

#### THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE: EAST ANGLIA BRANCH www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuture.org.uk/east.htm

Issue 152 December 2011



After much rumour, it was announced on October 20<sup>th</sup> that Dutch Railways subsidiary, Abellio, had been awarded the short, 29 months, Greater Anglia franchise starting 5 February 2012. It is going to be a particularly tricky 29 months though, as it embraces the Olympic Games rail travel arrangements next August, for which National Express East Anglia (NXEA) has undertaken the bulk of the planning thus far. Success in this and the other actions to which Abellio committed will presumably augur well if they choose to apply for the longer term franchise (starting July 2014) when it is advertised. We at Railfuture East Anglia certainly wish them success, whilst remembering that NXEA achieved perhaps rather more than they have been given credit for, especially over the past couple of years. May the changeover be seamless for the bulk of its 3000 employees and particularly the two million passengers it carries each week.

As a footnote, Colin Stewart reports that Cambridge MP, Julian Huppert "was encouraged by the new Greater Anglia rail franchise holder Abellio which, being a Dutch company, would have better plans for catering for bikes; when planning their bid they sent someone to cycle round Cambridge and the local area to see what the problems were for cyclists."

But NXEA doesn't bow out just yet as the following report shows

#### Train named at Cambridge

Peter Wakefield writes that "on 30th September 2011, NXEA arranged a significant public relations event at Cambridge station. Before an invited audience of local authority officers and transport portfolio holders, NXEA staff, Railfuture etc, the Mayor of Cambridge, Dr Ian Nimmo-Smith, named a new Class 379 train "City of Cambridge". The unit was no30, the last of the 30 new trains, which received its honour at



platform 2 after a non-stop run from Liverpool Street in a record time of 48 minutes and 13 seconds.... 4 seconds faster than the previous record set in 1987! " (But don't get too excited: the overall speed limits were relaxed specially for this run with a probably unique 99mph recorded near Shelford. The December timetable will be less 'speedy' but still attractive. Ed.) Phot: Peter Wakefield

### New NXEA West Anglia timetable

All this celebration was a fitting prelude to the new West Anglia timetable that begins on Sunday December 11th 2011. This will be operated by a mixture of the existing 317/6 units and the new trains but overall providing from Cambridge and area 551 extra seats in the morning peak and to the Cambridge area 1011 extra seats in the evening. The number of services remains broadly the same but with the off-peak semi-fasts generally speeded up by around 2 minutes by omitting a Sawbridgeworth stop on most services.

The 08.03 M-F and the 08.33 M-F from Liverpool Street to Cambridge call just at Tottenham Hale and Audley End, whilst the 16.40 M-F from Cambridge calls at Audley End then fast to Tottenham Hale. However, generally in the peaktimes, 6 or so semifast trains become fasts by skipping Sawbridgeworth, Harlow Town, Broxbourne and Cheshunt stops, knocking of 9 or 10 minutes off overall journey time, particularly improving the Audley End commuter journey time. To/from Cambridge these trains now have just 4 stops including Tottenham Hale. An up morning service from Kings Lynn and an evening return is named "The Fenman" once more.

Saturday services mirror weekday off-peak with a slightly speeded up semifast and a stopping train every hour. Sadly, connections to the new half hourly Bishops Stortford-Stratford service are very poor.

Sunday services from/to Cambridge are two an hour, with a stopping service from/to Stratford and a semi fast from/to Liverpool Street. A half hourly Liverpool Street to Audley End and Cambridge service is maintained by a good connection out of a Liverpool Street-Stansted Airport service into the stopping train at Harlow Town. In the opposite direction the stopping service has a good connection at Bishops Stortford for Liverpool Street, again maintaining a half hourly service from Cambridge and Audley End.

We hope that these connections will be advised on the various station timetables, announcements on-train, on the platforms, platform displays and websites. PW

#### **New Platforms**

None of the increases in capacity created by this timetable would be possible without the addition of the two additional platforms at Cambridge - number 7 and 8 which are soon to be operational. Over 165 years or so since Cambridge station opened, long phases of familiarity have ended in sudden change. Now the view eastwards from the famous long platform has altered yet again and I wonder for how long. The new platforms and the bridge already feel as if they had always been there. We look forward to seeing them thronged with passengers. Well done, Network Rail and National Express East Anglia. PW

#### **New thinking?**

It is pleasing to see the route north of Stansted Mountfichet once again getting some attention with better trains and certainly more seats. The focus in the last few years has been on the development of profitable Stansted Airport services.

However, much more thought does now need to be given to the route particularly as developments at Stratford City, London Docklands and Cambridge continue apace. Of course, the M11 has paralleled this railway for many years, and unusually the railway has not really competed, largely because of the sinuous, speed restricted nature of the route north of Bishops Storford and the very congested service pattern south thereof. Traffic from Whittlesford and Audley End has not been developed as much as similar stations on neighbouring routes into London, owing, no doubt, to the lack-lustre timetable and often poorly-presented trains. We hope a future operator will eventually improve these matters developing services via Stratford, a destination, aside from its many transport hub advantages, offering Stratford City Westfield for 'retail therapy', rather than M11 motoring to Lakeside and Bluewater centres. PW

#### The wire-less railway!

Metal theft has become a serious problem in recent years, whether it be telephone cable, church roof lead, road signs, manhole covers or of course, railway signal cabling and, amazingly, 'live' overhead wires. Now it has reached epidemic proportions, described by some as economic sabotage. Legislation has lagged behind this disruptive practice which costs the railway millions each year.

One partial solution would be to make all transactions at metal dealers cashless, using cheques that could only be credited into named bank accounts thus creating a paper trail. Another might be shutting down scrap dealers in whose yard such material is found. None of this, however, would stop crime syndicates filling hired containers with the stolen metal and shipping directly out of the country.

When I was working in Mozambique a few years ago, many of a newly rehabilitated railway's brand new UK made rails were found, neatly cut up, in numerous containers, at the port en route to a country hungry for "scrap" before a single train had run on them. Routine searches at our ports should take place of very heavy containers; so the problem is certainly not just ours alone!

On Thursday September 15<sup>th</sup> the West Anglia route was the victim of just such an act of sabotage: early morning cable theft led to a great deal of damage to the 'overhead wire' resulting in power being shut off between Harlow Town and Stansted Mountfichet electricity feeder stations. Trains could not run south of Bishops Stortford for most of the day.

Unfortunately neither did they run north of Bishops Stortford. Hundreds of train users trying to get to work, college, school and shops etc were simply abandoned! Buses were *not* provided. Personally, I have never known the service to be abandoned in this way before. I wrote to the Managing Director of NXEA, Andrew Chivers, asking why this had happened. He explained that "we were unable to run a service north of Stansted as a feeder station at Ugley was taken out of operation the previous day for emergency maintenance work. The next feeder station, located at Milton Fen would not have had the capability to feed both the route to Kings Cross and our services. In these unique circumstances we could not therefore operate a service as we would have liked."

There are still unanswered questions about what seems cavalier abandonment of the service 'til late afternoon... would a 4-car shuttle every hour really bring the trains through Cambridge to a halt even if NR could not temporarily re-instate power through Ugley; or why could an hourly NXEA service not be run from the North (single line) Curve at Stansted to Cambridge with FCC curtailing their semi fast service at Royston combined with special stops there with the non stop trains? More joined up railway thinking, please, Network Rail, or, as it was not a London-bound problem was anybody really bothered? PW

#### The Cambridge to Colchester Rail Project

The Chairman of the long standing Cambridge to Sudbury Rail Renewal Association has supplied the following information about the updating of their long term aims. Please note that this is for your information only, as this campaign is **not**, as yet, a Railfuture East Anglia Branch aspiration campaign.

"THE PURPOSE of the Association is twofold.

- A. To provide a rail-link between Cambridge and Colchester via Haverhill and Sudbury, connecting into the national rail system, as a contribution to the transport *needs* of Great Britain as a whole and of south-east England in particular.
- B. To provide much improved travel opportunities, including commuting to London, for the communities between Cambridge and Colchester, most notably Haverhill and Sudbury, but also other communities such as Sawston, Linton, Clare, and Long Melford. (Haverhill has no railway at all at present, and Sudbury lacks rail-connection to the west and north).

Routes & Technical Requirements – Several alternative rail-routes between Cambridge and Colchester have been considered by the Association. We believe that we should keep an 'open mind' on them all, until we communicate with organisations, which can deliver engineering feasibility studies on their merits.

We advocate that a new railway should have a 25Kv overhead electrified specification, and be generally double – tracked.

A NEW NAME The subject of updating our purpose coincided with the need, felt by many members, for a new name for our project, and for our website. Our Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2011 had decided that our website, previously entitled, 'csrra.co.uk', should be renamed 'railhaverhill.net'. Discussion took place at this Meeting on our project's name, and the proposition that the new name should be 'Railhaverhill.net', supplemented by 'The Cambridge to Colchester Rail Project' was approved. Compiled by *Chairman, Rev. Malcolm Hill, 11 Meadow View Road, Sudbury CO10 7NU, 01376 323206* 

#### **Newmarket Station footfall count**

The result of our footfall count was used as a press release, reproduced below.

# "Number of passengers using Newmarket station UP by 33% in just 30 months: Jenny Baker and Peter Wakefield report

On Thursday September 28th, local volunteers belonging to rail user groups MARPA (Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association) and Railfuture East Anglia, carried out a footfall count of users of Newmarket station. On that \*Thursday\*, 685 passengers were counted compared to the 452 counted on Thursday April 23rd 2008. This equates to approximately 250,000 users a year - up from 165,000 in 2008. Most users travelled to and from and via Cambridge as in my picture of the a breakfast time passengers awaiting their train.

MARPA and Railfuture ascribe much of this increase to the awareness and convenience of the hourly fast service inaugurated in 2005 and the more comfortable trains now used on most services throughout the day.



Surveyed the facilities at the station the volunteers concluded that the platform needs lengthening to accommodate 3 car trains and the 'bus-stop' type passenger shelters are of very poor quality. No platform seating exists apart from perches in the shelters. Car parking is very inadequate with all 11 spaces in constant use with evidence of overspill into neighbouring streets. Overall it is a very poor

gateway to this important town. (Photo: P. Wakefield)

MARPA and Railfuture East Anglia call upon the Town and District Councils, Suffolk County Council, and the horse racing industry, to come together and address the poor facilities for all users of the station, as a matter of urgency. A long article on this topic appeared in an early October edition of the Newmarket Weekly News in which MARPA and our Branch were extensively quoted. Many thanks for the hard work put in by our members. PW /Jenny Baker

\* Why Thursday? The rail industry tell us that Thursday is the 'average' day of the week for station usage." See also: <a href="http://www.marpa.org.uk">http://www.marpa.org.uk</a>

#### And now we add Meldreth to the 'counted' list:

Yes, we completed another 'users' count on Thursday (of course) 10 November, this time at Meldreth just south of Cambridge on the route to Kings Cross. A bit more testing though as the first train was at 05.44 and the last at 01.05 the next day! Your esteemed Chairman was man enough to be there for both and reports: "this is provisional and open to correction: 150 people boarded Royston bound trains and 196 alighted from them. 216 travelled towards Cambridge and 129 alighted at the same time. Total for the day 691 users. If the principle of Thursdays being the 'average' day is followed, that equates to 252,000 users per annum."

"There appears to have been less student travel on the day as most of the travellers boarding towards Cambridge in the am peak appeared to be adults going to work. We were told that student travel into Cambridge fluctuates according to the individual student's timetable... to test that we'll have to do a whole week! Only joking! But a very big thank you to everyone who gave up their precious time to take part." CB/PW

Branch Meeting at Cambridge

Saturday 3 December at 2.15pm

in Little St Mary's Church, CB2 1QG

### **Further News items**

#### **ABELLIO Late News:**

Hearing rumours that some NXEA EMUs were coming off-lease we wrote to Abellio who replied thus: "...the introduction of extra train carriages across the Greater Anglia network during the NXEA franchise term has resulted in capacity which now exceeds demand. It is therefore possible to deliver the capacity requirements of passengers with a small reduction of carriages. This saves costs which will be reflected in savings to the tax payer. The reduction in carriages will not reduce service levels and will not make crowding worse. Indeed, it allows us to deploy the fleet more effectively which means there will be less crowding on some services." Ruud Haket Transition Director Abellio.

All a bit odd as we thought the carriages were meant to actually reduce overcrowding significantly everywhere. It seems these coaches will be refurbished and sent to Lancashire to provide emus for the otherwise trainless new electric network. DfT and egg-on-face scenario? ND/PW

#### **Ely Crossing**

The Branch has responded to a consultation by Cambridgeshire County Council on options to deal with the problems associated with the Ely Station level crossing and the adjacent road under-pass. This under-pass has only limited clearance (2.7m) and is often hit by high road vehicles. The adjacent level crossing is closed for around 35 minutes each hour, causing delays to road traffic which then blocks the road to the under-pass for cars. Increases in rail freight traffic once the Felixstowe–Nuneaton route works are complete will only make matters worse.

In choosing a scheme to resolve these issues, the Branch considers the following issues are important.

- •Improved movement and less disruption for both road and rail users
- •Maintaining and improving the passenger interchange at Ely Station
- Environmental impact of the scheme
- Disruption during the works
- Cost

In responding to the consultation, the Branch is supporting the option to deepen the existing under-pass to enable it to be used by all vehicles. This will allow the level crossing to be closed and remove the risk of bridge strikes. The scheme will also maintain easy access to the station. We do have concerns about the possible disruption during construction and have urged the County Council to produce full construction sequence when they get to the next design stage.

The other options considered by the County Council were for a new road running across the railway on a viaduct just south of the station. Two possible routes were included. The Branch did not support these options due to the higher cost and high visual impact. Although they would result in the closure of the level crossing, the existing under-pass would remain, as would the risk of road vehicles hitting the bridge. ND

#### **Information during Disruption**

Passenger Focus has issued a report on passenger expectations for information at times when the rail service is disrupted. Not surprisingly, most passengers are unsatisfied with the present arrangements.

Although commuters welcomed the provision of a text messaging service during disruption, many were unaware that many train operators already provide this. There was a strong requirement for accurate and easy to understand information and a strong preference for "real announcements" rather than pre-recorded messages. Passengers wanted announcements to include the location of station staff where further information could be obtained. Many felt that information on the reasons given for the delay were inadequate, especially when they had to explain to their employers why they would be late. Hopefully the euphemistic phrase "operating difficulties" will become a thing of the past. Other key bits of information that were not always provided were details of alternative routes and

most important, how long the disruption would last. Sadly, nothing was said about the practice of keeping passengers cooped up in a train, sometimes for hours on end, when a major incident occurs. ND/CB

#### Station take-over bid:

A disused Victorian building at a station could be transformed into a community cafe.

Newport Business Association (NBA) wants to take over the building on Newport station platform and turn it into a café run by residents. NBA adopted the station one year ago and with the help of dozens of community volunteers, businesses and schoolchildren, has transformed the area around the station into a more welcoming, attractive and tidier place resulting in an award for the most improved station from National Express. ND

## EAST MIDLANDS TRAINS

"From the same day, off-pattern departures from Cambridge to Birmingham at 0652 and 1751 will move to 0655 and 1800, a modest but useful acceleration. Most trains will be advertised as arriving in Birmingham up to five minutes earlier." Fuller details from this user group at www.penrug.org.uk JS/CB

#### **East-West Rail Link: Parliamentary news:**

Liberal MP for Cambridge, Julian Huppert, is to a play a key Parliamentary role in the discussions about the multi-million pound East West Rail Scheme, through being appointed Vice-Chair of the new All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the project. The scheme includes a rail link from Cambridge to Oxford.

The APPG is committed to the strategic rail project and Julian's appointment will allow him to be involved in discussions and debates on the issue with Parliamentarians and key private sector companies.

**And with** literally going-to-press news, John Henderson writes to say "On 15th November there was a half-hour EWRS debate in Westminster Hall, London, which can be viewed at: <a href="http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?">http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?</a> meetingId=9342 Tip: on starting move the slider to just after 1100 (11am).

Later, the Minister of State for Transport, with responsibility for rail, Theresa Villiers, joins the debate. She acknowledges 'impressive value-for-money' (its

benefit/cost ratio), but ominously adds that the project must be 'affordable'. She explains what's meant by that but I leave you to draw your own conclusions.

Looking forward to 23 NOVEMBER in Parliament, when there will be the first meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group for East West Rail. At this we hope to see a good attendance by the MPs who have constituencies that will benefit (which, given the connections the project offers is most of them!).

Finally, some not so good news from Oxfordshire, where the application by Chiltern Railways to rebuild the Oxford-Bicester section (part of their Evergreen 3 Project, and a necessary element of Oxford-Cambridge) has been postponed by the DfT due to inadequate provision for re-housing the bats that live in Wolvercot Tunnel. We understand that Chiltern is now close to agreement on a new home for the bats, so we're sure the green light is not far off. Somewhat more worrying is the statement by the DfT that: 'He [the Inquiry Inspector] concluded that while there was no currently demonstrated need for the East West Rail link, such a need may arise in the future. Obviously a conclusion we must challenge. As usual, comments and suggestions to ox-cam@railfuture.org.uk (if you don't need any more emails from us please email with 'unscribe' in the subject line) JH

#### **Loco-hauled versus Electric Multiple Units (EMUs):**

Tony Baxter and Tony Bedford of Clacton area user group write to say "Rail magazine recently reported that National Express have admitted that the class 360 emus are not appropriate for long-distance commuting and, with effect from the December 2011 timetable change, ex-Stansted Express class 317/7 emus will be rostored for the peak-hour Stowmarket and Harwich services.

However this still leaves the Class 360 emus operating the bulk of the Clacton services, which have similar journey times (around 90 minutes). These Clacton trains also provide the majority of the outer suburban services from Colchester, for which high density 12-car trains with 2+3 seating are appropriate; this inevitably leads to a poor quality of service for Clacton and Walton.

It seems that Stowmarket passengers are reluctant to use the class 360s, preferring to wait for a Norwich service with Mk III coaches (which also stop less often. Ed). This has been noted too in the Tendring District of north-east Essex where some people drive to Manningtree or Colchester to travel on a Norwich service. Others use the Clacton service as far as Colchester and change onto a Norwich train there.

The current housing consultation for the Tendring District indicates that thousands of new houses are due to be built in the coastal strip comprising Clacton, Frinton and Walton. With a lack of suitable employment in this area, an increase in commuter traffic is inevitable and there is the danger that the bulk of this will be road-borne (leading to the requirement for road building), unless the local authorities and train operator collaborate in providing a higher standard and frequency (half-hourly) of local (to Colchester Town) and through London services from both Clacton and Walton.

The deficiencies of the current pattern of service are highlighted by the high

number of interchanges at the small station of Thorpe-le-Soken (village population circa 2000), greater than Norwich or Ipswich and only slightly less than Colchester North.

Network Rail is currently repainting stations prior to the transfer of responsibilities for station maintenance in 2012 to the train operator (Abellio). However certain backlog items are not being covered; these include station canopy roofs which require the overhead wires to be isolated thus still involving Network Rail – one really does wonder whether this policy has been thought through.

On the plus side, there is a late evening train from Colchester Town (departing 23.07) to Walton, proving a connection at Thorpe-le-Soken out of the 22.18 ex-Liverpool Street, and a late train to Clacton departing Liverpool Street at 23.18 on weekdays. NXEA have also made sensible adjustments to timetables regarding the Clacton Air Show with through trains between Walton and Clacton; also the Sunday shuttle service between Walton and Thorpe-le-Soken has been extended to Colchester Town during the high summer and over the Christmas shopping period (the latter are due to start on 4th December)." If you wish to get involved with this active user group contact Tony Baxter on: acbaxter@iee.org or Tony Bedford on <a href="mailto:arug@btinternet.com">arug@btinternet.com</a>. Thank you both for making contact. TB/TB

# www.eastcoast.co.uk financial

East Coast trains declared their financial results for 2010/11 during October. Turnover was

£644m and Expenditure £464m leaving a tidy surplus of £180m. Of this £176m disappeared into Government coffers as a 'Premium Payment', or a 27% return from East Coast customers! Rather healthy. Revenue growth was below the 8% 'InterCity' average, allegedly reflecting low economic activity in the North East. Within days of this announcement Ms Elaine Holt, Chair of East Coast resigned from that position and subsequently became Bid Director for National Express Rail Division starting in January 2012. Michael Holden is the new Chair, East Coast. CB

thamesinkprogramme.co.uk The 2011 Stakeholders meeting took place in mid-November and offered presentations from Patrick Bateson, Thameslink Sponsor at DfT, Roger Perkins of Thameslink and Graeme Elliott from Network Rail. Bateson would say nothing about the Siemens 'contract' as it is under scrutiny. This also seems to affect whether or not services terminate at Cambridge or carry on to the proposed Cambridge Science Park station, but they would be a mix of 8 or 12car formation. Hitachi's Inter-City Express Project train is still expected to operate right through to Kings Lynn.

The Invitation To Tender notice for the First Capital Connect franchise should appear next Autumn. Otherwise no rabbits out of the hat from Mr Bateson. Roger Perkins fluently described changes to operations from 11 December which primarily

affect the route to Bedford. The real eye-opener was Graeme Elliott's eloquently enthusiastic exposition of infrastructure changes south of the Thames, especially the rebuilding of London Bridge station. This latter project is an astonishing example of logistic complexity in which both operational and architectural aspects are being refashioned in order to double the station's capacity.

Thameslink services will have to be truncated at Blackfriars for a period to make all this possible. At the moment the project appears to be on budget and schedule. When completed in early 2018 it will surely become a monument fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Do check the Thameslink website for full information and pictures of the project.

http://www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk/cms/pages/home CB

#### **Cross Party Agreement on HS2?**

A reply from Labour Shadow Transport Secetary, Maria Eagle, to member, Alan Mayes, concludes that broadly the parties agree on the need for HS2. There isn't space for the whole letter but I will quote: "I understand the strong feelings that this issue evokes, particularly amongst those whose lives will be seriously affected by the proposed route of the line." She goes on to say: "The review that we have carried out has concluded that there are significant economic benefits from reducing journey times between our major cities, particularly for the north of England. I think some of the wilder economic and employment claims are illadvised, but I have been convinced that there will be benefits to the country from this new line."

".....Labour is also absolutely clear that, without the completion of the full Y-shaped network to Manchester and Yorkshire, the case for the new line is significantly weakened. That is why we think it is wrong that the government is proposing to bring forward a hybrid bill which will only cover the route as far as the West Midlands. There is no convincing reason not to seek to obtain the powers for the full route now."

There were various other caveats as one might expect, but Labour support is apparently largely forthcoming for the Government's position on HS2. AM/CB

#### A14 Road enlargement gains new momentum:

In recent weeks local government has sensed a re-aroused interest in improving the notorious A14 road between Cambridge and Huntingdon. Initially the DfT has provided money to carry out the first two stages of a survey, the first of which is expected to be completed before Christmas and will assess the damage acrued by previous schemes not being implemented.

Stage two will assess other transport modes and their possible contribution, such as buses, trains and rail freight. In Cambridge News 21 November the story had already moved on to suggest that a new road funded by toll is the most likely. This is, of course, without any results from the government-funded assessments being to hand. Certainly it's a story which will run and run ND/CB

And a sad piece of news on which to finish: Peter Lawrence writes to inform us that Colin Littlewood, a very active participant in East Norfolk Travellers Association, died recently. Our commiseration to his family and our thanks for his committed work. Henceforth, all relevant correspondence, news letters etc, to Steve Hewitt, Flat 3, 83A North Quay, Great Yarmouth NR30 1JF which is his new address. PL

At which point the 'Bufferstops' must be placed for this issue.. As ever, grateful thanks to the many who contributed material, and apologies if I've been editorially brutal to your text – space is always the reason. Do keep it coming, especially pictures which are in very short supply. These should be in JPEG format if at all possible; contact Editor if in doubt. **Deadline for next issue is** 15 January 2012

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**Dates for your Diary** 

CAMBRIDGE
3 December at 2.15pm
Little St Mary's Church, CB2
8AE

Guest Speaker: Julie Houghton, Network Rail Route Enhancement Manager, East Anglia

Annual General Meeting
BURY ST EDMUNDS
25 February 2012
Friends Meeting House, IP33 1SJ

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