



THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

www.railfuture.org.uk

www.railfuture.org.uk/east.html

Number 143

September 2009

From the Editor:

Hello again. Well, whatever you might be thinking about our summer, I bet you, like most of us, were pretty confused about the true reason for the recent rail strikes in our area. Happily the dispute appears to have been resolved and not a moment too soon. Strikes are usually a loser for all concerned.

The possible reinstatement of train services to Wisbech, advocated by many of us for some years now, takes up quite a bit of this issue which it deserves. Wisbech is a town whose economic malaise is at least in part down to lack of direct rail connection southward to Ely, Cambridge and London, and indeed westward to Peterborough. Wisbech needs action, very soon.

And before I make room for other contributions, a hope: with inflation pretty well zero I would like think there will be no overall hike of ticket prices in the New Year. Some hope, I hear you say. But if you feel the same way (and who doesn't), the time to lobby your MP and local news media is right now, and well before our next issue at the end of November. By then we will know the truth. But don't wait for the announcement! CB

**Branch Meeting: Norwich Saturday 26 September at
14.15hours**

Guest Speaker: Steven Ashling of Network Rail East Anglia

Full details back page and enclosed flyer

NEWS:

Senior Railcard – How to get a Discount

Recently I was forwarded an informative table which I'm pleased to reproduce. If you are not of the 'grey persuasion!' but more concerned with 16-25, Family & Friends, or Disabled Persons Railcards, do check availability with your local local authority; you may be very pleasantly surprised at the price.

For those of you entitled to purchase a Senior Railcard, remember: if you buy it online or at the station, it will cost £26.00. It can be cheaper, as you will see,

if purchased through your local authority, though not all offer a discount. I do hope you find it useful. Now for the table. CB

District or equivalent Council

Breckland.....	£18.00	
Babergh.....	£18.00	
Broadland.....	£18.00	
Cambridge.....	£19.20	
East Cambridgeshire	£20.00	
Fenland.....	£20.00	
Forest Heath.....	£19.00	
Kings Lynn & W.Norfolk..		“Do not issue Railcards”
Mid Suffolk	£19.50	
North Norfolk.....	£19.00	
Norwich.....	£19.00.	
Peterborough.....	£21.50*	
St. Edmundsbury.....	£18.00	
South Cambridgeshire.....	£19.20	
South Norfolk.....	£18.00	
Suffolk Coastal.....	£18.00	Oddly, it makes you ineligible for the Bus Pass.

National
Tendring

Only a small discount

The following make no mention of the Senior Railcard on their website, which does not necessarily mean they do not offer a discount. Always enquire though.....or campaign for!

- Colchester
- Great Yarmouth
- Huntingdonshire
- Ipswich
- North Hertfordshire
- Uttlesford
- Waveney

* Peterborough also offers Young Persons and Disabled RC at a discount.

FCC Station improvements

First Capital Connect continues to carry out improvement work at some of its stations. Over 200 parking spaces and additional cycle parking have been added at Royston station. On the East Coast Main Line at Arlesey , the booking hall has been redecorated whilst at Biggleswade the work to create new

waiting rooms and toilets, within the currently disused buildings on the London bound platform, has started. The train operator intends to upgrade 9 stations by the end of the year. ND

Are we satisfied?

Passenger Focus has issued the results of its latest passenger satisfaction survey. This is carried out twice a year with nearly 26,000 passengers asked for their views on stations, trains and staff. Nationally the results show that overall satisfaction levels are 81% with just 8% dissatisfied or considering their journey poor. There are, however, areas where major improvement is required: around 40% felt this should include whether car parking, value-for-money fares and availability of staff were satisfactory. Our local train operators tended to follow the national results as shown in the table below: ND

	Overall Satisfaction	Strongest areas % Satisfied	Weak areas % Satisfied
<i>First Capital Connect</i>	76%	Station staff (86%) Journey time (82%) Frequency (74%) Connections (74%)	Availability of staff on train (11%) Train toilets (24%) Value for money (31%)
<i>National Express East Anglia</i>	76%	Station staff (80%) Connections (79%) Journey time (78%)	Availability of staff on train (23%) Train toilets (25%) Value for money (28%) Dealing with delay (29%)
<i>East Midlands Trains</i>	80%	Station staff (87%) Punctuality (84%) Journey time (83%) Station information (82%) Personal security (79%)	Dealing with delay (37%) Value for money (45%) Train toilets (45%)
<i>Cross Country</i>	85%	Station staff (87%) Punctuality (87%) Journey time (86%) Station information (86%)	Luggage space (51%) Value for money (51%)
<i>National Express East Coast</i>	87%	Station information (90%) Frequency (90%) Journey time (90%) Punctuality (89%)	Train toilets (45%) Value for money (54%)

First Capital Connect: not getting the message across?

Jerry Alderson writes to say "In RailEast 141 (April 2009) I praised the BTP for its common sense and the railway for keeping passengers informed following a fatality at Knebworth. This time I offer the railway only brickbats."

The date was Tuesday 18th August, and another sad fatality, this time at Downham Market. Jerry takes up the story: "dozens of us stood at Waterbeach station (located between Ely and Cambridge) with no idea when we might catch a train (or a dreaded replacement bus). The information screens showed trains that then rushed past *without* stopping." "...the Tannoy kept repeating that "all trains between Ely and King's Lynn were suspended" but did not mention our station, Waterbeach."

"I used the brand new Help Point to request information but the poor chap on the other end had no idea. I enquired whether a diesel train from Norwich or Peterborough might be able to stop and pick us up." However, this was apparently "not possible as the line was blocked from Ely to King's Lynn. Do these people not have route maps in front of them? Fortunately one of the other travellers had an iPhone and could see that the trains were stranded at King's Lynn but the train from Norwich to Cambridge would indeed be stopping at Waterbeach at 7:42, and it did.It is a sorry state of affairs when a passenger with a high-tech gizmo has more idea of what is going on than the railway staff actually employed to provide information!"

"I hope that FCC will look at all of their procedures for dealing with their customers and see how they can be improved." JA/CB

Support for new timetable

A big "thank you" if you were one of the many members responding to our consultation on the proposed changes to the National Express East Anglia timetable. As described in the last Rail East, the major changes proposed reflect the additional rolling stock that is due to arrive over the next few years.

Probably the most radical is the ending of the 2 hourly through services between London and Lowestoft / Peterborough in exchange for an hourly service on the Lowestoft line and longer trains on other rural routes. Members supported these changes but expressed concerns on how tricky it might be to change trains at Ipswich, where a simple cross-platform change is required. (*see Ipswich bridge item.* CB)

Other comments included running trains from Peterborough through to Colchester, and additional trains from the West Anglia route through to Stratford.

These comments have been passed on to NXEA. Thanks again for responding

so promptly. ND

East Midlands draft Rail Utilisation Study (RUS)

Hot from the press is the Network Rail, draft Rail Utilisation Study (RUS) for the East Midlands, and very much embracing Stansted to Birmingham and Norwich to Liverpool services. It may be downloaded from the website thus: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=\RUS%20Documents\Route%20Utilisation%20Strategies\East%20Midlands&>

Overcrowding is recognised as a serious peak-hours problem between Peterborough and Cambridge, Leicester and Birmingham, and Nottingham and Liverpool.

The RUS analyses several solutions such as three/four coach trains between Stansted and Birmingham which, currently, is believed possible by juggling existing train rosters. However, selective door opening (SDO) will have to be installed on *all* Class 170 units as platforms at Whittlesee, Manea and Stansted are too short. Some platform lengthening might also be sanctioned. Most journey time reductions will result from infrastructure work associated with Felixstowe-Nuneaton gauge changes for freight traffic.

Between Liverpool and Nottingham services might become mostly three/four coaches, but remain two coach thereafter to Norwich as there is "sufficient capacity on existing services to address future growth". But is there? A further suggestion is the extension of the 13.52 Liverpool-Nottingham to Norwich, to fill the present gap. No plan exists for shortening journey times other than the "possibility" of cutting out the Sheffield stop, estimated to save 16 minutes.

This is though a draft document to which Railfuture East Anglia will be submitting a formal response. In the meantime, send your comments to Nick Dibben whose full contact details are on the back page. CB

nick.dibben@btinternet.com

Working together

Trevor Garrod writes to offer a "big thank you" to Railfuture members Clara Zilahi, Simon Hope and Mike Taylor who together with local members of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association (ESTA) conducted a survey of passengers in mid August on the two lines to Lowestoft.

Partly funded by Railfuture's Rail Defence Fund, it asked passengers the reason for their journey, how often they travelled, their final destination, whether they were travelling with young children, luggage, bicycles etc.

It was also explained that Lowestoft station might be moved 450 metres inland, if the regeneration company First East gets its way. Passengers were asked whether this would make them less likely, or more likely, to do this particular journey by train.

Hundreds of replies were received and a second week of surveys (from September 20th) will also seek the views of local commuters, students, school pupils etc using the trains. If you can help on a day between September 20th and 26th, please contact Rod Lock, The Beehive, Hall Road, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, NR32 3AW Tel: 01502 511715.

The vast majority of passengers were only too willing to give useful feedback on a range of transport issues, the outcome of which will greatly assist Railfuture/ESTA in their respective campaigns. TG

Meeting with Norwich City Councillor :

Trevor Garrard writes to say that he and Peter Wakefield had a very helpful discussion on August 2nd with Dr Rupert Read, Norwich City Councillor and Green Party candidate in the recent Norwich North by-election and European Parliament election.

"We set out the case for an East/West Rail Link and reopening the March - Wisbech line to passengers; together with enhancement of the Norwich - Liverpool service., The future plans of National Express East Anglia were also considered, as were issues of bus integration, consultation with users and demand-responsive transport.

Dr Read was very interested in the potential for more rail freight. We discussed plans to increase the capacity of the Felixstowe branch and improve capacity at Ipswich. The options for rail-borne freight to and from Yarmouth following the building of the outer harbour were also explored.

Railfuture is, of course, a non-party organisation, and we welcome opportunities to discuss transport with politicians of all the main parties in our region. In February, for example, Peter Lawrence and Trevor Garrod had a very interesting and productive meeting with Mr John Gummer MP.

In the coming months we also need to be engaging in dialogue with all local MPs and prospective candidates. There is a maximum of 9 months before the General Election.

If you are willing to help in this dialogue, please contact Peter Wakefield in the first instance (details on back page)." TG

East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)

If you Missed the Exhibition...

Curated by ESTA for the East Suffolk Line's 150th anniversary, it will again be on show, at the Long Shop Museum, Leiston, from October 4th till October 31st.

The Long Shop is a very interesting industrial museum in the centre of Leiston, open daily from 10.00 to 17.00 'till the end of October. On weekdays, buses from Saxmundham stop outside.

Telling NXEA...

ESTA's message to NXEA about their services plans from December 2010, following discussion in committee and consultation with members, is that we would accept an hourly Ipswich - Lowestoft service, in place of the present two-hourly Lowestoft - London trains, only if certain conditions were met.

These include the definite funding and construction of Beccles loop by 2012; the construction of a passenger lift at Ipswich and other measures to improve congestion at Ipswich. We also want to see two through trains each way to Liverpool Street. These could be combined with a through London -Yarmouth train - a concept also supported by the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association. Without these commitments, NXEA's promises are hedged with too many "ifs" and "buts." TG

Whither the Wherry Line?

Apparently not. After four years of reducing use 2008/9 saw a welcome leap of nearly 12% in passenger traffic over the Wherry Line from Norwich to Lowestoft and Yarmouth. Will the recently increased fuel tax sustain this?

Our Vice-Chairman, Peter Lawrence, asks, "Has the Credit Crunch changed the fortunes of the Wherry Lines? If so maybe now is the time to campaign for extra trains to serve Great Yarmouth particularly during the Summer months. Perhaps Great Yarmouth to Norwich Services should be linked with the Norwich to Cambridge service in order to provide better through facilities?"

The Wherry Line Community Rail Partnership (WCRP), apart from lobbying for better local services, also has the long term aim of restoring summer service trains from beyond of Peterborough to Yarmouth. After all, there are several sets of locomotive hauled charter coaches around the country available for hire. PL

Ipswich station: Assent to new bridge.

A big "thank you" to Andrew Gee, who pointed out that Ipswich Borough Council website confirms planning permission has been granted to the revised plans for lifts and new footbridge at the Norwich end of the station. This Platform 1 / 2 construction is in the approximate area of the current semi 'portakabin' Waiting Room. The existing bridge is to remain. As pointed out

elsewhere, the new bridge might prove critical if NXEA's proposals for the 2010/11 timetable reach fruition.

<http://online.ipswich.gov.uk/ppc/appnsearch.aspx> AG/CB

OUR CHAIRMAN'S VIEW:

Wisbech & the ATOC Connecting Communities Report

It is very pleasing that the mothballed branch from March to Wisbech has been included in the high level report recently issued by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) as one of the top 14 routes with a strong case for reconnecting the community to the national railway network. This is something we have been campaigning for for many years.

ATOC Report 'Connecting Communities':

The report was warmly welcomed and discussed at the most recent Branch Committee meeting. We were particularly pleased that the Wisbech line had been included. The discussion did raise the following points which I hope will be pursued at a later date:

- Rail freight companies are looking for sites in the area for a new freight depot. The reintroduction of freight on the line would help the business case.
- Cambridge was considered to be a better destination for passenger services. There are bay platforms at the station, and with the proposed station at Chesterton, would provide good links to employment centres. Employment centres in Peterborough are more spread out and less accessible from the station."
- The idea of a Park and Ride station near the A47 was supported

ATOC, in response to our enquiry as to what happens next, replied.....

"We are currently collating the replies to the report in order to be able to discuss the proposals in more detail with relevant organisations including Network Rail and the Department for Transport – and where appropriate the owners of heritage railways.

The next stage after that would be detailed engineering surveys and more detailed analysis of costs and benefits. At the launch of the report we made clear that this report represented a first stage of thinking. We said in our press release: "Over the next nine months ATOC will carry out further analysis with train operators, Network Rail and local authorities to validate the work so far undertaken, and to confirm those routes that would justify safeguarding.

Safeguarding would then be taken forward by Network Rail in conjunction with local authorities and involvement of the Department for Transport, through the Route Utilisation Strategy process.

The timescale for development, coupled with the need to make provision for funding (by local authorities and central Government) would mean that the schemes justified might be implemented from 2014 onwards (CP5 and beyond).” Sheree Dodds, ATOC

Wisbech and Fenland District Council (FDC):

On July 17th 2009, I was invited to represent the Branch at FDC's "Access to Services Review Team" meeting. Here the possibility of the line into Wisbech being reinstated as a part of the national railway passenger network was to be discussed. The "team" consisted of 5 councillors and the appropriate officer, representatives from NXEA, Railfuture and "the Bramley Line" heritage group.

The latter group argued strongly that a national reopening to Wisbech was not needed and outlined their plans for the future. We, of course, argued that a reconnection to the national network was *exactly* what Wisbech needed if its economic growth and quality of life was to be enhanced and sustained. Despite appreciating and indeed supporting the tireless work carried out in the past by this and various predecessor heritage groups, we could not agree to let this serious opportunity offered to the town by the ATOC report be passed up.

Railfuture and the NXEA representatives advised the committee that the FDC were not expected to fund the proposal but at this stage should urge their Council to support the ATOC proposal and further recommend to the Cambridgeshire County Council that it takes the proposal forward as the overall public transport authority, together with a nominated "Champion" for the scheme.

Below is a part of the statement made to FDC on July 17th:

"Wisbech is by far the largest town in the region unconnected to the national rail network. We have long advocated the resumption of passenger services, and are very encouraged by the great success of regeneration-led reopenings in South Wales and Scotland. In short the ATOC proposal delights us and we expect our elected politicians and public servants to push this scheme forward to a reopening before 2019. Most people would like to see a fast service developed to Cambridge home of high quality education, medical and employment opportunities. It would open Wisbech to the prospect of new employment opportunities together with an influx of new residents.

We are much taken by the tenacity of our elected representatives in the East West Rail Consortium and would expect nothing less from those in

Cambridgeshire for this project. We would urge the local authority to protect the route along its entire length and especially at the Wisbech end from any redevelopment." PW

National Strategic Freight Network (NSFN).

At the end of May the Department for Transport published a document entitled "Strategic Freight Network: The Longer Term Vision". This reiterates Network Rail's Control Period 4, of routes both into and within our region in the context of the national network.

These are:

- Felixstowe to Stratford and the North London Line via Colchester, and the diversionary route through Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket and Bishops Stortford to Stratford.
- Felixstowe to Bury St Edmunds, Ely, Peterborough, Nuneaton
- Peterborough to Spalding, Lincoln and Doncaster.

These routes will be upgraded to accommodate "the ideal optimum size freight train, travelling at appropriate line speed, without checks.." and..... "eliminate conflict/pinch points. This may require construction /reinstatement of chords, avoiding lines, investment of grade separated junctions."

The idea is that the NSFN will ultimately reflect the requirements of the national/international freight logistics business, with due consideration given to safeguarding valuable track alignments,connections and the like.

The document suggests that in CP5 (2014-19), further enhancements of the routes mentioned above should take place plus the electrification of Haughley Junction to Ely and Peterborough thence to Leicester and Nuneaton; Spalding, Lincoln and Doncaster. PW

Newmarket and counting

Very many thanks to the several Branch and MARPA members who stood on Newmarket station on Thursday April 23rd counting the numbers of passengers joining and leaving *every* single train. With 452 users recorded over the day, the station has certainly become busier since the introduction of the hourly service. This gives an approximate annual tally of 164,528.

Various deficiencies were noted, primarily the poor provision of platform shelters, plus unreliable information screens, inadequate signage to places of importance in and around the town, or any indication of walking routes from the station to the town centre (and vice versa).

Race days at Newmarket are long standing national sporting events of great social significance. Unlike other one-off events in East Anglia race days always seem to take NXEA by surprise, in spite of continual moans that a class 153 single car train just will not do. Hundreds were left behind at Newmarket after the July Meeting creating a rather nightmarish image of travel conditions for those 'lucky' enough to board. And if that were not enough, on reaching Cambridge the FCC non-stop for Kings Cross pulled out before their very eyes. Less than brilliant public relations, I think you'll agree. PW

Walton on the Naze/ Frinton

On a recent Monday morning I had cause to visit Walton on the Naze., travelling via Liverpool Street on the hourly through train to Clacton, changing at Thorpe le Soken.

Everything about this journey was excellent, including the cross platform connection at Thorpe into the waiting branch train. The return journey was made on a well patronised stopper to Colchester Town, where I got off to explore the attractive delights of Colchester. I tell you all this not because you are in the slightest bit interested in my social life, but because I think I might have stumbled upon a clue as to why passenger journeys fell on the Tendring branches last year, against national trends.

No one on either journey made any attempt to check or sell tickets to the many users, some of whom clearly expected their journey to be free. My more honest fellow travellers formed quite a queue at the Colchester Town ticket office so they could pay their dues.

I noted with interest the newly installed lifting barriers at Frinton. A few days later a local newspaper ran a story that these had failed for a short time, causing great upset. Network Rail technicians complained that they were hindered in their efforts to correct the fault by very abusive residents. In the past, I remember reading how nice Frinton was, isolating itself from modern ways. Indeed, so proper that I never visited it except over the level crossing en route to Walton. Clearly modern ways have caught up with Frinton that even the old wooden gates couldn't keep at bay. I may now, after all, feel more at home there and so will have to visit. PW

Hunstanton

Like many of our favourite seaside resorts Hunstanston was created by the railway. Sadly, the railway withdrew from the town many years ago. To show how important the railway is/was to our economic and social life, **Hunstanton Civic Society** is mounting an exhibition at the end of September/beginning of October described thus (and see the enclosed flyer):

The King's Lynn to Hunstanton Line

An Exhibition of Archive Photographs & Memorabilia

To be held at the Coal Shed Gallery, Le Strange Terrace, The Old Station Site (now the main car park), Hunstanton, Norfolk. Entry is free and it will be open from 11am to 4pm, Wednesdays to Saturdays September 23, 24, 25, 26, 27; September 30, October 1, 2, 3, 4.

The railway is far from forgotten in Hunstanton and its closure very much regretted by its residents. Many local people dream of a reconnection..... an idea that just will not go away and reflected in this high quality display.

First Group and Norfolk Green buses run a frequent service to and from Kings Lynn. Norfolk Green continue round the coast to Wells and Sheringham with the 'Coast Hopper'. PW

Cryptic Chesterton and Cambridge Stations.

In a reply to a letter urging the government to build Chesterton Sidings railway station without delay , the Department for Transport stated that: "The East of England Regional Assembly has recommended that funding should be made available for delivery of the new station in the period from 2012 to 2015. The Department for Transport is currently in discussion with the Regional Assembly regarding the timing of transport schemes within its Regional Funding Advice. However, no decisions have yet been taken."

Meanwhile, reliable sources indicate that the island platform to be built at Cambridge Station is "imminent". PW

Thank you, Peter, for much stimulating text and, indeed, to all our contributors.

Late News

National Express East Anglia(NXEA) announce, with justifiable pride, that their Norwich to Cambridge service just goes from strength to strength. Last year a record 800,000 passenger journeys were sold with commuting to Norwich or Cambridge, especially from Wymondham, Attleborough and Thetford, significant. But almost as significant were trips for business and leisure including academics heading to the University of East Anglia or Cambridge University.

As a result of this 70% traffic growth since year one, NEXA want to standardise on three-coach Class 170 units for running the service. Railfuture agrees with this strategy though not wholly with transferring the units from their current

work on the Liverpool Street-Ipswich-Lowestoft/Peterborough service. We certainly believe that the service needs speeding up with, ideally, a limited stop second service of, say Wymondham, Brandon, Ely and Cambridge in absolutely no more than 65 minutes. But congratulations all the same to everybody concerned, not least the original Anglia Railways management, without whose entrepreneurial zeal the service probably wouldn't exist. CB

**All comments and contributions most welcome (but no more than 300 words) to: Editor, Chris Burton, / or Nick Dibben, see details below.
Deadline for next issue is Monday 16 November 2009**

Railfuture

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EAST ANGLIA BRANCH :

Dates for your Diary

BRANCH MEETINGS 2009 / 10

NORWICH:
26 September: Methodist
Chapel, Chapel Field Road. NR2 1SD
at 14.15 hrs.
Guest Speaker is Steven Ashling of
Network Rail.

CAMBRIDGE
5 December
Alex Wood Hall, Norfolk St. CB1 2DL
at 14.15 hours
Guest Speaker: Mike Lamport of
Olympic Delivery Authority

BURY St EDMUNDS: 27 February
AGM. Venue and Guest Speaker TBA

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