

raileast

THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

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Summer is here?

Welcome to RE and, yes, we hope, summer! At least it might brighten up the financial gloom which has blighted the world since last year and is now affecting the railway. Ticket revenue has dropped, especially in expense account First Class, with some Train Operating Companies complaining that their Franchise agreement is unsustainable. Meanwhile Railfuture continues to actively lobby about sustaining investment especially on infrastructure projects, with their medium to long term benefits.

Part of this involves contact with national and local government: in this context Peter Lawrence, Peter Wakefield and your Editor were invited to meet a prospective Liberal Party Parliamentary candidate in Norwich, where also we have been meeting local Broadland councillors and the Deputy Chairman of Conservative Party, Bob Neill MP, when he visited the area in early May. We covered many issues during both these meetings, both local and national.

Anyway, credit crunch or not, RailEast *is* giving full value with another twelve page issue. So please, whatever it moves you to think or say, do respond, particularly our female readers. One thing we are looking at is including pictures, but only if they reproduce well. Either way, we really do want to reflect membership views when we tackle Train Operating Companies (TOCs), Network Rail (NR) or politicians. Contact details on the back page, as ever. CB

AGM Bury St Edmunds: Guest Speaker, Jonathan Tyler(JT)

When it comes to the intricacies of timetabling, Jonathan Tyler must be the premiere *independent* expert with experience dating deep into BR days, and including a period in the higher echelons at BR Headquarters in London. He is probably amongst the most eloquent too, as our members at the Annual General Meeting discovered and enjoyed.

The Swiss 'Taktfahrplan' (rhythmic timetabling) system, where consistent, predictable connections are created at various 'nodal points', is his great speciality. All very passenger friendly stuff and largely unknown at any time in the United Kingdom. In fact, Jonathan claimed that here in the UK there was no measure for what actually constituted 'a good timetable'. Tyler, I should add, uses exactly the same software as Swiss Railways(SBB) when working as a consultant, especially for the Association of Train Operating

Companies (ATOC) and Network Rail.

British timetabling policy largely concentrates on offering the customer what the privatised railway "logistics chain" can profitably cope with, drawing an analogy with our supermarkets. Maximising revenue rather than the niceties of connecting services is the yardstick. So, should *this* be "the measure of a good timetable"?

In failing to meet 'its obligations' to consider connections, integration and value for money, asserted JT, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) was in dereliction of its duty. Yet, he reminded us, train achieves 60-70% modal share to and from London with 10-15% generally over the rest of the country. His core belief appeared to be that this latter figure would grow substantially if non-London bound trains connected consistently with London services. After much lively questioning, the Meeting seemed to be largely in agreement with him. CB

NEWS ITEMS (and there's a lot of them)

East Midland Train Cancellations

The provision of a reliable Sunday service from Norwich to Liverpool continues to cause concern. Various reasons get cited, yet this problem has continued for far too many years for it to be tolerated much longer. But Railfuture knows full well just how ambitious EMT are for this route, in spite of the straight-jacket franchise to which they signed up. In their plans for growth we support them wholly. But please, get this Sunday business sorted. CB

Community tidy up March Station

Nick Dibben reports that twenty local volunteers responded to a call by Fenland District Council Street Pride Group to help tidy up parts of March Station. Working alongside representatives from NXEA and Network Rail, the area between the former Wisbech Line platforms was cleared of the extensive and unsightly vegetation."

This is activity to be encouraged as it helps create a good impression for both the railway and, in this case, the town of March. Details of future events can be obtained from Jeanette Milner, at Fenland District Council. ND

Intercity Express Project: For Cambridge and Kings Lynn?

Back in February the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that Agility Trains (of which Hitachi is 60%) were the preferred bidder for the new 'standard' Inter-city-urban train. Whether the project will actually reach full production is a moot point thus far; and the technical discussion well beyond the remit of this journal. But the IEP Press Release did reaffirm that Kings Cross to Cambridge (Kings Lynn?) will be a recipient, but after the East Coast Main Line and Paddington to Bristol have their new kit.

Which naturally leads many of us to muse over what exactly will become of the

current franchise (First Capital Connect) when it ceases (2015), and when Thameslink and IEP become reality (?).

These days one ticket from Cambridge to Kings Cross will pass-muster on any of the four FCC trains per hour over that route. If the franchise is split will the non-stops become a premium (still more expensive) IEP service to the current Kings Cross, with the remainder defaulting to Kings Cross Thameslink? Will tickets cover both services. Indeed, will one or more of these non-stop services still head north to Ely and Kings Lynn? And what of overcrowding: consigned to history?

While these and other questions will need answering, at the moment absolutely nobody knows for sure. But for those of us depending on this service; well, we had better read future announcements particularly closely. Maybe tell our MP and the Department for Transport exactly what we don't want to see. After all, as reported elsewhere in this issue, big plans are also afoot for seriously upgrading the NXEA Liverpool St-Stansted Airport-Cambridge route.

Why who knows, it might even become truly competitive in journey time and value-for-money with the route to Kings Cross! Yes, if long term the future looks good, perhaps short term, financially, it's a trifle fragile. CB

Hi-tech information for NXEA

National Express East Anglia have introduced a new intranet information system for their staff to keep them informed of what is happening on the railway. It should be especially useful at time of major disruption as the latest information and emergency timetables can be circulated to key staff. NXEA are intending to extend the system to adjacent train operators so they too can be kept informed about train connections. NXEA hope that the days of staff not knowing what is happening are now over.

Do you have direct experience of this system? Has it made a difference? Do let us know if you feel staff are now able to provide more information when things are delayed. ND

Better bus connections at Huntingdon

Stagecoach now run buses every 20 minutes all day from Huntingdon Station to St Ives and onto Cambridge, rather than just in the peak hours. FCC and Stagecoach are working on through ticketing and St Ives should shortly re-appear as a rail destination! The Branch complained about the lack of publicity when Plusbus was introduced at Huntingdon Station earlier this year. Our concern has clearly been taken on board - there are posters advertising the new service around the station including a large floor map in the ticket office showing the bus link. ND

Further Freight From Felixstowe

Despite the recession The Port of Felixstowe and First Gbrf recently welcomed

the start of a new service to and from the port. This will be the 27th daily rail departure from the Port, and is operated by First GBRf, on behalf of The Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC),

The destination for this new 22 wagon train is Hams Hall, near Birmingham. It's the third daily scheduled service to this location, and MSC's second contract service to Hams Hall. Operating from Monday to Saturday each week, the service increases First GBRf services operating from Felixstowe to a total of five intermodal trains per day. May there be many more. CB

Future train services

With additional rolling stock arriving on National Express East Anglia over the next few years on both the Great Eastern and West Anglia routes, the train company will be looking to develop new timetables with possible extra services. A 3 month consultation period with local stakeholders including rail user groups is planned over the summer.

What new services would you like to see? Please write and tell us, but not before reading the next item. ND

Big Infrastructure Plans for West Anglia Route

Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon told parliament that government expects continued growth in demand for transport within the East of England, including the Stansted Airport corridor. Work carried out by the Department for Transport shows a business case for a package of significant enhancements to the West Anglia Main Line which could be implemented between 2014 and 2019. A list of infrastructure enhancements that would add the most significant benefits to the route has already been drawn up and will be the subject of detailed development work by Network Rail between now and 2014. This list includes:

- *Grade separation of Coppermill Junction, south of Tottenham Hale, to segregate the routes to Stratford and to Liverpool Street*
- *Four-tracking of the constrained stretch from Coppermill Junction through Tottenham Hale, plus significant alterations at Tottenham Hale station*
- *Possible improvements at Cheshunt to facilitate improved service resilience*
- *An additional track from Tottenham Hale to Northumberland Park to permit the reversal of Stratford Shuttle/London Overground trains from Stratford*
- *Remodelling of the track layout at Broxbourne and the Hertford East*

branch junction, which is a key bottleneck

- *Line speed improvements to 100mph to be the 'ruling train speed' along the route*
- *Removal of road and footpath crossings, with alternative crossings provided*
- *A second tunnel on the Stansted Airport branch and platform capacity improvements at the airport station*
- *Signalling changes, to allow for extended hours of operation of services to Stansted Airport, without disruption to route maintenance requirements*

Although the report backs four-tracking part of the route, it says that this is only one component of an improvement strategy and a package combining a relatively short stretch of four-tracking combined with other improvements is likely to deliver the most benefits. The DfT has looked at a lengthier stretch of four tracking, potentially as far north as Brimsdown or Broxbourne. But it says parts of this section of the route have a constrained layout and would be particularly expensive to upgrade while delivering relatively few benefits.

The West Anglia line has witnessed passenger growth of around 30% during the past 10 years and further increases are forecast in the longer term. The number of passengers at Stansted Airport using rail has grown steadily and is already the highest proportion at a UK airport. ND

Network Rail plans for Control Period 4.... Or at last jam today...?

Control period 4 extends from 2009 to 2014 and apart from routine maintenance work, a large number of enhancements are planned and 'funded'(?). **These include continued work on the cross-country freight route** enabling much longer and more frequent higher gauge freight trains to run via Bury, and Ely, to Peterborough connecting with the about to be refurbished 'Joint Line' via Spalding to Doncaster and the Leicester route onwards to the West Coast Main line at Nuneaton.

New loops are planned at Peterborough together with a rearranged junction at Werrington, possibly a flyover line. Ely will be 'enhanced' and a decision still pends on track doubling to Soham, as is the proposal for the Bacon Factory Curve joining the East Suffolk Line to the Stowmarket line at Ipswich. ND

The long awaited passing loop at Beccles is booked for installation, as is the reinstatement of double lead junctions at East Suffolk Junction, Ipswich and Haughley. However, **there do seem to be unresolved funding issues**

regarding the loop. This is a vital part of the urgent resignalling of the line *now* (or not at all). So, surely Network Rail should just get on with it? PW

The island platform at Cambridge *is* to be built. Without it there will not be the capacity for the 12 car trains planned on both routes to London, nor the extra services planned, for example, from Stansted to Birmingham. Where needed platform lengthening for 12 coach trains is to take place at all stations from Cambridge, to and including Royston, and to Liverpool Street. But not, sadly at Waterbeach! As *Arriva Cross Country* is aiming for 4 car trains (as well as a half hourly service) platforms will lengthen at Stamford. PW

Peterborough station is to be comprehensively rebuilt. Included is a new island platform for East Anglian services to the west of the present island platform. The current platform 3 will be extended westwards to the up fast through line whilst platform 4 will in turn extend eastwards to the *down* fast through line. This will transform both platforms into wide, spacious *and* safer public areas. A new station entrance is to be built on the western side. PW

Hitchin Flyover *is* to be built, as plans recently exhibited in Hitchin confirmed. A new route will be taken to the north of the present junction, over the ECML to a junction near Stotfold Road on the Cambridge branch. This will make the down line to Cambridge slightly longer: we have expressed a reservation about the fact that the viaduct section of the new route will be limited to 50mph, thus making it difficult to give an enhanced journey time in the future. The new line will also leave from the ECML down slow line, making for a conflicting move as fast trains cross from the fast to slow before joining the flyover line. The original plans showed the flyover line leaving **between** the fast and slow lines, with junctions onto it off both, the latter slewed around the viaduct. The present junction will be renewed and upgraded to provide operational flexibility. See website: hitchin@networkrail.co.uk . PW

(So much exciting stuff, but will NR prove immune to the credit crunch? Ed)

Network Rail have published their route utilisation strategy on electrification which can be seen in its entirety at:
see <http://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=4359&NewsAreaID=2&SearchCategoryID=2>
We may well comment on the East Anglia dimension in our next issue, No.143.

First Capital Connect (FCC): New Timetable

John Henderson reports that "on 16 May the Great Northern saw the biggest change to the timetable for 15 years, mostly affecting FCC peak time services between Kings Cross, Cambridge and Peterborough. To run the new services, FCC has taken delivery of five Class 321s, cascaded from London Midland. FCC is also reducing the stopping service between Welwyn GC and Letchworth, to

free-up trains and track capacity for the new service; stations on that route will be served by semi-fast trains. But there are inevitable losers as well as winners.”

“The winners are the stations that generate most of FCC’s revenue: Cambridge, Hitchin and Stevenage. Two morning trains from Cambridge to London are lengthened to 12 carriages and these stop once, at Royston. Whilst there are no 12-car trains in the evening, two trains will now run non-stop to Cambridge to similar effect, hopefully. Hitchin now gets non-stop trains to and from London, while Stevenage – which already has some non-stop trains – will get more. These extra Hitchin and Stevenage trains are being created by stopping fast Peterborough trains. It’s great news for Hitchin and Stevenage despite a small increase in seating capacity. Other winners – though with slightly smaller prizes – are Welwyn North and Knebworth. Those stations are getting better peak period services including some new London semi-fasts to and from Royston.”

“But what of the losers? These are the stations that inherited fast services from British Rail, but are still second division in terms of income. Peak time trains are taking 5-10 minutes longer to / from London, due to new stops, mainly Stevenage and Hitchin. Northbound, passengers need to get to Kings Cross at least 10 minutes earlier as there will be more competition for seats. There is a small sweetener for passengers from Huntingdon and St Neots – some of their trains will be lengthened to 12 cars – so in the mornings it’ll be easier to find a seat. But by Kings Cross the trains may be fuller than they were due to those extra stops. Another loser is Arlesey where the morning off-peak service is being cut to one train per hour.” JH

To this Peter Wakefield adds that chronic overcrowding north of Cambridge has been eased by an 8 coach service to Ely at 18.05 pre-empting the hitherto packed 18.12 to Norwich, now retimed at 18.09. Between 17.50 hrs and 18.40 no less than five services of 22/23 coaches in total go to Ely. To this is added a limited stop 8 coach service at 19.05 to Kings Lynn. So, overall, very real improvements. But there is one caveat: it seems that non-stop services to Kings Cross are slipping from an enticing 45 minutes to around 50 minutes duration. Temporary speed restrictions are becoming a problem, especially at the northern approach to Hitchin, and now Harston. May these be quickly removed – even if it requires substitution!! PW/CB

Well Done The Railway:

On Sunday 17 May NXEast Anglia, First Capital Connect and Network Rail displayed a most laudable, if uncharacteristic, flexibility. Realising that a lot of Cambridge United football fans would be wanting to get to Wembley that day, Network Rail responded to pressure and ceased track possessions at 08.00 hrs. And the result: a series of packed eight and twelve coach trains to Kings Cross and Liverpool Street and some much needed revenue. So well done everybody and more power to the 'can do' philosophy and the image of the railway! CB

And Again: Jerry Alderson writes to “praise the rail industry and British

Transport Police for their common sense attitude following a fatality”

“On 26th March as I was leaving Cambridge station on the 08:45 to Kings Cross we were informed by the train driver that following a fatality at Knebworth 30 minutes earlier, we would be using the Hertford Loop and our train journey would be significantly delayed (inevitable when trying to squeeze six tracks’ worth of trains onto two). It was so good to see the railway getting a plan in place so quickly.

However, by the time we reached Stevenage, the driver explained that we would actually be continuing through Knebworth, albeit at lower speed. At Knebworth station I could see several police officers on the island platform beside a stretcher with a body bag upon it.

No doubt some people will say that passengers should not have been presented with such a sight, but a residential street would not be closed to allow undertakers to remove the body of someone who died in their sleep. The emergency services clearly understood the need to minimise inconvenience to passengers, which is something that would not have been the case a few years ago. They were absolutely right.” JA

Our Chairman's Views and News

Our next meeting is in Ipswich on Saturday June 20th 2009. at 14.15.

The venue is the Ipswich Institute at 15 Tavern Street, **IP1 3AA**

Full details on the enclosed leaflet. But our NXEA Guest Speaker means you will get bang up-to-date news about the Great Eastern Main Line, Beccles loop and much else. In fact, you can quiz him about all aspects of the service.

So do come along to help make this a well attended meeting. PW

Job losses? Service changes? Better service?

At the end of last year there were reports of imminent job losses at *National Express EastAnglia (NXEA)*. These were reported to be from the platform, booking offices and from on-train catering. A letter was sent to Andrew Chivers, the MD of *NXEA* pointing out that large stations, such as Cambridge, already had a minimal staff presence on the platforms and that the booking office was already working flat out. We thought it perverse that the recently staffed offices at Attleborough, Wymondham etc were to be de-staffed when it is clear the train conductors would be unable to collect all the fares.

Mr Chivers reply was very encouraging in that he confirmed that neither Cambridge booking office staffing nor the part time staffing arrangements at Wymondham would be changed. By implication we assume that the other part time booking offices in Norfolk would remain too. PW

East West Rail Link leaflets....do your bit.

10,000 leaflets and postcards were printed and so far we have distributed over 7,000. There has been a very positive response to the leaflet from the public,

8www.railfuture.org.uk

councillors and MPs. The website has proved to be popular.

If you haven't sent your postcard off to your MP, please do not forget to do so. Perhaps your partner could do likewise. The more reminders the powers-that-be have, the more likely we are to get the route reopened.

On the website there is a 'supporters' section. Please sign into that if you are able, even though you already belong to Railfuture.

Chiltern Railways recently outlined their plans for re-building the Oxford to Bicester line to create an Oxford to London, Marylebone, route. You can download their plans from www.Railfuture.org.uk/Ox-Cam Additionally, the EWR Consortium (EWRC) / Steer Davis Gleave plans for the various options to get from Hitchin to Bedford can be viewed at the same site.

Below is the response the branch made to the Consortium regarding the SDG report.

Railfuture welcomes the report commissioned by the EWRC

- **We commend the decision not to take the evaluation of the "Northern Route" via Manton further.**
- **We welcome the development of the option to route via Luton and Stevenage. The connectivity possibilities of this routing appear to be very high.**
- **We approve of the decision to opt for Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich as final service destinations. We thus support the further investigation of option 1c.**
- **We would urge more work to evaluate the option to use the erstwhile Bedford to Hitchin direct route. We feel that this route may well maximize the potential for the fastest end to end journey times.**
- **Bedford is a major population centre and we feel that there must be very compelling reasons for the town not to be on the core EWRL.**

Other good news is that the East of England Development Agency and the East of England Regional Assembly are now members of the East-West Rail Link Consortium. We will put a list of the Consortium members on the website soon.

We have started a website photo gallery of the various parts of the EWRL possible routes. If you have any digital photos of the projected routes, please email them to me for possible inclusion. Thank you. PW

Cambridgeshire Transport Commission

With rejection of congestion charging in other parts of the UK, and opinion polls showing doubts within the county, Cambridgeshire County Council has formed a "Transport Commission" to 'examine the County Council's Transport Innovation Fund bid and suggest where the proposals might be modified'.

CCC website says: “ **Invitations to join the Commission have been sent to organisations including Cambridgeshire's City and District Councils, Addenbrooke's Hospital, the two Universities, and many others.**”

It seems our elected representatives are unable, or afraid, to make difficult decisions, hence the call on unelected people drawn from the above to provide a so-called independent panel. Well, needless to say, in spite of the above reservations, we have made our contribution which included the need for **new stations at Chesterton, Addenbrooke's and 'Wisbech**. We drew attention to the need for better longer distance rail services, and for the County Council to actively promote and support the County's needs in:

The planning of Thameslink services

The East West rail link to Milton Keynes, Oxford and beyond

Supporting Arriva Cross Country's aspiration for a half hourly service from Cambridge to Birmingham

Support for East Midlands trains desire to increase the capacity of their Norwich – Liverpool service..

We also called for recognition of the work of Network Rail and the DfT in providing substantial extra freight capacity across the county from the Haven Ports to Peterborough and onward to Yorkshire and the West Midlands. Thus providing huge relief to the A14 and M11 roads. **In other words, no more calls for huge extra road expenditure.** PW

Network Rail (NR) under pressure regarding Bus-Substitution

NR are not only under pressure from Train Operating Companies and rail users over weekend travel pain, but now also from Transport Minister Lord Adonis. From a recent trip to Japan he learnt that for the past 25 years their railway has done *all* its maintenance at night. They were forced to when in earlier times daytime engineering disruption caused such an outcry that the authorities forced a change of practice. Now everything happens between midnight and 06.00hrs. NR boss, Ian Coucher, is said to want the same, and to help, a new fleet of 26 wagons for operation in the narrow tunnels is due for delivery in the autumn.

So, with more than a bit of resistance, NR are being forced to reappraise their work practices and bring the vaunted 'Seven Day Railway' to reality. And about time too cries everybody...well, apart from coach drivers! CB

And Talking of Weekend Blockades.....

We recently sent a letter to Andrew Chivers (NXEA) and Elaine Holt (now ex-FCC), commenting about the recent concurrent closure of the ECML at Stevenage and the GEML at various places. One result was *Hull Trains, Grand Central, NXEA* from Norwich and *FCC* from King's Lynn all feeding into the 2 trains per hour *NXEA*, Cambridge to Liverpool Street service. In other words the up to 44 carriages per hour that normally run from Cambridge to London were reduced to 16. Aggravating this was much extra traffic connected with two major sporting events in London. A poor travel experience. So what to do?

We suggested that when the Royston route was closed, FCC Kings Lynn trains become NXEA **through trains** to Liverpool Street. We hope NXEA/FCC can be nice to each other and resolve this in favour of the passenger. (*A similar situation occurred twice last March when both routes south out of Scotland were closed. NR was heavily criticised. Ed*)

The uncharitable might think that it is easier (more profitable?), for TOCs to take the NR disruption money than sit down and think about making the the passenger's journey seamless. PW

To this, we received a reply from Mr Chivers which affirms NXEA are looking at the issue raised above, to see whether this sort of through running from Lynn to Liverpool Street is achievable. He points to a variety of potential impediments ranging from driver route knowledge, their terms and conditions, are timetable paths available, fleet maintenance schedules, costs of operation etc. All need to be taken into account. But we and they on the case! PW

Elaine Holt Leaves First Capital Connect

We cannot be alone in being saddened by the rather speedy exit from FCC of Managing Director, Elaine Holt. Her charm, enthusiasm and utter professionalism did much to win support for the company when times were tricky. We wish her well and hope her talents will not be lost to the railway for very long. Development Director, Jim Morgan, is her interim replacement. CB

*** RAILFUTURE IN NORTHALLERTON ***

Saturday 4 July is the date of the 2009 Railfuture Summer Conference, and County Hall, Northallerton, the venue. Although full details are on the leaflet accompanying this newsletter, suffice to say that the Guest Speaker will be Tom Clift, Managing Director of Grand Central.

Now there's a story to hear: from a very painful, embarrassing birth through relative robustness to recession; and all in two and a half years! Enough to wither the most gung-ho of entrepreneurs. But not Tom or his team Come and hear him along with the rest of the full programme. And for contrast; this is also a wonderful opportunity to indulge yourself in the verdant beauty of Wensleydale and support the valley's very own railway company. A great weekend ,I'd say. Book now. CB

*** A Journey Brought to Book ***

And to finish on a lighter note: apparently, Lord Adonis is not alone in travelling the rail system and with well publicised conclusions: '*Eleven Minutes Late: A Train Journey to the Soul of Britain*' by Matthew Engel recounts a similar foray across the mainstream to the extremities of our railway. Like Adonis, Engel generally rates the staff rather highly, but not always it seems the companies employing them.

Particularly pleasing to learn is that despite getting to Devon, Cornwall, the Scottish West Highlands, and other well chronicled beauty spots, Engel was actually most enraptured by the "sheer English-Rose tinted loveliness" of the Lowestoft to Norwich line on a "limpid-clear springtime evening". He even added Needham Market and Stowmarket to his list of favourite stations! Why? Ah, I'm afraid you'll have to buy a copy of his book to find that out. Published 1 May by Macmillan at £14.99 it was well featured in the Financial Times. **CB**

And now for the bits that didn't make the printers deadline.

Meeting the Boss: On 6th May a delegation from Railfuture had a 40-minute meeting with Transport Minister Lord Andrew Adonis. Topics covered included fares and ticketing, capacity and overcrowding, rolling stock issues, train design, funding and finance, NATA refresh issues, light rail and the recession. Lord Adonis appeared throughout to be attentive and receptive to many of the issues raised. There had been insufficient time to discuss all the points that the delegation wished to raise, so a number of papers were left with the Minister for future consideration. *Tony Smale Railfuture Web Newsletter*

Advenza Freight Ltd, a relative new freight company, was in the High Court recently answering a Petition presented by HM Revenue and Customs. Happily the case was dismissed after the appropriate settlement was received. This is very good news especially as a new flow to and from Tilbury to West Burton power station had started on 1 June. Let us hope the company will manage its cashflow a little more efficiently in future. **CB**

Seeking Cheaper Fares

Did you know that Transport Direct journey-planning website: www.transportdirect.info is a very good route to the cheapest fares on offer? Type in your start and destination points and your travel dates/times, then wait for the search engine to come up with a range of fares and their availability. Transport Direct claims to have just recorded the 50 millionth user of its website tools.

In a recent survey, 92 per cent of users said they find the Transport Direct site easy to use; almost half of users were given a quicker route for a familiar journey. Real time information on road and rail disruption allows travellers to avoid unnecessary delays to their journey while extensive maps show the locations of bus stops and train stations, and also suggest where traffic congestion may occur. *DfT press release/ CB*

Change of Minister

Continuing the time-honoured practice of changing Department for Transport political almost as often as the weather changes, Geoff Hoon fell foul of the political tempest which engulfed politics in early June. As result, the good news is that Lord Adonis has been promoted to Secretary of State for Transport, Hoon's old job. In Adonis' place as Minister of State for Transport, is Sadiq Khan, part of whose direct responsibility will Crossrail.

NB: Remember, the views expressed in these pages do not necessarily reflect official RAILFUTURE policy.

All of your comments and contributions to: Editor, Chris Burton, / cfb79ten@googlemail.com or Nick Dibben, see details below. Either of us would love to hear from you, especially those of you from eastern side of East Anglian! Deadline for next issue is Saturday 29 August 2009 (the correct date this time!)

**Dates for
your Diary**

BRANCH
MEETINGS 2009 /
10

IPSWICH: Sat
20 June.
14.15hrs, Ipswich
Inst. 15 Tavern St
IP1 3AA

NORWICH:
26 September

CAMBRIDGE:
5 December

BURY **St**
EDMUNDS: 27
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www.railfuture.org.uk

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