

Network Rail – What Now?

Almost every time I open a national newspaper or railway journal Network Rail (NR) is in the firing line. Whether it be engineering over-runs, the huge debt, alleged executive malpractice, and heaven knows what else, it seems NR just cannot win. A bit like the British Rail of old. But now, confronted with a probable fiscal onslaught from the government, what is sad and frustrating might rapidly become critical and worrying.

Whether we like it or not, NR is the oxygen of the railway, its lynch-pin, or whatever metaphor you prefer. NR must attract the best management to lead a well qualified and experienced workforce, which is unlikely to be sustained if its money, talent and morale is constantly and publicly reduced. In avoiding such a scenario the Office of Rail Regulation (NR's 'guardian') and above all, the Government both have a vital part to play. And so do we; ideally by not publicly lambasting them but instead quietly yet strongly lobbying behind the scenes. The art of gentle persuasion, no less. But change there must be.

Of all the serious things NR needs to rectify, so far as you and I are concerned, one of the most important is their public attitude: we want a greater willingness to face the media and attend rail user meetings to explain and inform; to create meaningful local relationships with users, local government and the like. This means personable, informed railway engineers; not members of their Public Relations department who all too often have to refer at a later date to the appropriate professional. Or quietly forget!

We users may not be NR's first-line customer but we are the second – and most certainly its paymaster. CB

NEWS

Spot the deliberate(!) error

Did you spot it, in the June issue? "It" was the news about East Midland Trains(EMT) getting the go-ahead and the money for extra coaches, in which I asserted that extended services were already underway. Wrong! Although the

facts were correct the start date is **May 2011**. I also said the leasing cost was £9.9m: here the mistake was minor as this figure includes various costs apart from the leasing charge. So my apologies for inserting misleading statements lifted from accurate text supplied by our honourable Chairman. My wrists are duly slapped. And remember; www.penrug.org.uk is the website devoted to Norwich-Peterborough (Liverpool) rail users through EMT and National Express services. Do use it. CB

What passengers want from the new Greater Anglia franchise

Another survey by Passenger Focus has asked rail users in the Greater Anglia franchise area what they want from the new franchise. The top 12 items are:

- ◆ ***Value for money tickets***
- ◆ ***Punctuality and reliability of the train***
- ◆ ***Frequency of train service***
- ◆ ***Journey time***
- ◆ ***Ability to get a seat***
- ◆ ***Upkeep and cleanliness of the train***
- ◆ ***Personal security***
- ◆ ***Facilities at the station***
- ◆ ***Information during the journey***
- ◆ ***Connections with other train services***
- ◆ ***Visibility of staff on the train***
- ◆ ***Cleanliness of toilet facilities***

Passenger Focus notes that the franchise has received few new trains in the last 15 years, although 30 new units are now on order. New trains providing extra capacity would help meet a number of the priorities listed above and help raise the overall satisfaction rating of passengers in the area. Nick Dibben (ND)

What happens now?

Future rail development projects may well depend on the co-operation of various local authorities, according to the Department of Transport in response to a letter from Branch Secretary Nick Dibben. The letter was sent, when the new Government announced that it had abolished the regional strategies including the Eastern England Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) in July this year.

A few years ago, the Branch contributed to the RTS and was part of the Examination in Public that reviewed the strategy. The final version of the RTS was much changed from the original; lists of new road schemes were deleted and in their place priorities for creating a more sustainable transport system.

According to the letter from the Department, the Government will prepare legislation to require Local Authorities to co-operate on transport issues. (Do

they have to be forced to do this!) The Government does, however, recognise that there is still an important role for national policy, so existing National Planning Policy Statements will remain in place.

Just what does this mean? As most Local Authorities have now produced local plans that are consistent with the regional strategies, it may take several years for any changes to work their way through the system. The lack of money for new infrastructure is likely to mean many schemes put on hold, although the news that Network Rail is progressing the new freight curve at Ipswich (see elsewhere in RE) is welcome news. Local authorities also need reminding that there are many modest schemes, such as new platform shelters or cycle racks, that can help improve journeys for rail users. ND



Making TRAXX UK?

If that is a puzzling headline then let me explain: the pretty picture, courtesy of train maker Bombardier, shows one of their very successful TRAXX class locomotives heading down the Mosel in Germany on a freight. I include it because at the end of August, Robert Wright,

Transport correspondent of the Financial Times, reported that Network Rail had already received an approach from Bombardier as to what would be necessary to tweak this design for use in the UK. Apparently the firm had already received enquiries regarding possible replacement by the TRAXX design of the locomotives currently used on the *Norwich to Liverpool St. service!*

Now although locomotives are usually more damaging to track than multiple-unit rolling stock, the fact remains that to order this TRAXX design would obviate the need for new rolling stock. A sensible approach, as the Norwich line Mark3 coaches are in good nick, and probably the most comfortable, smooth-riding express rolling stock around. Much technical discussion will ensue before anything gets built, of course, but the whole concept is fascinating, to say the least. Watch this space, as they say. CB

Anti-social behaviour on trains

Passenger Focus has carried out a survey of rail passengers to find out their views about anti-social behaviour on stations and trains. Although the majority of rail passengers (72%) were satisfied with their personal security whilst on the train, many remain concerned about anti-social behaviour. Passengers reported that "Playing music loudly", "fare evasion", "graffiti or vandalism" and

“feet on seats” were the most annoying types of behaviour. In terms of the what worried people most, up came “abusive behaviour”, “people under the influence of alcohol or drugs” and “theft”.

When asked about what could be done to make them feel safer, all age groups emphasised the importance of not allowing rowdy or drunk people to board trains, and the importance of having more visible staff or police on trains and stations. ND

FCC Passengers 'rev-up' about new Car Park charges

Commuters on First Capital Connect (FCC) have been complaining about further increases in car park charges at St Neots and Huntingdon stations. Daily charges are now £6.20, and £2 off peak and at weekends. Both car parks were extended a few years back and a combination of the economic climate and the high charges mean there are plenty of spaces. At Huntingdon, a new and cheaper private car park has opened opposite the station. Cheaper still for some commuters, is to take the bus to the station. An annual plus bus ticket is several hundred pounds cheaper than car parking plus petrol. ND

Ely to Norwich resignalling

This new-technology pilot scheme, based at Cambridge signalling centre, is the brainchild of Signalling Solutions, a BalfourBeatty-Alstom group company and essentially involves replacing all nine picturesque but ancient signal boxes between Ely and Wymondham, with decidedly unpicturesque cabins, as the accompanying picture shows.



These cabins, or 'Islands' as they are known, will receive signals from base via conventional fibre-optic cable and/or Geostationary satellite connection.

In turn, the Islands will control new lightweight LED (Light Emitting Diode) signals (as in picture) and automatic full barrier (AFB) level crossing gates, the latter replacing virtually all the manual versions. Radar will monitor these crossings for

obstacles, with the only signalmen directly involved being those in Cambridge signalling centre. Axle-counters will monitor trains between these Islands.

The east-bound (down) line at Brandon is planned to become bi-directionally signalled so that a slow westbound train can be 'parked' there whilst a faster service overtakes on the usual westbound line. Other modifications of track

and signalling to improve operation are planned at one or two points, though essentially it is a 'like-for-like' replacement project, as can be see at: http://www.networkrail.co.uk/documents/5958_SP&C%20Anticipated%20Tender%20Programme.pdf

The result is supposed to be a much cheaper, more effective and efficient railway, capable of higher capacity and, where track condition allows, speeds up to 100mph. The kit being installed offers enough capacity to extend the signalling coverage beyond Ely and Norwich if and when funds allow.

This is one of two such pilot installations, Crewe to Shrewsbury being the other, which if successful, might become the de facto system for secondary routes across the network. One caveat concerns the use of axle-counters between these 'islands': where such devices were recently installed on the West Coast main line they did not cover themselves in glory. Let us hope current models from Thales or Siemens offer markedly more consistent reliability.

As for funding, the scheme's prospect looks robust although the decision to go ahead will not be confirmed until late October. Let us hope. CB



Recent months have revealed some good news on the freight front. First, Inter-modal traffic (that's containers to you and me) has shown a welcome increase in business, both import and export traffic. To this we can add, from Potters Distribution at Ely, a *new service* apparently on the books to

start in the Autumn, running to Trafford Park, Manchester. Such are the capacity constraints on the largely single track Felixstowe branch, that the containers will 'trucked' from the port to Ely.

Packing-up agriculture. At Railfuture's Taunton AGM in July, Nick Gallop of Intermodality Consultancy enthused his audience with news that supermarkets, always alive to more efficient ways of doing things, are very much driving the idea of a major railfreight depot at Spalding in Lincolnshire. Why Spalding? Well, not only is it home to many food packaging firms, it also houses Europe's largest abattoir. The retail trade want to connect this area by train to other parts of the UK, especially the south west. The market research has been done, a site has been identified, local authorities thoroughly engaged, and the process moves forward purposefully. For fuller details go to: www.intermodality.com/news/index.aspx?id=14

Infill potential: CEMEX is proposing to infill the lime quarry at Barrington, south west of Cambridge, over a period over five years. The material brought

to Barrington depends on CEMEX successfully winning major contracts in the London area. One of these may well be CrossRail. *If* they are successful and *if* Cambridgeshire County Council grant planning permission, up to four trains, each way, each day, will use the connection to the Cambridge-Kings Cross route at Foxton. These trains may load to a maximum of 23 wagons and operate on a twenty four hour basis. The infill is intended ultimately to restore land to arable farming and nature conservation. So good reason for optimism.

Developments at Great Yarmouth

And with the foregoing in mind, our Chairman, Peter Wakefield(PW), can also report that "The former carriage sidings outside Yarmouth station and adjacent to the A47 have been purchased by Gt Yarmouth Borough Council for use as a freight terminal. The sidings had been used briefly, a few years back, by the local fertiliser industry and hauliers to put the stuff onto rail. Let's hope that this far sighted initiative to safeguard the site by the local authority will be the catalyst to start up rail freight in East Norfolk again.

The potential for this 'new' freight facility came under close scrutiny during the compilation of a report for the Cantley River/Rail Transport Working Group. (A consortium of Gt Yarmouth BC; Broads DC; Broads Authority; Norfolk CC and British Sugar.)

The latter company wishes to run its factory at Cantley continuously throughout the year by importing 200,000 tonnes pa of sugar cane for processing during the summer months. This will be imported through the new Yarmouth Eastport and would equate to about 10,000 tonnes per week for carriage from Yarmouth to Cantley.

Road, rail and barge were the modes studied. The full report is at the weblink below. Suffice to say, barge from Yarmouth to Cantley was shown to be the most sustainable option, despite a certain vagueness about how some of the costs might be met concerning reconstruction of Cantley British Sugar Wharf, and river bank upkeep, etc.

Rail is found to be "feasible" but costs associated with the reinstatement of the factory connection to the mainline and building of a new siding were put at £3.2m. An extortionate NR quotation, surely!

There would also be the need for a lorry shuttling the raw material between the Port and the Vauxhall sidings. Both these items were deemed to conspire to make rail too expensive. The report did say that other traffic such as the sugar stone could be railed directly into Cantley instead of to a Norwich railhead. That the plant's outputs could also use new rail facilities if built, was also mentioned, but these traffics were not included in the mix to make a better case for rail. An interesting read but it does not bind anybody to do anything positive or otherwise. " PW

For further details see: [http://www.broadsauthority.gov.uk/broads/live/planning/cantley-transportfeasibility-final-report/ FINAL_REPORT.pdf](http://www.broadsauthority.gov.uk/broads/live/planning/cantley-transportfeasibility-final-report/FINAL_REPORT.pdf)

BRANCH NEWS

Report of Ipswich Meeting June 26th 2010

A well attended meeting heard two speakers give accounts of progress being made with projects vital to making the railway more useful to the communities it serves.

- Peter Lawrence explained how the Wherry Lines Community rail partnership works, its achievements, and what was in the current action plan. He spoke too of the main problems it confronts; namely the lack of holiday season through trains to the coast from the midlands and northern England, and the shortage of rolling stock. The plan to re-site Lowestoft station was also mentioned.
- Phil Smart outlined the back ground to the current Network Rail plan to build a new curve linking the East Suffolk Line with the Ipswich–Stowmarket line in the northern suburbs of Ipswich. Important to all the current plans is the long term strategy of Ipswich Borough Council; with far-sighted vision it safe-guarded the land upon which the new curve is now to be built. Phil added a fascinating account of how the strategy evolved from as far back as the 1980s: showing plans of the extent of the curve, he outlined the pros and cons of whether it should be built as double track or a more basic single track. We showed our appreciation of Peter and Phil's first rate presentations in the usual way. PW

Since then, Network Rail have issued the results of the public consultation meetings. Over 300 people visited the exhibition about the curve and most were in favour of the plans. NR hopes to get permission in the Autumn to build the chord, having decided to 'go for' the double-line option as it give the necessary long-term capacity and would be very expensive to add at a later date. The Branch has written in support of the NR plans. Having also met Ipswich MP, Ben Gummer, to urge his support, it is pleasing to note that he fully approves of the scheme. PW

Station improvements:

Member Andrew Gee (AG) joins PW in noting that NR is also getting on with the enhancement of two of our busiest stations: *at Ipswich*, building work has

started on the long awaited footbridge and lifts that will allow step-free access to all four platforms. It is to link the south end of platform 1 to 4 and 5 opposite and should be finished in the spring of 2011.

In Cambridge the long awaited island platform is in its final planning stages and it is hoped that construction will start in the Autumn. It too will have a footbridge with lifts rising up from the end of platform 5 to cross three tracks to the new platforms 7 and 8. These will be long enough for 12 carriages, which will be covered by a canopy extending southwards from the footbridge to give shelter to 8 of them. Platform 5 will be shortened to accommodate the lift shaft and bridge supports.

We greatly welcome this development as it enables active train service development to take place by providing more timetable paths through the station. Some Cross Country services have 10 minutes added to their overall timings to negotiate the current congestion at Cambridge. Hopefully this will quickly be removed after the building work is complete next year. There is to be passive provision for extension of the footbridge to a future eastern pedestrian entrance to the station.

The new lifts are of controversial design in that they appear not to be to the European standard but NR's very own, and thus can only take one bike at a time placed diagonally across the lift. Adverse comment from the many cyclists who use the station should not have taken NR by surprise! It also appears that, so far, there are no plans for extra platform staff, which seems somewhat short sighted, at least in the medium, term as initially it will be used only at peak periods. AG/PW

Hard times ahead and other things

Trevor Garrod (TG) writes to remind and inform under the heading

"PROMOTING SERVICES AND FACILITIES"

- There is likely to be considerable negative media publicity about the railways this autumn, in view of likely fare increases (*and financial cutbacks, ie: taking away with both hands!* Ed). So be on guard!
- Railfuture and its affiliated users' groups have a long history of promoting services and facilities; and in recent years Community Rail Partnerships have added their weight to this work. We need to continue to do so, especially in the more rural areas.
- For example, the latest issue of "East Suffolk Travel" points out under a headline "Not many people know this..." that, although not widely advertised, the "Anglia Plus" ticket still exists and now costs £14 a day for a day's unlimited travel on NXEA trains north of the River Stour. A three-day ticket costs £28 and you can take up to 4 children for £2 each.

The only restrictions are on peak-hour morning trains Monday – Friday. So please, now is the time to make sure as many people as possible know about this ticket. **24 hours unlimited rail travel for £14!**

ESTA has also promoted the facility in the latest of its "Try the train... Try the bus..." leaflets, distributed in the Aldeburgh area; and the East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership also features it in its most recent train guide. However, National Express East Anglia's publicity virtually ignores this ticket. Why?

- NXEA's website also fails to mention Lowestoft or any other East Suffolk Line stations - a fact which was picked up by BBC Radio Suffolk on August 13th.
- In early August, I was pleasantly surprised to be offered a day return fare from Great Yarmouth to Sheringham for just £4.95. This was when I arrived at the station with three Continental colleagues who were staying in the town, and we were informed by the booking clerk that a group of four adults could make the journey for this remarkably low price. Again, NXEA seems to do little to promote this facility.
- This incident also illustrates the value of real live staff who know what they are talking about and advise customers. Of course there is a role for on line ticketing and ticket machines, especially for routine ticketing - but the human input remains important. TG

Branch meeting Norwich: Shaping Norfolk's Future

Our next branch meeting will be at **14.15 hours** at the **Chapel Field Methodist Church, Norwich on Saturday September 25th**. Our speaker will be **Mr. Chris Starkie**, Chief Executive of "Shaping Norfolk's Future", whose objectives are:

- *A 90 minute schedule between London and Norwich;*
- *more reliable services; new inter-city style trains;*
- *more capacity; station improvements; steadily improving cleanliness*
- *added comfort; better on-board facilities;*
- *action to reduce engineering disruption;*
- *improvements to rural lines.*

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION (ESTA)

Member Trevor Garrod writes to remind us that ESTA will mann stalls at the East Anglian Transport Museum September 11th-12th and at Ipswich Transport Museum on October 3rd. Railfuture members will be welcome at ESTA's autumn meeting, to be held in the Friends Meeting House, Smallgate, Beccles at 14.15 on Saturday October 23rd. The venue is a few minutes walk up Station Road and then left at the traffic lights. The main guest speaker will be talking about buses, but local rail issues are likely to feature in the discussion. TG

Late News



PENDELINO OUT OF KINGS CROSS?

If you had already learnt about this true story through the media, you could be forgiven for thinking Intercity Express Project (IEP) really was history, and that **East Coast** was defaulting to West Coast-style tilting trains. Not true. Well, certainly not yet. One brand new 11 car Pendolino (ordered for the West Coast mainline) is *possibly* going to be tested on the Kings Cross route to Edinburgh and Glasgow next summer. Not least because it saves Transport Minister, Phil Hammond, from having to explain why a very pricey piece of kit is sitting unused in a siding, which it would be otherwise. But that's another story.

If this Pendo' poses no unacceptable technical challenges, it might slot into the then sole service from Glasgow (where it would be maintained) to Kings Cross. In so doing it also might, just might, make the coveted four hour schedule from Edinburgh to Kings Cross feasible, but it won't in any way improve East Anglia connections at Peterborough! So, whilst very intriguing, it is of little practical value to we 'Easterners'! For the time being, anyway. CB

Franchising and the Coalition Government according to Teresa Villiers:

During the Summer, Minister of State for Transport, Teresa Villiers, outlined thinking so far on the future of franchising; "The existing system is too complicated with too much micro-management from Whitehall" she said. Villiers (right) proposed that all franchises would run for about 15 years, provided performance levels are met, passenger satisfaction targets are met, along with premium payments to the Treasury. In return operators would get greater commercial and operating freedom in meeting users, government and investors aspirations.



With most franchises let for around 8 years and every chance of losing it at the end, operators see little incentive for serious investment such as has been witnessed on Chiltern and C2C railways, where the term is far longer.

Michael Roberts, speaking for the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), said, "franchising had become too prescriptive and limits operational flexibility". Whilst many of us would agree with that statement, it is well to remember that it is the duty of the Department for Transport to 'stand guard' over the vast sum of tax-payers money which underpins the railway. Fare-payers too expect an equitable value-for-money agreement with all franchisees. Be sure the bean-counters are hard at work, though!

Any decisions will await the end of the consultation period on 18 October. CB

East Coast Main Line 2016 capacity review – New Consultation Document

In August NR issued a new invitation to stakeholders to comment on an addendum to the original 2008 Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS). This concerns which infrastructure improvements might be mooted for Control Period 5 (CP5). Current CP4 ends in 2014. This is not about the trains themselves so much as what track, signalling and station projects should be analysed and proposed for CP5 to improve capacity and efficiency.

The full document is at <http://www.networkrail.co.uk.aspx/4449.aspx> and is well worth a read if this railway route interests you. Should you have any subsequent comments, suggestions etc, do please send them to our Secretary, Nick Dibben at, 24 Bure Close, St Ives PE27 3FE, or nick.dibben@btinternet.com no later than 11 October.

The Branch will most certainly submit formal comments which will be blended with the comments of other Railfuture Branches covering the ECML to create a national Railfuture response. Hopefully this will be reported in Railwatch. CB

A Plea: yes it's almost the final page except to say that although there are more than a few 'ifs' and 'buts' in our news this issue, the overall view in our region is still optimistic, especially for freight. The Government's Spending Review October statement might well change everything, of course. In the meantime a special plea to our female readers: as Editor I would very much like to hear your views: just what do *you* expect of the railway; what doesn't it deliver that you believe it should? Do let me know: a 300 word paragraph would be ideal but not essential, and sent either via the post or e-mail using the contact information on this page. CB

Last but absolutely not least, a big "thank you" to those of you who took the trouble to make contact with news, views or general information. It was, and always is greatly appreciated. Keep it coming. Otherwise, **Raileast 148** should be with you in mid-November, all contributions for which to me, Chris Burton, via one of the contact conduits stated below. If you have relevant pictures, so much the better. They never need to be more than 500k in black and white and are therefore eminently e-mailable **Deadline is 8 November 2010**

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EAST ANGLIA BRANCH :

Dates for your Diary

BRANCH MEETINGS 2010/11

Norwich

**25 September at Chapelfield
Methodist Chapel, NR2 1SD
Guest Speaker: Chris Starkie,
CEO of 'Shaping Norfolk's
Future'**

Bury St.Edmunds
4 December at the Friends
Meeting House IP33 1SJ

Cambridge (AGM)
26 February at Little St Mary's
Church, CB1 2QG

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