



THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE: EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

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Number 145

February 2010

## **Welcome to Rail East in 2010.**

Indeed, slightly belated New Year greetings to you, not just from me, your Editor, but also from our Chairman, Peter Wakefield. May the coming year bring peace and fulfilment to you and your family. And of course, a more effective railway in our region. A particularly warm welcome (especially in view of very chilly weather) to new members, Alan Mayes of Cambridge, and Mrs Mary Garrett also of Cambridge, plus an equally warm welcome back to Mrs Nicola Scully of Alconbury, Cambs. Your support of and participation in our work is immensely welcome.

At the other end of life's cycle it is very sad to report the death of member Nigel Brown of Cambridge. Nigel supported the work of Railfuture over many years and was a very familiar figure at branch meetings. In spite of his failing health and mobility problem, he attended September's Norwich meeting; a testament to his belief in the role of rail. A brave and resolute man. RIP. At which point I will make way for Nick Dibben, our diligent Secretary. CB

### **Our Secretary, Nick Dibben, reflects on 2009**

Our railway network has had its usual mixed year. Following some bit of good news, often influenced by a long running Railfuture campaign, something reminds us all that there are still many long standing rail issues that need to be tackled.

On the positive side, 2009 was the year when the Government announced new electrification schemes covering the Great Western Main Line and routes around Liverpool and Manchester. There was also growing support for new high speed lines aided by the start of the Kent high speed domestic service to St Pancras, making journeys between East Anglia and Kent so much easier through new interchanges at Kings Cross / St Pancras and Stratford. (See below. Ed)

Closer to home, design work on the new Cambridge platform and Chesterton Junction station started and the new lifts at Ipswich station were approved by

the planners. Reopening of the line to Wisbech was suggested in a report from the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC). The official plan for the Cambridge new platform does suggest a speed limit of 20mph all the way from the Hills Road turnout to the points at Mill Road. If true, a time wasting restriction which will exacerbate congestion! CB

*And here is a picture showing exactly where the new platform will be sited. The line on which the freight train is running is to be removed (Up freight line).*



*Photo: Chris Burton*

**cont.....** However, ATOC was also the source of some spectacular “own goals” by the rail industry. When Transport Secretary Lord Adonis toured around the country using an all line rover ticket and said what good value it was, ATOC clumsily responded by increasing the price! ATOC also appear reluctant to accept that our current fare system is very complex and in need of serious reform. Many passengers were left stranded and bewildered when they found that staff issues regarding Sunday working were still outstanding.

The economic situation resulted in the East Coast franchise being returned to Government control, a knock-on effect is that the National Express East Anglia franchise will not be given its possible 3 year extension. Let’s hope that the company continues with its plans to develop services and does not give up on the region.

Will 2010 be the same? Probably. New trains are on their way, the East London Line will re-open and who knows what the impact of the General Election will be. Railfuture will aim to comment on these issues as they emerge and in Rail East, we will try to make sense of it all. ND

### **No sign of the busway**

After much pressure during the year, Cambridgeshire County Council finally announced in October that the Cambridge Guided Busway would open for business on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2009. However, within weeks the opening was put off, when the Council identified a number of construction issues that needed resolving before it would agree to hand over the busway. There are issues with the adjacent cycle track, which has been built at the wrong level. Over Christmas and into the new year, much of the cycle track was under

water, making any remedial work impossible. There are also drainage issues on the bridge over the River Ouse and suggestions that the ride quality during the short gaps in the guideway at farm crossings needs to be improved if the buses are to run at full speed.

No new opening date has been given, so watch this space for further updates!

### 2010 General Election

One event that *will* take place this year is a General Election. The political pundits are predicting early May but it could happen earlier or deferred to June. Although transport in general and railways in particular affect many millions of people, there is often very little serious debate on these issues in the run up to an election

Railfuture has produced a leaflet that covers some key rail issues for members to send to candidates. Copies will be sent out with the next Railwatch. The Branch will be writing to all the candidates from the main parties asking them what they would do to encourage a move to more sustainable forms of transport. Members are asked to contact their candidates as quickly as possible. Please do not wait until the election is called. It is also worth keeping an eye out for local election meetings and asking a question directly.

Details of candidates can be found on the political parties web-sites:

**\* Conservative Party:**

[http://www.conservatives.com/People/Prospective Parliamentary Candidates.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/People/Prospective_Parliamentary_Candidates.aspx)

**\* Labour Party:** <http://www.labour.org.uk/ppc>

**\* Liberal Democrats**

[http://www.libdems.org.uk/in\\_your\\_area.aspx](http://www.libdems.org.uk/in_your_area.aspx)

**\* Green Party**

<http://eastern.greenparty.org.uk/region/easternregion/general-election.html>

### **LOWESTOFT STATION REPORT - AND SECOND THOUGHTS?**

Trevor Garrod writes to say that "In January the East Suffolk Travellers' Association issued a 40-page report of its survey of some 1400 users of Lowestoft station. The survey had taken place during two carefully chosen weeks in August and September 2009, and several Railfuture members helped with it. A wealth of material had to be analysed, and this work was completed by early December.

Among other things it showed that over 50% of users of the station went to or from it on foot and a third of passengers were heading for the shops or the beach. The existing station is, of course, ideally sited for both. 80% favoured keeping the station on its present site.

Even before our final report appeared, however, First East appeared to be having second thoughts. Vesta's secretary was invited to a meeting with them, at which they suggested an alternative: cutting the track back just 40 metres. ESTA considers that this could be accepted if a number of conditions are met: including retention of all current passenger facilities plus enhancements - such as toilets open all the time the station remains open; platform canopies to afford protection for at least 3-coach trains; and platforms long enough to accommodate long excursion trains.

The report has been sent to the regeneration company First East (which wanted to close the station and cut the line back 400 metres inland), local authorities, politicians, Network Rail and National Express East Anglia. A further period of consultation was promised for February." TG

### **ESTA SPRING MEETING**

Railfuture members will be welcome at ESTA's Spring Meeting, to be held on Saturday March 13th in the URC Church Hall, Quay Street, Halesworth starting at 14.00. The venue is about ten minutes' walk from the rail station. Go down Station Road and turn right, and the church is on the right by the roundabout. Guest speaker will be Councillor Guy McGregor, Suffolk County Council's Portfolioholder for Transport. TG

### **AIRPORT LINKS**

This new report by the Railfuture International Committee is complimentary about access to Stansted Airport, with its direct rail, bus and coach links, though less so for Norwich Airport. Of course, we ultimately want to see the rail link extended eastwards to Braintree.

This Railfuture report can be obtained from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. TG

### ***The East Anglia Railfuture Branch AGM 2010***

***I hope that you will be able to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Branch at Bury St. Edmunds on Saturday February 27<sup>th</sup>. It is good for as many members as possible to get together at least once a year to mull over issues, give opinions, and generally influence policy PW***

**14.00hours at the Quakers Meeting House, St John's St, IP33 1SJ**

## **New Station for Chelmsford?**

Beaulieu Park is the name of the projected new station to serve the proposed housing scheme and business park of the same name. Sited on the Great Eastern main line it will offer four platforms and passing loops, if the application by Countryside Properties is accepted. Although the scheme is technically just outside our area, it does offer the promise of easing congestion at the main Chelmsford station, as well as catering strongly for buses, taxis and bicycles. If the planning application is successful building is scheduled to start in 2012 with completion by 2015. Chelmsford Station, it should be remembered, generates the greatest amount of passenger rail business anywhere outside Liverpool Street station, within East Anglia. A salient factor in favour of the Business Plan. Our Branch is very much in favour. CB

## **Faster Still?**

Apparently, there is the long term prospect of a truly high speed line northwards, if pre-Christmas speculative journalism is to be believed. This was probably triggered by the news that Sir David Rowland, Chair of the company, HighSpeed 2, had just submitted his report to Lord Adonis, detailing options for high speed routes north out of the capital. These all important details, will not, however, be declared until March at the earliest, not least to avoid planning blight. And votes to be lost, no doubt!



This call for a route to London from Scotland via Leeds and Cambridge came from the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority (WYIT). Not that integrated 'anything' has traditionally appealed to most DfT senior civil servants, of course. But maybe times have changed. The necessarily vague cost of this sizeable scheme was put at £69b!

After which I would merely ask, that if this notion is taken seriously by Network Rail, will the new island platform planned at Cambridge acquire additional length initially, or will they return years later for a very expensive rebuild? Or might HS2 just go to a brand new station near the A14 and Chesterton 'Parkway'? We shall see, but not, I suspect, in my lifetime! CB (who also took the photograph)

## **Branch Meeting, Cambridge. Report:**

### **Guest Speaker: Mike Lamport on The Olympics and the Railway**

This was a wonderful talk that captivated all who heard it. And what a project: 80% will get to the Olympics *only* by rail with three stations serving the site; Stratford, Stratford International and West Ham. One million people per day expected to travel to and from the site. Ten Tube and rail lines will serve the games directly. Broadcasting contracts determine that 'Games will be spread over 16hours each day requiring a 24hour service (Union views on this unknown thus far, negotiations being a DfT responsibility).

Mike waxed lyrical of the Cl.395 emus, currently running the high speed service from Kent to St Pancras. Just for that fortnight of the Olympics these will leave every five minutes from Ebbsfleet en route to Stratford International and St Pancras. And vice versa. Other rail services may well be maintained as the Para-Olympics follow immediately for another fortnight. Stratford 'old' station is to be de-cluttered and cleaned up. At the end of the platform 10 a new freight loop will be installed thereby relieving congestion on the North London line and benefiting freight.

In essence, Mike believed this to be the most exciting company he had worked for since joining the railway in 1964, with investment at an undreamed of level. Facts and figures fell from his lips with an infectious enthusiasm and mirrored by audience applause and many questions. Thank you, Mike, for making sixty minutes seem like ten! CB

## **Thameslink Developments**

Still in London, Thameslink held an update meeting in the Guildhall on 21 January. Most of the Stakeholders present represented genuinely hard-done-by travellers on First Capital Connect's (FCC) services to and from Bedford. These have been bedevilled for far too long by driver shortages and late delivery of new Class 377/5 electric multiple units. FCC's representative, Roger Perkins, spoke with some eloquence from an almost indefensible position, one indeed which that very day had drawn threatening comments from no less than the 'man himself', Lord Adonis.

The good news, and there was much of it, mainly focused on substantial infrastructure advances especially at Blackfriars, and yet also revealed that the Network Rail East Coast Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) was about to be re-appraised. And that is what RailEast readers are most concerned with. GN mainline major works for Thameslink are not due to start until the Olympics are firmly out of the way, ie: September 2012.

So maybe some aspects might change as a result of this reassessment. Certainly, there was no suggestion that the policy of 24 trains per hour through central London during the peak period had in any way been abandoned. It is

still an integral part of the business plan, inseparable from ATO (Automatic Train Operation) whereby, as services approach the central London section of the route, conventional driver control will be relinquished to ATO. Thrilling stuff. Well, so long as it's reliable!

What does not seem to have been addressed is a simple commercial aspect: with 12 car fixed formation train sets the norm, much extra off-peak business will need to be generated. The arrival of through services will certainly account for some of this, but what is really needed is a cut in journey time. One way of achieving this would be to raise speed limits to at least 90mph on the slow lines north of Finsbury Park, those most likely to be occupied by Thameslink. For budgetary reasons alone this would be a slow job. But a public announcement of intent would be an admirable public relations move to enhance Thameslink prospects. Our Branch has written to DfT and Network Rail to this effect and is 'on the case', as they say. CB

### **Sheringham Crossing Developments**

Our Treasurer, Lewis Buckingham, reports that our Branch has handed over a cheque for £171 to the North Norfolk Railway (NNR) as our contribution to its project to restore the crossing linking Network Rail's route from Cromer to the NNR. A big, big, "thank you" to everyone who contributed.

Serious track laying takes place over the weekend of 20/21 February resulting in, if all goes well, Britannia Pacific 'Oliver Cromwell' hauling the first fare-paying passengers across on 11 March. The train will be a modest 5 coaches owing to space constraints at Cromer where it has to reverse, en route from Norwich and London. Let us hope that everything *does* go well. CB

### **From Our Chairman, Peter Wakefield**

2009 has proved to be a good year for our railway in many ways, despite the strikes and a disastrous spate of criminal vandalism which were severely disruptive. Still there is much infrastructure work scheduled to take place in the next couple of years, including building the Bacon Factory Curve at Ipswich, from the Felixstowe line north toward Haughley and Ely, greatly benefiting freight. Nick has already mentioned others so I'll not repeat. All in all, then, much to look forward to - things you have campaigned for, in one form or other, for years. And much refurbishment as well as new build.

*Disrupted journeys -did you know?*

Whilst this happens disruption to journeys will be inevitable, causing much aggravation amongst users 'not in the know'. To counter this, sometime ago we urged Network Rail and NXEA at a Suffolk Rail Policy meeting, to issue

booklets outlining the projects causing the disruption, what it was costing, and the ultimate benefits. Needless to say nothing of the sort has happened. So every weekend leads to more and more unhappy, ill-informed users.

### *Right Time-Or is it?*

Talking of whom, recently I attended the AGM of the very successful User Group, FLUA, and heard a fascinating talk by the Network Rail(NR) Anglia Route Director. He quite rightly was very pleased with the high punctuality performance his team, together with TOCs had succeeded in pulling off in East Anglia.

But, I asked him, how could NR really boast that the figures were so good when to a passenger a train was late if it arrived one minute 'down' from the advertised time let alone the 5 minutes (or 10 minutes for a long distance service) leeway considered as 'right time'. His reply was along the lines that I wouldn't ask such a subversive question if I really knew how difficult it really is to run a railway to time. Sure, we all know it takes real discipline and very good timetabling to do so and that all sorts of daily unforeseens' occur, but there is no need to dissemble.

And in this I appear to be supported by Transport Secretary, Lord Adonis: he recently stated that "trains that are five minutes late should not be classed as on time". As a start he wants 2 minutes to be shaved off the present absurd 5 minute rule. However, what we do *not* want is any padding of the timetable slowing journeys to make Network Rail and the operators (TOCs) tasks easier. So, well done, Department for Transport (DfT) PW

### *East-West Rail Link:*

Our East West Rail Link (EWRL) leaflet distribution went well, with no small thanks to many who helped to do this so effectively. The cost of the campaign was considerable: just over £1000, but well worth it, as the EWRL is now firmly implanted in the collective heads of the DfT, NR, the TOCs, plus local and regional authorities. So it was good to read in Chiltern Railways' recently deposited application for a Transport Works Order, under the "Statement of Aims under Rule 10.2.(c)": key objective 9 as being: "**to facilitate the East West Rail Link**". See: <http://www.chiltern-evergreen3.co.uk/> for further details. Start date is dependant on a successful planning enquiry this coming summer. No significant objections are expected.

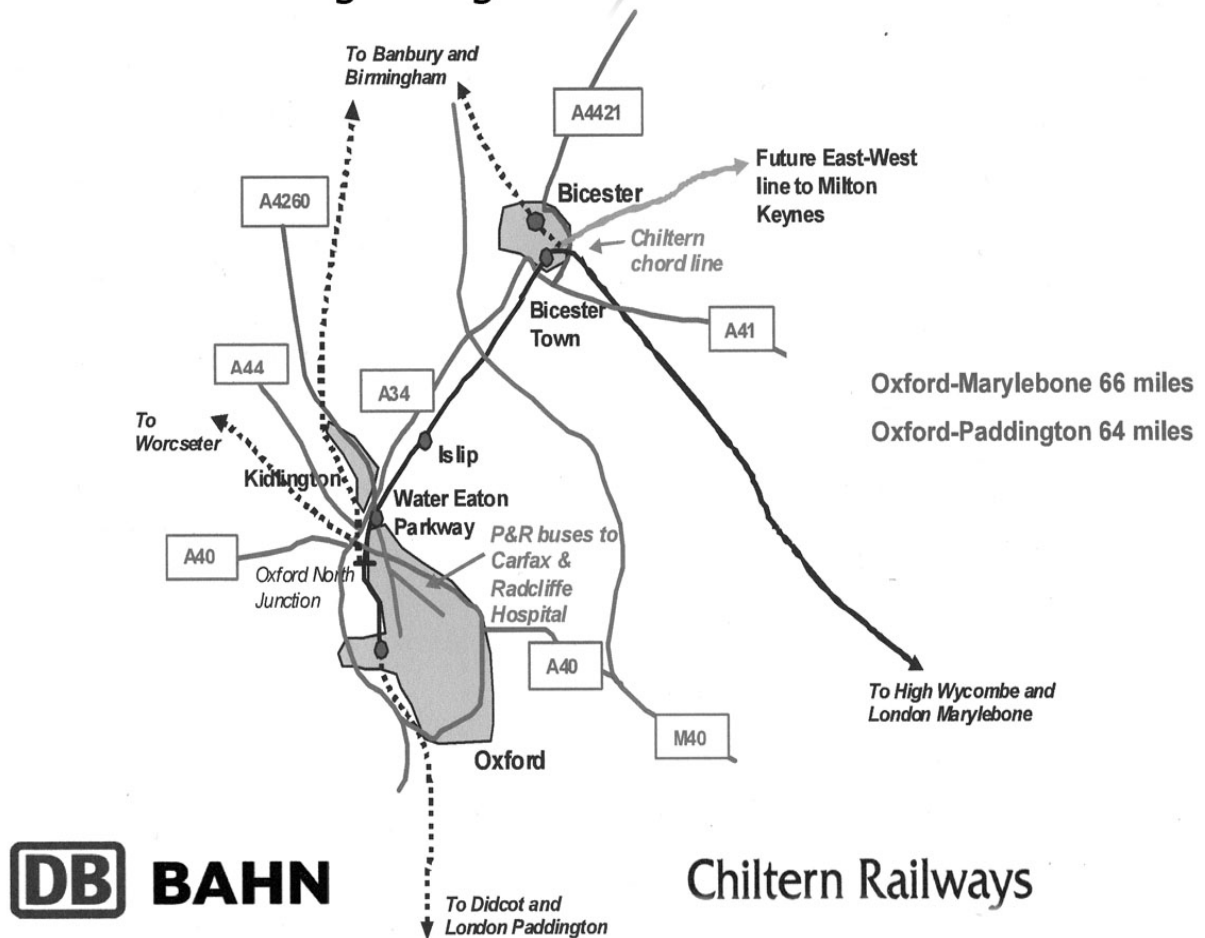
Provision of a rail link between Oxford, Milton Keynes and East Anglia is widely regarded as key to both the future success of the Oxford - Cambridge "Knowledge Arc" and to the growth of Milton Keynes. It is identified as a regional investment priority by the South East Regional Transport Board, in support of the South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy. East West rail would also deliver benefits to the wider railway network, which is



recognized by Network Rail and the Department for Transport.

The East West Rail Consortium of local authorities together with the South East England Partnership Board and the Milton Keynes Partnership have been actively developing plans to reinstate this route, with the Oxford/Aylesbury – Bletchley/Milton Keynes section being the first priority. The Chiltern proposals to upgrade the Bicester to Oxford section will significantly reduce the amount of public funding needed to deliver East West Rail and Chiltern Railways and the Consortium have thus worked closely together to maximize the wider transport, environmental and economic benefits". I hope the map below does not test your eyesight too much! PW

## The Beginning of East-West Rail-Link?



Map courtesy DB Regio/Chiltern Railways.

### Winter Service- Well Done

We have had 'a proper' winter for the first time in years. Transport has not been easy to keep going. We give our thanks to all the people who have laboured in often appalling conditions, day and night, to keep the trains moving. These unsung heroes who often work well beyond the call of duty, have been a consistent feature since Britain's railways began. PW

## **East Anglia, and East Coast Franchise Consultation Documents**

Both your Editor and Secretary each received a copy of these stylish publications just a week before we went to press. They are also available on the internet at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/passenger/franchises/> which can be accessed free at many local libraries. If you can, do try and peruse these significant documents as they will form a significant Agenda item at the AGM in Bury St.Edmunds. Our Branch will of course be officially responding to these documents, the closing date for which is 19 April 2010.

Briefly, it does address the need for more reliability on the Great Eastern Main Line (GEML) and more seats on trains: as part of this it readily concedes the lack of reliability of the Cl.90-hauled Norwich expresses and the need to replace them with Electric Multiple Units (EMU) As to the design, well that's still up for grabs. Certainly an EMU offers passenger capacity where now at either end sits a locomotive or driving van trailer. So, a win-win situation for all concerned.

As to improvements elsewhere, it is very much as you've possibly read in previous Rail East' and other journals. One of the most significant comments concerns Rural and Cross-Country services, to quote: " East-West services have an important economic role to play in linking East Anglia to the Midlands and northern England. Bidders will therefore be asked to assess the opportunities to develop these routes to ensure that appropriate capacity provided to satisfy demand and that journey opportunities reflect market needs.....etc" Railfuture members will I'm sure feel pretty strongly in favour of this outlook, as well as other things. Significantly, these are the comments of civil servants, not train operating company executives or Network Rail. So probably indicative of thinking at the policy level.

As for the East Coast C-D, again many of our concerns have been aired in this journal over the past twelve months or so. Especially convenient connections at Stevenage and Peterborough! But as mentioned earlier, Network Rail's strategy for that route is now under reassessment which in itself ought to be good news, but only provided the UK fiscal fiasco doesn't cut back too much on railway maintenance budgets, let alone capital projects. All good discussion points for our Annual General Meeting in Bury St Edmunds, where we really do really want to hear what you think on these and other matters. CB

**Your Editor discovers:** that there is a **Gunton Station User Group** in existence, but the Web reveals no contact details. Apparently their current newsletter includes a wry comment about the lack of information screens at Gunton Station: on a weekend of service shutdown "passengers waited oblivious of the problem – the next day there was still no visible sign to say "No Trains". Failing anything else, a bit of chalk would come in handy!!" Thanks to Tony Smales Railfuture news digest for this titbit. AS/CB

## **MARPA news:**

The Secretary of **Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association** tried in vain to help a passenger at Bury to get a valid low-price fare for Ipswich from the ticket machine. He found out afterwards that it's perversely necessary to select "Ipswich Buses" as the destination (!!!) and concluded: "Ticketing is a potential minefield that needs to be looked at urgently." Well aware of vandalism at some locations, MARPA is pleased to be involved with the British Transport Police in the setting up of a passenger forum which was due to have its first meeting in Jan 2010. There's a rather worrying security arrangement at Bury Station - MARPA has discovered that, when the night cleaner is not on duty to lock up, a taxi driver performs the task...provided he's not off sick or on holiday!

## **News From beyond our shores.**

Railfuture is always keen to learn of moves abroad, especially in France, which promote more rail-bound freight through the Channel Tunnel where traffic levels, though growing, are still way below 1990's predictions. One move in France which might certainly be beneficial is the law passed last December to form a legally and financially independent Rail Regulator. With the acronym ARAF, it is empowered to impartially assess and fairly charge infrastructure costs to those applying to run freight (and passenger) trains across France.

The legislation is intended to transform the hitherto highly prescriptive French rail network into one which is open and regulated. And there are several players eager to do business, not least DB-Schenker.

Let us hope that they and other players, large and small, will markedly grow the market employing many people, including the more successful members of Fret, if the latter again fails. It shouldn't: 70m Euros are being pumped in by Government. So, potentially good news for the Channel Tunnel, UK-bound freight, UK freight terminals and specifically those here in our area. CB

## ***And to finish with- a lovely, true story:***

National Express East Anglia's Stansted Express team had a big surprise for enterprising Cambridge students Rebecca Trevalyan and Catherine Pulman, when they found themselves Istanbul-bound on a charity 'jail-break' organised by Clare College, Cambridge over the weekend, 30/31 January.

Approaching Stansted Exp. Customer Service Stand in the hope they might cadge free rail tickets to London, they instead met Marketing Manager, Adrian Warren who planted free ***air tickets*** in their hands instead. Oh joy unbounded!

Said Adrian Warren, "Stansted Express is always happy to help a worthy cause and reward enterprise as well. Both were very much in evidence here". In response, Rebecca Trevalyan said. " we never expected to be travelling *all the*

way to Istanbul and back. We hoped we might make London, or maybe a little further.....but never in our wildest dreams.....so a big thank you to Stansted Express and Pegasus Airline for a truly memorable experience and helping us to raise even more money for the charity." Ellen Rossiter (NXEA)/ CB

And that I like to think is a rather good, positive note on which to wind up this edition of Rail East 145. See you in Bury St Edmund's, I hope. CB

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**Rail East 146** should be with you in early June, all contributions for which do send to me, Chris Burton, via one the contact mediums stated below. If you have relevant pictures, so much the better. **Deadline is 24 May.**

**Railfuture**  
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**EAST ANGLIA BRANCH :**

**Dates for your Diary**

**BRANCH MEETINGS 2009 / 10**

***BURY St EDMUNDS:***  
**1400 hours, 27 February**  
**AGM. Venue: Quakers**  
**Meeting House, St John's St.**  
**IP33 1SJ**  
**Guest Speaker**  
**Alan Neville, Area Manager**  
**for all Nat Exp. Stations north**  
**of Audley End and west to**  
**Whittlesey.**

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