

# raileast

THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE: EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

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**Issue 151**

**September 2011**

**THANK YOU** to all those who said such nice things about the colour 150 Issue; and this was in spite of getting the wrong date on the next meeting orange panel, and dropping two lines on page 2. For this issue we revert to monochrome but are serious about colour – soon!

**MUCH** has been said about the seven-day railway and how Network Rail should bring this about. But it isn't just down to NR: maybe you too have noticed that East Anglia Sunday timetables, away from London-bound routes, change on that day. Why? Sure, we understand that business is lower on Sunday, at least before mid-day. But why use wildly different arrival/departure times from weekdays, especially when the overall schedule *isn't* wildly different? Take the Norwich to Cambridge service for example: the first train out of Cambridge (which has stabled overnight) leaves at 08.48 rather than 09.12, as it would during the week. And then back at Norwich, instead of leaving at 08.40 or close to, it rolls out at 09.03. This pattern continues all day. There are no freight services to inhibit progress and serious maintenance usually employs that great travellers deterrent, the substitute bus. So why the different timetable?

Although less dramatic, much the same change occurs on our other 'secondary' services, with the notable exception of East Midland Trains whose departure times are pretty close to those the rest of the week. So please Greater Anglia franchise owners, current and potential, make this one of *your* contributions to the seven-day railway - very, very soon. To travellers, the present Sunday timetable regime confuses an otherwise splendid story. CB

## **NEWS**

### **EastWest Rail**



Very many thanks to Jerry Alderson, whose picture this is, for being in the right place at the right time to record this Network Rail Test Train literally testing and measuring Swanbourne Flyover at Bletchley. If you didn't realise, this is the way

1 [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

the East-West Rail link gets itself from Bedford and Milton Keynes to Oxford without conflicting with West Coast mainline trains to the north (in the foreground). Built in 1960 to service Swanbourne Yard, which never came to fruition, it is now fundamental to the proposed passenger service over this route. Good to know Network Rail are taking the East-West Link seriously. [JA/CB](#)

*And John Henderson, our Branch Committee EWRL Campaign Co-ordinator writes....*

Oxford–Cambridge featured in reports through BBC News, Modern Railways, RAIL, and several local newspapers. These were all generally favourable, though the capital cost of the Western Section, about £250m, is sometimes referred to as a massive amount of money, forgetting that it's about the same as the cost of the new roads on the west side of Bedford, but for far fewer miles.



Railfuture's High Speed Rail July conference at Bletchley Park featured an Oxford–Cambridge stand which generated much interest. Emails of support have been received from local MP, Iain Stewart, Oxford City Councillor Graham Jones, and the Mayor of Bedford, Dave Hodgson. At our June Railfuture EAB Ipswich meeting, we piloted an EWR slide show which we hope to show in other locations this autumn and during 2012.

*HS2 opponent, Lizzie Williams, tries to convince seemingly impassive Stephen Joseph at this successful event. Photo: Chris Burton*

Also in late July, we helped to decide a potentially important legal case: some residents of Woodham in Buckinghamshire applied for about 4km of disused railway to be adopted as a Village Green. Although this stretch is not part of the planned Oxford to Cambridge link, conversion to Village Green status might endanger other disused sections that *are* part of the link.

Railfuture appeared at the public enquiry and made a strong case against the proposal. As a result, the enquiry Inspector recommended against, and subsequently the council refused the application. The lesson learnt is that it's important that disused sections are properly signed identifying the owner and their potential future function. In this way future function would be identified in the Local Framework Plan.

Transport Minister, Theresa Villiers, visited Cambridgeshire County Council's Shire Hall on 8 September (see Chesterton Station news item) to meet Transport Chiefs, Cambridge MP Julian Huppert, and N E Cambridgeshire MP Stephen Barclay to discuss the whole East-West Rail Project (Ipswich to Reading). Once Parliament is back to work, we also hope to have more news of the all-party EWR group which is likely to involve many of the MPs along the route.

But how might you help? First: please write to or email your own MP expressing support for extending the planned Oxford – Bedford link to Cambridge. Yes, you

might have sent the same message some time ago, but since then many MPs and Councillors have handed over to somebody else.

Secondly, if you see anything about East West Rail in the news, local or national, please cut-out, scan in or even type it up, quoting the original source, and send it to [ox-cam@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ox-cam@railfuture.org.uk) along with any photographs or ideas. This way we keep the website up to date. Thank you. JH

### EastWestRail DVD

*Meanwhile, focusing on communication and media, East West Rail Consortium has produced a DVD concentrating on the economic and transport benefits of the (Reading), Oxford to Bedford Section. The EWRC has also sponsored a report by Oxford Economics which establishes that this new rail link would be an effective part of overall public investment in the South East. See: [www.eastwestrail.org.uk](http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk) JH*

### **Those 8% Fare increases: This is what we said to the Press**

"Railfuture East Anglia Branch covers the whole of the region which includes the three main radial routes from London as well as the inter-urban and rural routes across the region."

"There has been a sizeable investment over the last 10 years in this network... but a lot remains to be done to bring the whole network up to acceptable and robust standards for the future."

"Until this planned investment is completed it is unacceptable that this huge increase should even be contemplated let alone enforced by the Department of Transport. The increase will really hurt many of those who have to travel to work by rail, and at a time when salaries and wages are frozen." PW

### **First Capital Collect?**

*Policing fare-evasion can be counter-productive as regular user John Henderson reports:* "During the school holidays there were reports of more ticket inspectors on FCC trains. But this can backfire. On one Friday in August a young lady travelling from Kings Cross to Peterborough was reduced to tears when the inspector ordered her off the train for using the wrong ticket, despite her offering to pay the difference.

Happily another passenger intervened and calmed the incident with all three

getting off at Arlesey. Whether the police were involved, or the woman bought a new ticket and continued her journey, isn't known. Either way, though FCC may gain a prosecution for fare dodging (though it's doubtful this person would be found guilty), what might they be losing? The public relations impact of this kind of conflict is immense, with here parents and children watching all this play out. From what I heard after the trio alighted, I doubt if any will be travelling by train for a long, long time." JH

## After which a parallel ticketing story-beware!

A cautionary true tale to complement John Henderson's experience.

Man breaks holiday in Scotland to return south for funeral and hurriedly rifles through tickets with his wife ( who is staying put). En route the following day the Ticket Inspector informs him that he is actually travelling on a Seat Reservation ticket. Result: new single ticket with no discount at £145. Ouch!

Later submits refund form, including original misplaced tickets and covering letter to East Coast explaining that he was in no way avoiding his fare (which he wasn't). Refund subsequently refused at highest level, twice

Meanwhile, perhaps Train Operating Companies might at least consider a simpler ticket or, maybe a quite different colour for the seat reservation? Either way, beware and check your tickets thoroughly! CB



Above, a typical journey ticket whilst below, the Seat Reservation version.

**BEWARE!**



## Future Chesterton station to be named Cambridge Science Park:

Another of our three priority campaigns moved closer to fulfillment on 8 September when Theresa Villiers met local MPs and Officials (see page 2). The long proposed station was high on the agenda. Our Branch view on this proposal was clearly laid out in the last edition of Rail East.

These were echoed by the MPs who asserted that "its benefits would be felt right across the City, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire through greatly improved access to employment, education and, specifically, the world famous 'High Tech' Science Park, which is but a brief transit from the proposed site. Even the 'infamous' Busway is in position to service Chesterton (see page 10). For a fuller report (but not Busway) see: <http://www.cambridgefirst.co.uk/home/e-edition> and/or

<http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Cambridge/Hopes-raised-that-new-city-rail-station-plan-is-on-track-23082011.htm>

## **And Talking of New Stations:**

A report has concluded that reopening a railway station in Soham is feasible. This resulted from a study by Network Rail on behalf of East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) and funded by a £37,000 grant from Cambridgeshire Horizons.

Reintroduction of a rail service to the town is feasible "in engineering terms", it says, and that sufficient demand exists for an unmanned station, subject to the introduction of an hourly service between Peterborough and Ipswich and a 15-minute interchange at Ely for onward travel to Cambridge.

Engineering firm, Atkins, in a separate report, concludes that around 400 passengers daily "could" use a station at Soham, roughly par with present rail business at Littleport.

"The project is still at early stages and it is recommended that discussions now take place with project partners to discuss these two issues in greater detail and also start to give some thought on how the project might be funded in the future."

It is believed "highly unlikely" that a station would be opened in the short term but with a time frame of five to seven years was a "realistic estimate".

The options favoured by Network Rail were the introduction of a single platform with a track crossover to Bury St Edmunds, or a double platform with a footbridge and a crossover towards Ely. The first option would cost around £3.4 million and the second, £4.8 million.

The report concluded it would be "sensible" to wait until Network Rail had completed its planned work on double tracking through to Ely, which is due to be implemented by 2018, before considering construction.

The future of Soham train station was on the 4 July agenda of the ECDC's Development and Transport Sub-Committee. Result unknown as yet. PW

## **Biggleswade Station – better access for disabled?**

The need for access for the disabled to the railway station was one of the key points to emerge from Biggleswade's recent Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan.

The reports says: "Many people wanted accessibility improved at the station – specifically disabled access – and also for wider public transport.". Further changes sought at the station included later running services and taxi ranks.

The Executive were expected to discuss and formalise this on Tuesday, July 12 the decision from which was unknown as we went to press. The result might emerge eventually at :[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/public\\_transport/get-on-track.aspx](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/public_transport/get-on-track.aspx)

***Keep up to date with Railfuture East Anglian Branch***

**<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=East+Anglian+user+groups>**

## **March Network Rail Centre, Open Day 14 August 2011:**

Ben Walsh reports that "this day was good.....no one (even the children) could get bored, as there were lots of demonstrations throughout the site to show how Network Rail re-cycles all the track, points, switches and vast amounts of ballast to good effect! Lots of stands were in evidence too: The Friends Of March Station, Network Rail, various charities, and GBRf, who manage the site on behalf of NR."

"They also ran a Raffle in which you could win a cab ride (which I, of course, couldn't resist!) John Smith, GBRf, Managing Director named a locomotive WHITEMOOR ' to much spontaneous applause."



*March, Whitemoor Yard showing new recycling centre. Photograph courtesy Network Rail*

"I think lots of people came away with the feeling that it had been a good day not least because the weather itself had stayed on the good side too!" BW

It should be added that this event celebrated the new 70 acre extension to Whitemoor's operations, which can be seen lower centre in the picture. As Ben states, this new facility specialises in recycling much old material and complements similar centres at Crewe, Doncaster and Westbury. Our thanks to Network Rail for the splendid aerial photograph. CB

**BRANCH MEETING  
1 OCTOBER at 14.15hrs  
NORWICH  
CHAPELFIELD METHODIST CHAPEL**

## **A welcome development ?(1)**

Development of the former Alconbury Air Base is back on the agenda, following the decision to make the site one of the Government's new Enterprise Zones. New or expanding companies will get tax incentives and a quicker route through planning if they set up in the area. The land is owned by Urban and Civic who say

they want to create a sustainable new development. The original approved plans for a major road/rail distribution complex have been replaced with high-tech industry and around 5000 new homes.

A report on the issues associated with the high-tech industry around Cambridge stressed the importance of fast rail links to London which the firms needed to access financial and other business services. A new station on the adjacent East Coast main line is proposed and the Branch will be campaigning for this to happen early in the development. ND

### **A welcome development ? (2)**

From time to time, political think-tanks identify groups of voters whose support they claim is essential for winning the next election. In the past we have had Essex Man and Worcester Woman, now the latest group identified by Harlow West Labour MP Gareth Thomas, are Suburban Simons and Commuting Chloes who live in outer London. According to Thomas, these people are very concerned about public transport. Great! Although transport affects all our lives every day, very little is said about it at election time. Maybe this will change. Perhaps Railfuture should be targeting these 'Simons and Chloes' as well. ND

### **Ahead of Curve**

The Branch has written to the Infrastructure Planning Commission in support of the Network Rail scheme to build a new double track line that would allow container trains to run directly from Felixstowe to Peterborough. Known now as the Ipswich Curve, the new £60m scheme would do away with the need for freight trains to reverse in Ipswich Yard. Although primarily for freight, the scheme would also benefit existing passenger services by reducing the number of conflicting train paths around Ipswich and onward to London, thereby improving reliability.

The Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) replaces the old Transport and Works Act (TWA) procedure for projects with national significance. The process, which should be much faster than the old TWA procedures, comprises six key stages including pre-application, acceptance, pre-examination, examination, decision and post-decision stages. Upon receipt of an application for development consent, the IPC has 28 days to decide whether or not to accept it. The IPC then has 6 months to examine an application and 3 months to make a decision or recommendation to the Secretary of State. ND

**[thameslinkprogramme.co.uk](http://thameslinkprogramme.co.uk)**

This project to serve the west of our region is steadily forging ahead in engineering terms. Interestingly, official thoughts about the subsequent train

service to serve the Peterborough and King's Lynn routes are now emerging. Let us take a look.

1. For Peterborough, Huntingdon, St Neots and, *presumably*, all stations through to Hitchin, Stevenage - 2 semi fast trains per hour to Horsham via Farringdon, East Croydon, Gatwick Airport, Three Bridges is suggested.
2. From King's Lynn/Ely/and non stop from Cambridge to Kings Cross as now.
3. From Cambridge, Royston, Baldock, Letchworth, Hitchin, Stevenage, 2 trains per hour to Three Bridges via Farringdon, East Croydon, Gatwick Airport.
4. From Cambridge to King's Cross, 2 trains per hour stopping at all stations to presumably Hatfield/Potters Bar then fast to Finsbury Park

The prospect of through trains to Gatwick Airport will be most welcome, PW

### **Community Rail Norfolk (CRN): Action Plan 2011**

Peter Lawrence reports that he submitted the following aspirations for CRN largely resulting from discussions at Wherry and Bittern Line committee meetings.

1. Cromer: better signage to and from station to bus station, toilets and town.
2. Cromer: increase peak-hour service plus all-day half hour service from North Walsham. Also, weed removal needed on track level at N Walsham.
3. Lowestoft: Summer Sunday service needs more services to be attractive.
4. Norwich-Cambridge: establish a CR Plan for this route, with or without local authority involvement (might be easier without).
5. Community Rail Organisation: Requires more profile raising events and people to staff the stands. PL

For fuller information on Community Rail Partnerships see: [www.acorp.uk.com/](http://www.acorp.uk.com/)

## **IMPORTANT CHANGES**

### **The Vice Chairman.**

Stepping down at our AGM will be Peter Lawrence, our Vice Chairman, for many years an influential and much respected leading voice in the Society both nationally and in East Anglia. He is also a most distinguished President of Railfuture. Peter has sadly decided to rein-in some of his activities so will stand down as our Vice Chairman at the forthcoming AGM. We very much hope that he will continue to offer himself to serve on the Branch Committee. PW

### **The Treasurer.**

You may recall that our Branch Treasurer, Lewis Buckingham, has for the past two years or so expressed a desire to step down from this post. Lewis has carried out this vital task in a most efficient way for 25 years! Because a replacement did not come forward, Lewis, ever loyal to the Branch, carried on. I am now delighted to tell you that a volunteer for the post has emerged. He is Mike Farahar from Ipswich. Mike will officially take over from Lewis at the AGM in Bury St Edmunds on February 25th 2012, and I hope the meeting will officially ratify him as Treasurer for East Anglia Branch.

Needless to say both Peter and Lewis will be officially thanked most warmly at the AGM for their immense respective contributions. PW

### **Members' email address.**

The national membership officer has a record of the email addresses of most Branch Members, but not all. This incompleteness can hinder a cost effective service to our greatly valued members. And when occasionally we need to rectify a mistake, quickly: this happened with the last edition of RailEast where the date for the next meeting was incorrect. Although most members were emailed the correction, 90 postcards still had to be sent. If you received a postcard and have an email address, which you are willing to share with us, do please send that address to [renewals@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:renewals@railfuture.org.uk)

We hope to use email addresses more extensively in future for updates, vital campaigning news or publishing useful general information, so the the more complete the list the better served you will be. This action is not mandatory though, so if you do not wish to divulge your email address then don't.

In parallel; if you would like to receive RailEast by email, then Editor Chris Burton is the person to contact at [cfb79ten@googlemail.com](mailto:cfb79ten@googlemail.com)

Again, it is entirely optional to receive the newsletter in that manner, but it will save the branch vital postage and printing costs if you choose to do so. PW

**Transforming Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Stations - The Ice Cream Factor** - *Susan van de Ven, Chair, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, tells us what their group has contributed to local stations.*

Station adoptions and community rail partnerships are commonplace in some quarters, but as yet unknown in the First Capital Connect patch. A bit of inspiration from two National Express stations in Cambridgeshire – Ely and March - was the impetus for first steps at three First Capital Connect stations on the Cambridge-King's Cross line: Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton. The three are now festooned with flower tubs, bird boxes, butterfly and badger habitats, and a flower and veg garden on the site of the old stationmaster's garden at Meldreth.

The success of bringing these gardens to life has been down to the willingness and interest of dozens of local businesses and residents, who have provided

donations of all necessary materials plus ongoing donations of time. Virtually all local primary and secondary schools have got their hands dirty, and garden tending has become a rival to the after-school X Box. Certainly the most tantalizing contribution has been free ice cream, provided by the Meldreth Sidings ice cream distributor Gocold. This was served up at the three stations' birthdays on July 9<sup>th</sup>, when the gardens were formally launched, and must have had something to do with the draw of many hundreds of people who came in support. Now in late summer, courgettes, tomatoes and cucumbers are the draw.



*Supporters at Meldreth Phot:Peter Wakefield*

This tremendous local support is rooted in historic interest in the railway, but also in the knowledge that the rail network on our rural doorstep is a public transport gateway to pretty well everywhere. With Cambridgeshire County Council's recent decision to scrap 100% of its bus subsidies – the most draconian bus subsidy cuts in England – access to rail is more important than ever.

The Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, which sponsored the gardens project, is now anticipating First Capital Connect's plans on formalizing station adoption and/or community rail partnerships – both of which have been included in Cambridgeshire County Council's revised Local Transport Plan and in the council's bid to the Sustainable Transport Fund.

Of course, access is everything. The Rail User Group will be organizing winter planting of the new platform tubs and vegetable garden, but in so doing it expects to add weight to its continuing campaign for better access to rail: disabled access where platforms are inaccessible, elimination of parking charges in villages with few public amenities, and a safer environment for pedestrians at Foxton, famous for a notoriously difficult level crossing.

**So how about it? Activate local people to spruce up *their* station!**

**SATURDAY 1 OCTOBER – NORWICH**  
**BRANCH MEETING – 14.15 HOURS**  
**MEETING ROOM OF CHAPEL FIELDS METHODIST CHURCH,**  
**CHAPEL FIELDS ROAD, NORWICH NR2 1SD**

## ***All aboard the Cambridge Guided- Busway.***



*During the first week of operation a bus leaves its 'guide track' just south of Cambridge station on route to St Ives.*

*Photo: Chris Burton*

Nick Dibben reports that " The World's longest guided busway between Cambridge and St Ives has finally opened. It will take sometime before the impact of

the scheme can be assessed, although nearly 56,000 used the service in the first week. Simply advertising the bus service, fear of the traffic congestion on the A14 and improved access to the Cambridge Science Park appear to be the main reasons for the increase in bus passengers, especially as for many the frequency and journey time is the same as the old bus route along the A14."

"In the first few weeks, time keeping was poor, with many services running 10-15 minutes late. New time tables were issued after just 3 weeks which added an extra 5 minutes on the journey between Huntingdon and Cambridge. Obviously it would have been politically unacceptable to add the time on the busway itself, so a mysterious traffic problem has developed in St Ives which causes the increased journey time." ND

## **East Anglia Branch 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Yes, another anniversary – as Trevor Garrod reminds us: " 12 February 2012 will be the anniversary of the formation of the East Anglian Branch (of the Railway Invigoration Society, as it then was).

It was actually formed on a Saturday afternoon in Norwich with John Barfield and me the only surviving members from that small gathering. So, should we mark this occasion and - if so - how? What would we be seeking to achieve and, of course, how much money would we be willing to spend?" TG

Our Chairman continues - As you will see from Trevor's piece, the Branch held its first meeting on February 12th 1972. Things are very different on the railway now, a lot of which is significantly better. Much has been achieved by the lobbying / campaigning made possible by our membership.

As Trevor suggests, the Committee at its October 1st Meeting will discuss how we celebrate this significant birthday. Your input to this, both by correspondence and by attending the afternoon meeting in Norwich, will be greatly appreciated.

I very much hope that our pioneers from those early days, National President Peter Lawrence; National Vice President Steve Wilkinson, National Director Trevor

Garrod, will make a note to be available sometime in February and certainly at the AGM! PW

*And there we have to end. A big thank you to the many who contributed material. As ever, news, articles AND pictures are always welcomed by the Editor although inclusion cannot be guaranteed. Pictures should be in JPEG format if at all possible. **Deadline for next issue is Monday 14 November.***

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

***Dates for your Diary***

**NORWICH**  
**1 October**  
**Chapel Fields**  
**Methodist Chapel. NR2 1SD**

CAMBRIDGE  
3 December  
Little St Mary's Church, CB2 8AE  
Guest Speaker: Andrew Munden,  
Director, Network Rail East Anglia

AGM: BURY ST EDMUNDS  
25 February 2012  
Friends Meeting House, IP33 1SJ

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