

# RAIL east

THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

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## Tomorrow's Team



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**Matthew Kerr, James Billman, Chris Nesbitt (Depot Manager) & Matthew Baker**, holding a replica of the nameplate sitting on the side of the locomotive right behind them, which had just been named at Liverpool Street station on Monday 13 December 2010. Anthony Smith of Passenger Focus undertook the naming ceremony to mark the start of the new National Express East Anglia (NSEA) Timetable. The three younger men, all apprentices at Norwich Crown Point maintenance depot, represent NSEA's investment in training today's youthful talent to deliver the timetabled services of the future.

No other country in Europe works its traction and rolling stock as hard as we do here in the UK, so investing in the people upon whom, ultimately, all railway operations depend is something Railfuture encourages and applauds. Crown Point itself has won many awards in recent years for excellence in engineering,

and so has an enviable reputation to maintain. May they and their successor franchises indeed do this and turn out trains which are both highly reliable *and externally clean*. Well done NXEA! CB/PW

### **Our Chairman takes a view:**

The NXEA mainline and rural revised timetable became active on December 12th with many improvements, especially in capacity. We send our congratulations to the planning teams for all the hard work and ingenuity they have put into this project. Inevitably, on a railway that is running at or near capacity in many places and is serving several markets with differing needs, there has to be compromise and not everybody will be happy. We hope the majority will be, but of course everyone's journey is personal to them where even a small change can disrupt a well established routine. (true, Peter: see elsewhere in this RailEast: Ed.)

The proud name "East Anglian", which you see on page one of this newsletter, has also been given to a new fast service from Norwich at 07.40 to London Liverpool Street arriving at 09.24. The evening East Anglian is 2 minutes faster.

The new timetable has seen the cascade of the class 170 diesel trains to the Ipswich – Cambridge route and observation shows that they are already much appreciated by users. The move to class 170 three car units on the Norwich – Cambridge service is also a huge step forward and will enable the route to continue to meet demand. Now that a much better product is available, we hope NXEA will have a promotion for both these inter-urban routes to increase local awareness and shorten the schedules.

Just as exciting is the introduction of the hourly service from Ipswich to Woodbridge and Saxmundham. Doubtless this is the long awaited precursor to the hourly service throughout the East Suffolk Line.

First Capital Connect (FCC) also provide vital East Anglian services from London, but Kings Cross instead and their planning team has not been idle either! Huge numbers of extra seats have been added to both their East Anglian routes. Again, this has not been easy as their services have to weave in and out of many services operated by companies who are not involved in our region, so the result is no doubt a compromise. So we congratulate them on providing longer trains, including one fast service to Royston of 12 cars that detaches 4 there; the latter becomes an all stations service for Meldreth, Foxton, etc, whilst the front 8 speed non-stop to Cambridge. Our thanks go to the FCC operating team for making all this possible.

Meanwhile, Network Rail has been busy with enhancements: at Royston, for example, the down platform has been extended by 90m enabling 12 car

services to Cambridge to operate, and constructed in such a way that services remained pretty much uninterrupted. At Cambridge, the soon-to-start new platforms will make it possible to run these longer trains more frequently, both to Kings Cross and Liverpool Street.

Network Rail have a number of enhancement projects under way or about to start: at Ipswich the new footbridge and lifts are highly visible, as the the picture shows. The extension of parking facilities at Diss began on 25th January to cater for an extra 60 places to total 239.



© Chris Burton

At Witham, a second station entrance is under construction together with an extension to the footbridge with the addition of lifts, new cycle and car parking too. At Audley End the new

footbridge and lifts are now in use, while the station concourse and adjacent waiting areas at Peterborough are funded to be enlarged and modernised. Finally, Colchester has seen the start of a £2.2m sequence of substantial improvements to its main station. All in all, a great way to start the year. PW

### **The New NXEA Timetable: Other views:**

As our Chairman rightly implies, there is no such thing as the perfect timetable (even in Switzerland), so for every beneficiary of a timetable revamp someone else loses out. Member, Max Roberts (Colchester) with laudable conciseness says: "Nice to have a new late train for the Clacton Branch on Saturdays; good to have Colchester Town reconnected to the network; good that Clacton trains no longer stop at Romford. BUT, the way they have shuffled times equals a hidden price increase in many cases. And when they say, off-peak tickets not valid between 16:30 and 18:30, they really mean 16:15 and 18:31. And if there are extra trains running due to capacity enhancements, well, I can't find them!"

Felixstowe to Ipswich appears to be confronted with increased conflict between freight and passenger services as reflected in punctuality, which appears to have waned with the new timetable. One correspondent reported: "various punctuality problems with missed London bound connections at Ipswich with the 08.20 non stop to Liverpool Street. On the branch, even during the short three day week before New Year, there were delays from freight trains. On two days (4 & 5 Jan) several journeys were delayed by 10 minutes (on a 26

*minute journey) again due to freight trains.....the off peak and pm departures from Ipswich to Felixstowe were changed from xx.27 to xx.58, which for some are either too early or late, but the changes have not prevented delays on the branch." Member, Trevor Garrod, adds further comment later.*

Certainly your Editor, when travelling to Ipswich from Cambridge during January, arrived just outside the station 4 minutes early, only to watch the 6 minute late arrival from Felixstowe enter our platform and then depart. This made us 4 minutes late!

Various members have also noted that, yet again, NXEA Sunday 'rural' timetables inexplicably change departure times from those on the remaining six days of the week; sometimes quite radically. I say "inexplicably", because it doesn't apply on London routes, or indeed, First Capital Connect, Cross Country or East Midland Trains. Is this some local staff agreement? Whatever; it confuses travellers. Perhaps National Express should actively remember that the 'seven day railway' concept does not apply solely to Network Rail. CB

### **ALL CHANGE AT IPSWICH!**

"Since December 13th, many more people have been changing trains at busy Ipswich station," reports Trevor Garrod. "There have been reports of East Suffolk Line trains not being held for late-running trains from London, with the situation becoming particularly bad in early January. One passenger was told by a member of staff that she should leave London half an hour earlier to be sure of catching her Lowestoft connection at Ipswich."

"It was then reported that National Express told their staff on January 10th that they could hold the 18.13 and 18.54 for up to 10 minutes and the 21.13 and 22.13 for up to 20 minutes in such cases."

"The East Suffolk Travellers' Association received some 40 responses to its members' questionnaire by mid January and submitted a report to NXEA's Managing Director, including a request asking him to define more exactly the connection policy at Ipswich."

"ESTA had been told previously by NXEA that East Suffolk trains might be held for up to 2 minutes at Ipswich "if large numbers of passengers were involved". Apparently conductors on the trains from London, among all their other tasks, were told to determine before the train reached Colchester, how many East Suffolk passengers were on board, and to advise the staff at Ipswich.

Railfuture members changing at Ipswich to/from East Suffolk Line stations are also urged to fill in the ESTA questionnaire on [www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk](http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk) ." ESTA will continue this exercise at least until the end of March. The questionnaire is also available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. TG

**East Anglia Branch Annual General Meeting**  
**3rd Floor Conference Room**  
**Central Library, CAMBRIDGE**  
**26 February at 14.00hours**

### **The First Capital Connect Timetable**

John Henderson writes to say that "the present timetable is now the most intensive ever; for example between 0630 and 0650 there are three departures from Huntingdon, each with a different stopping pattern. The small stations of Shepreth and Meldreth, between Hitchin and Cambridge, have also benefitted with a new evening fast train - Meldreth is the second stop in 54 mins from London."

Several trains have been lengthened from 4 to 8, or from 8 to 12 coaches; This obviously relieves crowding, but the rolling stock has been switched around with the result that some very popular trains from Huntingdon and St Neots are now formed of well nigh 30 year old trains. Passengers aren't told they are boarding a 12 car train, hence some assume that they are in the front unit, which continues to Kings Lynn, when they are actually in the centre unit. This also causes passengers to stand when spare seats exist in the extra carriages (it's not easy to see as the train comes into the smaller stations).

When everything runs smoothly the operation is very impressive, especially in the evening with several 12 coach trains waiting on the approaches to Kings Cross ready to pick up their passengers. However, the service requires a high train availability and FCC are stretched to keep it up when there's disruption. For example during the very cold weather before Christmas, trains needed repairs to pantographs and traction motors with the result that the Emergency Timetable was run on several days when the lines were almost clear of snow.

Car park charges continue to be a big issue for FCC travellers as they rise at well above inflation level, even allowing for improvements. At Waterbeach, unusually set by Cambs County Council, the parking charge has risen 50%! Elsewhere passengers resort to parking in local streets; a sore point with residents. Yet the extra spaces that FCC has provided at many stations are not used, probably due to the very high charges. JH/JA

### **Not going with the flow**

Our Vice-Chairman, Jerry Alderson, wrote musing over what might happen when 12-car trains become commonplace and start disgorging their passenger through Cambridge/King's Cross ticket barriers. By way of example, he sent a picture. "This queue at King's Cross Underground station is not a daily event, yet occurs every time the platforms downstairs are too crowded." Jerry says. "So they just shut the barriers". Does the photograph on the next page

represent the chaos ahead for Cambridge (and other stations) he asks?

1. Remember that the King's Cross picture is *after* vast sums of money have been spent upgrading this underground station.
2. What would Kings Cross and Cambridge rail stations be like if *two* full 12 car trains in rapid succession decanted 1500 or more travellers into the few barriers? Given how slow average ticket barriers work, does rail need to adopt a speedy-read electronic Oyster-style ticket?

**As for** the herding aspect, just ask anybody who has stood gazing up at King's Cross departure board wondering from which platform the Cambridge-line train will depart, which all too often happens: about three to four minutes before departure time the platform is indicated, resulting in a headlong panic sprint, often to the suburban station, leaving in its wake the old, infirm, families with small children etc, who tend to lose all chance of a seat, or even miss the train altogether. Especially galling if you'd arrived in good time.



© Jerry Alderson

This has been going on for years with no apologies or explanation and really does have to be addressed. Soon! "All will be fine when King's Cross modernisation is finished," they will probably tell you. But will it? JA/CB

## NEWS DIGEST

### Ely to Norwich Re-Signalling gets go ahead but...

More good news here as the scheme has been given the fully funded green light, with completion before the timetable change in December 2012. RailEast Edition 147 carried the details of this truly original scheme which will be controlled from Cambridge signal box. Some track reconfigurations are included to increase the operating options.

Not so certain is the conversion from single to double lead junction at Haughley. This is where the cross-country route to Ely and Cambridge leaves the main line to Norwich and Ipswich. Originally pencilled in for this Spring, Network Rail apparently now believe that despite the gauge-enhancement of

this route, it does not need to expand this junction. We beg to differ. CB

**thameslinkprogramme.co.uk**

Phillip Hammond, Secretary of State for Transport, announced before Christmas that, yet again, Thameslink completion date had slipped, this time to 2018. Apparently it would not be possible to cope with the traffic from Peterborough and Cambridge routes until London Bridge station had been rebuilt and new track laid. This will not occur until late 2018, hence the 'slipping' date. CB

### **No sign of Guided-Buses**

It is unlikely that buses will be using the Cambridge guided bus way before July 2011, nearly two and a half years after the route was due to open. At the same time, the expected cost has risen to £180m, a 70% increase on the original price. Work on the southern section is ready for handover, although problems still remain with defects on the section between Cambridge and St Ives. The County Council has an alternative contractor ready in case BAM, the original contractor continue to refuse to correct the problems. ND

### **Wymondham Station:**



Sad news: with the lease due for renewal the hitherto pro-active owner, David Turner has decided to sell up and retire. So no more food, and few if any antiques and bric-a-brac as most of the latter has already been disposed of. This is very definitely the end of a deeply appreciated era for which David deserves our great gratitude. He created a station unique to East Anglia and, quite probably, much farther afield. Quite who is taking over the lease was unknown at the time of writing, but the Brief Encounters aspect of the station will almost certainly be closed by the time you read this. CB

### **Suffolk's New Transport Plan**

Suffolk's draft Local Transport Plan is available for consultation. Please find below a link to the documents. The first part covers a twenty year strategy.

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/TransportAndStreets/Policies/LocalTransportPlanDocuments.htm>

## **Greater Anglia Franchise**

The 'Invitation to Tender' is to be issued in April this year with the new Franchisee announced on 20 October. Fuller details at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/passenger/franchises/greater-anglia/ojeunotice.pdf>

In the meantime, you might be interested in the Franchise Objectives which the incumbent is expected to pursue. The question mark is the Editor's.

- *Controlling operational costs.*
- *Maximising revenue.*
- *Delivering a quality of service (?) for passengers for the entire rail journey.*
- *Working with the Department and other stakeholders to ensure value for money.*
- *Managing and delivering changes required to accommodate Crossrail.*
  - *Implementing the station responsibilities if required.*
- *Working effectively with Network Rail to maintain performance.*
  - *Delivering the plans around the Olympics.*
- *Managing the introduction of the Class 379 HLOS vehicles.*

## **LOWESTOFT STATION - PROBABLY SAVED**

Trevor Garrod tells us that "before Christmas Waveney District Council issued its "Lowestoft Lake Lothing & Outer Harbour Area Action Plan. This weighty document (in more senses than one) appears to rule out any movement of the station in the foreseeable future, but then talks about "a minimum of two platforms plus a siding for excursion trains." Whether this means excursion passengers are meant to clamber down on to the trackside is not clear..."

In its response, ESTA insists that "three platforms of the same length as now are required" and urges "The plan should accept that both in the short term and in the long term, relocation of Lowestoft station is neither strategically acceptable nor legally possible." The East Anglian Branch of Railfuture has also responded in similar vein to Waveney District Council.

Our thanks to Railfuture members who helped ESTA in its 2009 survey of passengers. The results of that survey showed that moving Lowestoft station would almost certainly have caused a significant drop in passenger numbers.  
TG

**Saturday 26 February  
Branch AGM Central Library,  
Cambridge CB2 3QD 14.00 hours**

## **BRANCH MEETING, 4 DECEMBER 2010: REPORT**

*Guest Speaker – James Steward NXEA Area Manager Rural Routes*

James described a typical day at work which included monitoring staff and rolling stock availability, dealing with passenger comments, working on improvement projects and investigating train delays.

Passenger numbers were generally growing on rural routes. The largest increases were at Needham Market (up 20%), Bury St Edmunds (+11% in 2010), Great Yarmouth (+10%) and Lowestoft (+5.5%). Saxmundham had however seen a drop of 3%.

The recent snow had many impacts on train services and James noted that other countries do suffer as well. Issues included freezing of sliding doors, points and couplers. There had also been trees falling on the track and ice on the overhead line. As these were infrequent events spending large amounts of extra money was difficult to justify. Roads were blocked as well which meant staff could not get to work.



2011 would see Wi-Fi on some Class 170 units plus extra cleaning staff.

It would take 10 years to deliver a 90 minute Norwich-London service (refer Sept meeting) but work to allow more 100mph running was being considered.

Overcrowding at car parks was an issue, however, it being difficult to make a business case as rural stations need to retain free parking.

Projects under way to improve stations include: cycle spaces at Newmarket; a shelter at Cantley; Halesworth bus interchange; Ipswich Lift, and Beccles' passing loop.

Our Chairman expressed our much deserved thanks to James for giving up his time and providing such an informative talk. Thanks also to Jerry Alderson for the picture and, of course, to our Secretary, Nick, for Minuting the talk. ND/JA

### **Great Eastern faces congested future say Network Rail**

Network Rail, are predicting that peak hour services on the Great Eastern Mainline will have a 4200 seat shortfall in 2031. The figures come from its latest Route Utilisation Study (RUS) for London and the South East: see <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/aspx/4447.aspx> This RUS pits possible future demand for passenger and freight on the railways around London against

likely track capacity and rolling stock. Where gaps are identified, possible solutions are put forward and initial analysis carried out to see if there is a financial case for the schemes to be taken forward.

The key drivers of future demand are a predicted additional 600,000 jobs being created in London by 2031 and a large increase in rail freight traffic created by expansion of the ports at Felixstowe, Bathside Bay (Harwich) and new port facilities by the Thames in Essex. The existing fast tracks on the Great Eastern route already carry 24 trains per hour during the morning peak. Network Rail say there is no simple way to increase this by changes to the track layout or signalling system. If all trains were to run at 12 coaches and new stock introduced on London to Norwich services with additional seats, there will still be a shortfall of 4200 seats during the morning peak hour, the equivalent of 5 or 6 extra trains. Space constraints at some stations would make running longer trains difficult.

Other routes into London from our region appear to have sufficient capacity during peak periods. The work on Thameslink and 12 car trains will enable the East Coast Main Line (ECML) to cope. The construction of the new high speed line between London and the North will result in fewer long distance services on the ECML allowing space for additional freight and local passenger services.

The cancellation of Stansted Airport expansion should enable sufficient capacity to be provided on the West Anglia Route. The RUS puts forward a number of suggestions for providing extra capacity in the Lea Valley area closer to London to cater for additional inner suburban trains.

The study predicts a large increase in freight trains with an additional 30 freights each way to Felixstowe / Bathside bay plus 40 extra from Essex Thameside. The former traffic will largely be routed via Bury St Edmunds and Peterborough, whilst the latter will travel via Gospel Oak in North London.

***During a seminar*** on the RUS arranged by Passenger Focus and attended by many Railfuture members, there was considerable discussion on the accuracy of the predictions. NR accepted that though the timescales may be out by a year or two, the figures highlighted the relative problems associated with each route.

*Although NR has a duty to match capacity to needs, the fact is that routes into London are reaching capacity with no simple solutions possible. Raising the fares to reduce demand will not be acceptable to Railfuture or to passengers, especially if it applies to some routes and not others. This imbalance stems from jobs being created in Central London whilst new housing is largely being built in the Home Counties. This is government's prime challenge! Linking more regional centre jobs with good public transport access is what is needed. Quite a challenge for local authorities too. ND*

## **West Anglia Service Improvements**

The first of an additional 120 (Class 379) coaches are being introduced later this year on the West Anglia Route between London Liverpool Street, Stansted Airport and Cambridge. On the 8 January a brand new Class 379 went on a gauging run to Norwich and Harwich. Although splendidly suited to the route they will be seen at Cambridge rather than Ipswich, where John Day took the picture, for which many thanks.



National Express East Anglia has carried out a consultation exercise on the proposed West Anglia Route December 2011 timetable.

The notional changes are: Longer peak-hour trains with 30 minute frequency between Stratford and Bishops Stortford; some speeded up Cambridge to Liverpool Street services and a new hourly service

between Ely and Stansted Airport.

In a joint response with Railfuture London and South East Branch, the proposals were generally welcomed. Railfuture suggested that the Stratford services should connect with trains to Stansted Airport at Harlow rather than Bishops Stortford as cross-platform interchange would be possible. We also urged that the new Ely to Stansted service should not prevent an extra Stansted to Peterborough (or beyond) service running in the future. ND

## **HS2: yes, or no?**

We in Railfuture must decide whether we wish to support HS2 or not. As one influential person wrote to our Branch Chairman: "If it gets cancelled I do not see any other high speed rail scheme happening for the foreseeable future..... Railfuture really needs to make clear to the Government that it supports the current scheme and current route unequivocally. Arguing for a change of route or other big changes at this stage will simply risk making the Government decide to cancel it." If time allows we hope to discuss this pivotal matter at the AGM in Cambridge, so do be there if you can. CB

## **North Walsham Survey: Results**

With 1297 responses the survey was a statistically valid exercise. 40% of responses were from people not currently using the train. High in the dissatisfaction league are the shabby, dangerous station approaches, with its unmarked parking. Very poor access between platforms. Insufficient signs in town and nearer station. Bus services to the station were poor enough to account for only 2% usage. 10% used the rail service daily; 20% less than

five times a week, whilst 52% only used it at weekends, but not every weekend.

Of the 51% travelling to Norwich, 21% were heading further afield. 11% went to Cromer whilst around 5% were bound for Wroxham and Sheringham. 46% of respondents walked to the station, and 37% used a car. 4.6% of respondents cycled. Over 8% arrive by taxi. And here we run out of space. If you would like a copy of the report via email (only), contact the Editor at [cfc79ten@googlemail.com](mailto:cfc79ten@googlemail.com) CB

*Do please send all news and pictures for the next edition (150) to the Editor by 29 May AT THE LATEST! In the meantime, the Editor wishes to offer a heartfelt "thank you" to the many contributors to this edition. Keep it up!*

## Railfuture

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### **EAST ANGLIA BRANCH :**

#### **Dates for your Diary**

#### **BRANCH MEETINGS 2010/11**

#### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)**

**Cambridge 14.00hrs  
26 February at the Central  
Library.**

**Guest Speaker:**

**Branch Meeting  
Ipswich Saturday 18 June  
2011**

**Guest Speaker TBA**

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