felixstowe-bound container train around 15.00 hrs on the Thursday, with the first passenger service just before 07.00 hrs the following morning. Now of course, National Express 'East Anglia' has to resell the service from Ipswich to Peterborough, as six months is a mighty long time to be without it. Railfuture hopes that the forthcoming work to improve gauge clearance for freight (see pages 4-5) might generate track and signalling improvements sufficient to shorten journey times and raise the level of business substantially.

At a Network Rail presentation to 'wider stakeholders' in Ipswich on 24 January, this work would include rebuilding Haughley Junction to permit parallel moves on both routes, but *not* doubling of Soham to Ely as reconfiguring of the loops at Ely "will cope" with expected traffic levels. As for the double tracking of the Felixstowe branch, DforT has agreed to Hutchinson Ports request that their financial commitment to this project be deferred to 2013. CB

The Network Rail Greater Anglia Route Utilisation Study (RUS)

Nick Dibben writes that the final report of the above has now been published. RailFuture, STEER and other rail user groups attended a couple of stakeholder meetings during the development of this RUS, subsequently submitting comments on the 23 proposals contained in the draft RUS. The RUS covers every Network Rail line from the Thames right up to north Norfolk and east of the main line from Kings Cross to Peterborough.

The report indicates that the region's rail routes are well used and can expect to see continued growth in both passenger and freight usage over the period to 2019. How Network Rail proposes to deal with this growth is detailed below.

To 2009 (Financial Control period 3)

- Signal spacing at West Ham to allow more trains to stop
- 8 car bay platform at Grays
- Line speed improvements on various routes
- Bi-directional signalling between Marks Tey and Colchester
- Development of longer term schemes

2009-2014 (Control period 4)

- More twelve-car trains on the Thameside Route
- New rolling stock London – Norwich services (will add 1000 seats during the morning peak)
- Additional outer suburban trains on the Great Eastern Route to Colchester and Southend. These trains can be accommodated by stopping all services at Stratford Regional Station.
- Additional inner suburban trains on the GE Route to Chadwell Heath.
- Replacement of overhead line equipment on the GE.
- Twelve-car trains on the West Anglia Route to Cambridge.
- New island platform at Cambridge.
- Nine-car trains on inner suburban West Anglia services.
- Removal of level crossings on the West Anglia Route between Tottenham Hale and Waltham Cross.
- Gauge clearance work for freight trains on the cross-country route between Ipswich and Peterborough.
- Extra trains to give an hourly Ipswich to Peterborough service.
- Upgrading of junctions

2014-2019 (Control Period 5)

- 4-tracking of the West Anglia Route between Tottenham Hale and Broxbourne.
- Second rail tunnel at Stansted Airport
- Six extra trains during the peak hour on the WA Route. Four of these would run to Stratford and could continue to Liverpool Street using train paths freed when Crossrail is complete.
- Half hourly Cambridge to Norwich service.
- More freight capacity giving 14 paths each way between Ipswich and the West Coast Route.

The upgrading of the Barking Gospel Oak line is also included. An hourly service on the Ipswich to Lowestoft line is considered. The report says that more work is required to consider level crossings (scope for line speed improvements) before a decision can be made. It is important to note that because new stations usually demand external funding, they are not included in the RUS Business Plan.

The RUS summarises the Business Plan in £m thus:.

	THAMESSIDE	GREAT EASTERN	WEST ANGLIA
Costs	£252	£300	£914
Rail user benefits	£627	£1197	£153
Non-user benefits	£216	£516	£601
Total benefits	£843	£1713	£2137
Benefit Cost Ratio	3.3	5.7	2.3

The West Anglia schemes will also generate £307m of quantifiable wider economic benefits that would improve the cost ratio to 2.7

The report gives a very positive outlook for the region's rail routes and shows that there is a strong case for future improvements to be made to cope with expected demand. The key task for transport campaign groups would appear to monitor progress to ensure that the schemes listed actually happen. ND.

Wakefield's Words: our Chairman, Peter Wakefield (PW) takes a view:

The A14 and the Peterborough – Nuneaton Freight Upgrade.

The Branch has issued a press release that welcomes the Department of Transport's announcement that it is to fund the upgrade of the route between Peterborough and Nuneaton to enable it to take so-called 'hi-cube' (9'6" high) international containers carried on standard intermodal wagons. The work will no doubt mean that Manton tunnel will be enlarged and that a new connection off the new Nuneaton flyover down to the WCML northbound slow lines will be built. Hopefully the route between Syston and Wigston will be re- quadrupled.

All this will result in a freight route for hi-cube containers, throughout from Harwich/ Felixstowe to the Northwest, South and West Yorkshire, Scotland, via Stowmarket, Bury St. Edmunds, Ely and March. The project will be completed within three years.

The press release stresses that the upgraded railway will enable railfreight operators to take a lot of extra freight out of the ports and relieve the pressure on the parallel A14 trunk road. It will also mean that some of the traffic currently using the Great Eastern Mainline can be diverted via Bury St. Edmunds, thus easing pressure on the passenger services. PW.

The threat of the 'RoadTrains'.

The road haulage industry, not surprisingly, always want more; but in its latest appeal for government help, it wants vehicles that can load up to 60 tonnes gross weight, or a third

more than now, and be 50% longer. What a staggering prospect.

In the past we have been told that bigger lorries would mean less of them. If this was the case we would surely have less CO₂ in the atmosphere from that source. In fact it has increased significantly since the 1990s. We are assured these vehicles would be on the motorways only, even though they would have to leave the m-ways to reach warehousing and factories. If they could legally do so, it would inevitably mean a pressure to relocate such facilities to greenfield sites near m-way interchanges.

Such larger vehicles would undermine the progress made by the railfreight industry, even in the very successful heavy haulage of aggregate.

What can be done? Already the German Federal Government has rejected these vehicles. Tests in various federal states, showed up problems with road safety, plus the need for a massive programme of bridge strengthening. Not surprisingly, we need our Government to reject them too...please write to your MP and/or to the Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Transport, 76, Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR. PW
More information at www.freightonrail.org.com

Cambridge to Norwich fast service success.

The hourly service between Cambridge and Norwich has been a resounding success, now carrying 635,000 people a year. Congratulations to the former SRA, the former Anglia Railways and the very current 'one' Railway (henceforth National Express-East Anglia: Ed) for all the hard work in its continuing development. PW

Rail Times - The National Timetable Book.

Sadly there is no longer a National Rail all-line printed timetable. Network Rail felt that falling sales of the book, owing to increasing on-line searches of their site for information, meant the publication was uneconomic.

All is not lost however, as the Middleton Press have undertaken to publish a version of the book, called 'Rail Times', on December 8th., priced £14.95 post free. It can be bought on-line at www.middletonpress.co.uk or from Middleton Press, Easebourne Lane, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9AZ. Telephone 01730 813169. I should think it is a case of 'buy it or lose it'. PW See The Stationary Office and UK RailTimetables for alternatives. CB

Thameslink 2015

On Thursday November 12th., the Thameslink Consortium held its annual update meeting in the City of London's Guildhall. This time it was to celebrate the success in getting the funding for the project. The Consortium's members decided to keep the organisation in being just in case any part of the three stages planned, falter. Network Rail's project team gave a short presentation detailing the time scale of the three phases. The linking of the ECML, and thus the route to Peterborough, Cambridge and King's Lynn, through the already constructed tunnels to St. Pancras International Thameslink, is at the start of its third stage.

Final destinations for the various services threading the central London core route are still a 'little fluid'.

No decision seems to have been made about the type of rolling stock that will be used. Bearing in mind that a train travelling from say Brighton to King's Lynn will cover well nigh 150 miles, the very least we would expect is comfortable 4 aside seating, air conditioning and plenty of leg room!

If some of the above sounds a little churlish, it is worth reiterating that between now and 2015, an enormous amount of work will be undertaken to enable a state-of-the-art railway to emerge.

We congratulate the Members of the Consortium (including ourselves!), its secretariat based at Chichester's West Sussex District Council's offices, the DfT officials and the Network Rail team, who have relentlessly pursued the vision of this project over so many years.

On December 9th the Thameslink station under the St. Pancras International station, opened with ceremony. (Services started the day before, when Kings Cross Thameslink simultaneously faded away, once more.) So, no more apprehensively trudging down Pentonville Road from Kings Cross Mainline. It's now a short stroll across to the fantastic new station. Exciting times we live in. PW

'one' to National Express 'East Anglia'

We have welcomed the name change that the National Express Group have decided for their East Anglian rail activities. Many people have been rather 'edgy' about the 'one' branding, so it is pleasing that a geographical name has been chosen : National Express "East Anglia"... a proud region that can now more closely associate with its railway. (Personally, I'm very pleased we have got the 'east' back. That TV company has a lot to answer for!)

National Express state that they are to repaint all the rolling stock in the corporate colours. Many will question the sustainability of that when much of the current fleet has been rebranded in the attractive blue only recently. A good PR move would be to make much of handing on the money that would have been spent, to a project like the long awaited 'Beccles Loop'! Dream on. PW

GNER become National Express "East Coast".... on 8 December last year. We wish the new operator well. We are concerned that the new timetable planned for December 2008 will accentuate the need for speed from London to the north at cost of stops at Peterborough. We have called for at least one Leeds service, one Edinburgh, plus the semi fast service to Lincoln/York, to call at Peterborough each hour. We recognise the need for the second hourly Newcastle service to get to its destinations as quickly as possible to enable the airlines to be taken-on. The hourly Scottish service is competitive with local airports in East Anglia. The services from Cambridge/ Ipswich/Norwich to Peterborough need to connect well and speed up! See below. PW

Taktfahrplan or hub or spider system... or Just Keep Going!

The Swiss have a national railway system that is the envy of the world. One of its greatest attributes is that when you arrive at a junction you know the connection will not be long in departing. (That timetable book is not actually needed once you've remembered the even-

interval times from your local station.) We have mentioned this user friendly system before in relation to East Anglia. It is a valuable marketing tool and should be possible to put into practice at Norwich, Lowestoft, Ipswich, Manningtree, Colchester, Witham, Shenfield, Stowmarket, Cambridge, Bishop's Stortford, Broxbourne, Ely, Peterborough..... surely possible now that National Express run so much of the regional network? PW

ARRIVA CROSS COUNTRY --AXIOM RAIL

On Sunday 11 November 2007 Axiom Rail opened a 'new' train maintenance facility at Cambridge contracted to the new CrossCountry franchise, Arriva. Created from the former Maintrain facility, Axiom Rail services and maintains five CrossCountry Class 170 trains a day at this site. It is the first time that Axiom Rail has worked directly with a passenger franchise operator on a long-term basis. All 18 staff previously employed by Maintrain at the Cambridge depot duly transferred to Axiom Rail.

The company has extensive experience in servicing the CrossCountry Voyager train fleet through its continuing contract with Bombardier, for Virgin Trains, the previous franchise operator, where high delivery targets have been consistently met. These same standards will be deployed by Axiom Rail at Cambridge for CrossCountry.

Paul McKeown, Axiom Rail Managing Director, said: "Axiom Rail is inheriting a strong and proud workforce at Cambridge with a solid reputation for delivering for their customers. The new depot marks an exciting expansion of Axiom Rail and we are pleased to be working closely with CrossCountry. Our job is to deliver trains serviced and maintained as promised to ensure CrossCountry operates its trains as planned for its customers. We look forward to delivering for them and their passengers daily under the new CrossCountry franchise."

As a company, Axiom is a diverse operation, nationally employing around 400 people in the provision of maintenance, leasing, refurbishment and suspension systems services. CB

Just The Ticket...Cambridge

For those who buy advance purchase tickets, railcards, reservations and the like, Cambridge station now has a new Travel Centre, but not on the entrance concourse where the multiple ticket windows and machines continue their vigorous trade. To find it turn immediately left outside and then left again a few yards further on. Also to be found in this smart room are Hertz car rental and Trainseurope (www.trainseurope.co.uk) although the latter, at time of writing, were still occupying the office on Platform 4. The original Advance Ticket windows on the main concourse have been added to walk-up tickets sales. We have yet to discover whether Platform Tickets are now available....and if so, how much?

Almost simultaneously, Cambridge switched on its first electronic ticket barriers; not entirely successfully, according to correspondent Martin Thorne who discovered only one working at 8am on the first morning. This caused major congestion, as you might imagine. But they appear to be having their effect as Martin reports seeing at least five people being served the standard £20 Penalty Fares Notice on one morning alone. Interestingly, the weekend prior to the switch-on saw a ticket-check blitz catch around 150 travellers minus ticket!

Whilst on ticket sales/ passenger journeys, it is interesting to note from a table compiled by First Class Partnerships(FCP) and published in Modern Railways, that Anglia Rail grew its business by over 92% in a mere eight years whilst 'one' has fractionally dropped in passenger journeys since taking on Anglia. Remember though that WAGN and First Great Eastern were also part of this integration. FCP say the figures nationally prove beyond doubt that marketing had a greater effect than the economy growth, so wide is the disparity. Much maligned Central Trains still managed a 48% growth over the ten year period whilst WAGN/First Capital Connect from Kings Lynn hiked theirs by 71%. CB

InterCity Express Passenger (IEP)

Just in case you hadn't realised, the next generation of intercity express trains (IEP) has become the specification responsibility of the Department for Transport. Its technical demands are daunting, as anyone who has followed Roger Ford's ruminations in Modern Railways will know. Suffice to say; it must be light on the track, carry up to 70% more passengers (over ten coaches, each 3meters longer than a Mk4), have an 'appealing' environmental footprint, and an even more appealing price! Sadly it will have little or no export market. Well, I did say it was a daunting design project.

After prototypes have been thoroughly run-in and appraised (thank God for this), production units will first benefit the East Coast route from Kings Cross and the West of England from Paddington to Bristol. But it is what happens then which should interest East Anglians.

Apparently, Kings Cross to Kings Lynn appears on the short list of next to benefit. How wonderful. But does this imply an upgrade in status for the service to Cambridge and Kings Lynn? Thameslink as it is to become. Or that First Capital Connect (FCC)/Thameslink will adapt the design to their conflicting requirements of off-peak comfort against rush hour 'compression'? Certainly current IC coaches are too long for too many of the curves south of the Thames. FCC Managing Director, Elaine Holt, told RailEast that a small group from FCC is now working directly with DforT on this design. Delivery is notionally for March 2015. CB

New Year 'Gift' from Network Rail

When the railway gets it absolutely right, as with Eurostar / St Pancras, advocates of the railway, by definition, Railfuture, are very pleased. So to see Network Rail squander so much goodwill with overrunning seasonal engineering work, as happened at the New Year, was very painful. And the media fell on them like starving winter wolves discovering food. Rightly so. Even eloquently frank spokesperson, Robin Gisby, couldn't really varnish the damage. Network Rail looked seriously incompetent whilst their recently Knighted part-time Chairman, Ian Macallister, was conspicuously absent from public comment!

For East Anglians trying to return to work, Liverpool Street remained obdurately closed far beyond the advertised re-opening time, made worse by National Express 'East Anglia'('one') being notified an untenable four hours before its passengers set off for their local station. Result: chaos. And the reason? Well, initially it was blamed on a lack of skilled overhead line and signal installation staff, never plentiful at the best of times.

Informed sources suggest a rather different reason, among many, however: apparently,

fed up with always working at Christmas, rather too many critically important people decided to make this year an exception. Quite when they made this decision is one thing the various official inquiries will have to establish. If true, this could prove an increasingly serious problem for Network Rail, especially if enough of these vital people decide to go freelance and with it, have a little more control over their work timetable. That the work has to be done is agreed. But not when. Undertaking it at other times might well create worse disruption, greater expense and even greater damage to public relations.

What is not wanted, however, is another rail reorganisation, as several senior Train Operating Company executives stated publicly towards the end of January. All of them old enough to know the deep truth behind revered ex-BR Manager, Gerard Fiennes, oft repeated adage; *"when you reorganise, you bleed!"* That something radical in management needs to improve, however, seems an unavoidable conclusion. We await the official reports to discover just what this might be. CB

Paying Our Way – The Government View

In enacting its wish for the railway to stand on its own two feet (rails?) the DforT assert that in 2007 rail passengers were paying about 53 per cent of the cost of running the network. By 2010 that figure is to be 63 per cent and by 2014, 70 per cent. The comparison is 68 per cent in 1991-2 when privatisation began its long dissembling journey. So now we know. But we do not agree! Privatisation has brought some virtues, but at steep cost to the Taxpayer, generally conceded to be about 400% more than in 1997, inflation included. But at least some of it returns whence it came in the form of Premium Payments/ taxes from train companies and employees. And what is £4b in the world of French railways (£12b) or Northern Rock? CB

Banking on OYSTER

A few months back Barclays entered the travel ticket market with a credit card that will double as an Oyster smartcard. To apply for such a OnePulse (TM) Card go to the website <http://www.barclaycard-onepulse.co.uk/dm>. Other banks may well follow this example. CB

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

Trevor Garrod writes " Spring comes early in Saxmundham.... where ESTA will be holding its Spring Meeting on Saturday February 23rd in St Johns Church Hall at 2.00 pm. The hall is behind the Parish Church, on the Leiston road, ten minutes' walk from the rail station. Guest speaker will be Mr Peter Iddon, Managing Director of First Eastern Counties, and so much of the focus of this meeting will be on buses; but rail issues will also be reported upon and discussed. **The Annual General Meeting of ESTA will be on Saturday May 17th in the Friends Meeting House, Smallgate, Beccles, starting at 2.15 pm.** The venue is less than ten minutes from the station - go up Station Road and turn left. Guest speaker will be Mr Bob Blizzard MP." TG

TICKET OUTLETS LOST?

Trevor Garrod tells us "that from January 1st, over 200 travel agents stopped selling rail tickets for journeys within Great Britain. This is because the Association of Train Operating Companies cut their commission for the third time in recent years. One agency affected was Travel Cannon Ltd, on Saxmundham Station, where Peter and Mary Cannon still offer

a full range of Continental rail tickets and all the other facilities you expect from a good travel agent. (Tel:01728 604600) / ESTA Chairman Trevor Garrod wrote to One Managing Director Andrew Chivers urging him to reach an agreement whereby Travel Cannon Ltd could again sell train tickets to anywhere in this country."

In his letter, Mr Garrod pointed out "that this facility was valued by rail customers from a wide catchment area; and that there would now be extra pressure on the conductors on the train. This could easily lead to fare evasion and to less time for the conductors to help, advise and inform passengers - so all passengers on the Ipswich - Lowestoft line would suffer, not just those boarding at Saxmundham. Mr Garrod also pointed out that, until December 31st, travel agency customers purchasing Eurostar, ferry or airline tickets could also buy a rail ticket to London, the port or the airport at the same time. Withdrawal of this facility would almost certainly lead to less business for the railways, if customers drove or went by coach to Ebbsfleet, to the seaport or the airport. Mr Chivers' reply is awaited." TG

Norfolk Orbital

Just before Christmas, Network Rail announced that they are prepared to countenance an 'occasional use' crossing reconnecting at Sheringham The Bittern Line with the privately owned North Norfolk Railway (NNR). This will make possible the running of special trains to and from the national system to the NNR, thereby benefiting all parties including the tourist business of north east Norfolk.

This statement was particularly welcomed by David Bill of the Norfolk Orbital Railway Project (NORP), whose long term aim is to return railway services to Melton Constable and Fakenham by linking with Dereham and Wymondham to the south, and Cromer and North Walsham to the east. Thus it would be possible to travel from Norwich to Norwich without retracing steps, should you so wish. If this scheme fires you with enthusiasm then NORP would love to hear from you. Just write to: *HMCFR Ltd, The Railway Institute, Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR24 2DA*. Surveyors, engineers and mega-millionaires are especially welcome! CB

The 2007 RAIL-USERS CONFERENCE: 'Thank You'

Our Chairman, Peter Wakefield, has asked me to offer a big 'thank you' for the immensely encouraging support of the Rail User Groups Conference back in November. It was wonderful to see so many delegates present, especially from East Anglia. The feedback thus far has been mostly highly complimentary, happily, with the criticism very constructive. The National Executive Committee is scrutinising these comments and fully expects many of the conclusions to be reflected in forthcoming national meetings. So perhaps we had better attend some of them in 2008 and find out! CB

A 'Sound' Supporter Departs: RIP

Early November saw the death of one of RailFuture's long term supporters, a man whose life warranted and duly received obituary status in several national newspapers. I refer to Peter Handford, who enjoyed an illustrious career as a first-choice sound engineer in the film industry, working with some of the world's best known directors and producers. However, unless you are prone to scrutinising seemingly unending film credits, I suspect you, like me, came to know his name through the extensive series of recordings of 1950's-

60's steam trains issued on the Argo-Transacord record label. Quite simply, Peter Handford captured the steam era with the microphone, in a way that parallels that of Colin Gifford with the camera: a loving melding of art and skill. Happily for us, it's an output which like the film work, will greatly outlive him, not least because all his railway master tapes are now in the care of the National Railway Museum. Peter Handford was 88. CB

Off our patch.....but of possible interest

With our Government, Train Operating Companies and Network Rail always wondering from where the next million pounds investment is coming, it seems amazing that Deutsche Bahn(DB), wholly owned by the German Government, has the money (and desire) to buy a British company. But it does: in mid January news emerged that DB had bought Laing Rail, and through it, Chiltern Trains; the deal also involves joint shares in London Overground with MTR, and the new open-access operator, Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway. Well, if nothing else, they'll learn how to run a railway from a much tighter purse than home territory expects, and in so doing help fight off some of the eager private companies nipping at their heels for federal passenger franchises. CB

And here's where to write with all that news and comment, adverse or otherwise: Editor, Chris Burton, 79 Tenison Road, Cambridge, CB1 2DG / cfb79ten@googlemail.com 01223 352327. or Nick Dibben, see details below. Either of us would love to hear from you, especially you Eastern East Anglians! Deadline for next issue is Monday 5 May 2008

Dates for your Diary

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
23 February 2008 at Little St Mary's Church, LStM Lane, Cambridge.

ALSO – special meetings for local members in the various towns and cities around the region over the coming year. These will be notified to you, personally. We very much want your feedback!!



the national independent voice for rail users
www.railfuture.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

BRANCH OFFICERS

Chairman: Peter Wakefield
7 Hollymount, St Matthews Street, Cambridge CB1 1QD
01223 352364
petawake@yahoo.com

Vice Chairman: Peter Lawrence
3 Hellesdon Road, Norwich NR6 5EB
01603 627217
pandwlawrence@waitrose.com

Secretary: Nick Dibben
24 Bure Close, St Ives PE27 3FE
Tel: 01480495101,
nick.dibben@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Lewis Buckingham
25 Drury Road, Colchester CO2 7UY

Membership Secretary: Clara Zilahi
31 Wimsbotsham Road, Downham Market PE38 9PE