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Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

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Abellio win the Anglia Franchise *with a record number of new trains*



Stadler and Bombardier share the order

At last we know - Abellio is awarded the nine-year franchise.

Just after 7am on Wednesday 10 August our new Minister for Transport, Chris Grayling, announced from the Bombardier factory in Derby, that Abellio had been awarded the nine-year Anglia franchise beginning in October this year. Some might argue that Abellio's record does not justify the award (remembering especially autumn 2015 Leaf Fall débâcle): maybe, but with two short short franchises under its belt has always been denied the opportunity to spend and

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flourish. That has now been banished with this long franchise and quite the largest order of new trains East Anglia has ever been promised.

Of these new trains Bombardier’s Aventura concept is the bigger order and to be built at their Litchurch Lane factory in Derby. A much welcome boost to morale there. This versatile design, based upon that currently under construction for Crossrail, is destined for outer suburban routes from Liverpool Street to Southend, Clacton, Walton and Ipswich and up to Cambridge on West Anglia. It is said this dual order is to replace all trains presently used on Greater Anglia routes although one wonders if this truly includes the five-year old Class 379 used on West Anglia? But all should mean all, and Railfuture thinks it does.

The second tranche was probably a bigger surprise, as this represents the UK’s first order of main line trains from Swiss manufacturer, Stadler. Included are some three- and four-car bi-modes, or Electro-Diesel, as Stadler prefer to call them, in addition to 240 electric-only inter-city vehicles for Great Eastern Main Line (GEML)/Stansted Express and West Anglia ‘fastest service’ use, as can be seen from accompanying table.

Abellio East Anglia Planned Rolling Stock



Fleet	Inter-city	Airport	Suburban	Suburban	Regional	Regional	Total
Supplier	Stadler Rail	Stadler Rail	Bombardier	Bombardier	Stadler Rail	Stadler Rail	
Type	Flirt UK	Flirt UK	Aventura	Aventura	Flirt UK	Flirt UK	
Multiple unit	Electric	Electric	Electric	Electric	Electro-diesel	Electro-diesel	
Cars per unit	12	12	10	5	4	3	
Number of units	10	10	22	89	24	14	169
Number of vehicles	120	120	220	445	96	42	1043
Primary routes	Inter-city routes	Stansted Express, West Anglia	West Anglia, Great Eastern	West Anglia, Great Eastern	Regional routes	Regional routes	
Passenger service	2019	2019	2020	2020	2019	2019	

Table kind courtesy of www.railwaygazette.com

The Stadler units are based on the FLIRT design which is well established in continental Europe, and indeed on narrower gauge mountain railways, whose dimensions more accurately reflect the British loading gauge.



In effect Stadler rolling stock will dominate the scene north of Colchester and Bishop’s Stortford, hopefully sparking (!) much new business, which is certainly necessary if only to pay for the trains and service a rather demanding financial package. With so much new kit Abellio ought no longer to be the source of unreliability; ‘extreme’ weather, tragic incidents and man/beast trespass excepted.

But every franchise is only as successful as its partner allows: bringing a 19thC railway up to 21stC requirements is a merciless challenge at the best of times for Network Rail. They too carry our hopes and demand our best wishes: like the healthy human body depends on good blood flow, so the railway timetable has to rely on its track and signalling operating efficiently for vital train 'flow'.

So our Branch says, Norwich-in-90 is good but not if the overall East Anglia service crumbles because of infrastructure constraints. Thus the oft-requested second track at Trowse Swing Bridge, remodelling Ely North Junction, and loops along the Felixstowe branch remain essential, as does vastly increased robustness nearer to London. One hopes these new trains will accelerate noticeably quicker than current stock, use regenerative braking and safely brake more quickly. All very important factors given that East Anglia's services tend to travel short distances between stops. The current Defensive Driving policy does no favours to our timetable.

Ipswich and Norwich to Peterborough and Cambridge routes are in dire need of shorter journey times. Anachronisms like the 12-year old 'temporary' speed restriction over Croxton level crossing north of Thetford, that saps fuel, wears out brakes, and adds significant travel time need to be removed. The branches out of Norwich and Ipswich too need sprightlier 21stC operation.

And the service improvements promised? First: there is no mention of Felixstowe, London to Yarmouth trains, or reconnecting Wisbech (in fact Wisbech is altogether absent from the DfT website map!). According to the Financial Times "Abellio is promising a 10 per cent cut in average journey times across the network, which also includes services to Stansted Airport", which is great if true.

The Ipswich-Peterborough service at long last goes to hourly and will be extended to Colchester, an almost certain testament to active lobbying by Railfuture, and others. Services from Norwich to Cambridge are for the most part extended to Stansted Airport, another commendable move. Norwich-Ipswich-London is to go to three trains per hour, yet with pathing at a premium this suggests a current semi-fast to Ipswich being extended. But at least the patrons will never have long to wait for their train! All these proposals pretty well guarantee a completely re-written timetable in three to four years time. Again, good.

As a further comment our Railfuture Director, Jerry Alderson, observes: "*Interesting that free Wi-Fi on all trains is mentioned but no reference to power-points (especially USB ones). Passenger groups, Railfuture in particular, consider power-points to be potentially more important than Wi-Fi especially on longer journeys since most news apps cache stories. Not everyone wants to carry around a charged booster battery. the maintenance advantages of only having two sources of train for the entire franchise? It certainly reduces costs e.g. less staff training, fewer spares to hold, same equipment to service all trains and so on.*"

Inevitably there are many details about this franchise we have yet to learn, one of which is where will all these new trains be maintained and by whom, Bombardier and Stadler? It is rumoured that a site near Manningtree is being considered: it does at least have a

triangle to hand, like Crown Point. And will Crown Point with its restricted access be retained?

The future augurs well for passengers who might well feel a touch pampered by these new trains, even though four years will pass before they become widely evident. There is the caveat that maybe FLIRT 110mph electrics on GEM1 might take a bit of time persuading passengers that it is superior to present day Mark 3 refurbished coaches. But that aside, it's probably likely that in time we will all fall in love with a FLIRT! So congratulations, Abellio, and let us hope the franchise bid proves realistic operationally and financially. CB/PS/JA



Terrific for train enthusiasts but bad for the balance sheet: two locomotive hauled trains expensively substitute for unavailable diesel units at Norwich in early August. What can't be seen are two further locomotives completing these top-and-tailed services totalling just six coaches but utilising no less than 11,100 horsepower! Apart from special events services, like Lowestoft Air Display, this sight ought to be consigned to the past with the new franchise. In fact even the foreground single-car Cl.153 unit should also become history by 2020. CB

More campaigning needed though, despite good news

Despite all the foregoing, our Committee Member, Phil Smart, reminds us that “We don't yet know if all proposals in the bid were accepted by the Department for Transport in the current post-Brexit climate. Sources close to the bid teams suggest some infrastructure improvements were not taken up and we need to keep up the pressure for a ‘fast’ Ipswich-Cambridge/Peterborough service as well as the reopening to Wisbech.” To which we might add that MPs, government and Network Rail need to be continually lobbied about improving infrastructure, so, so crucial to a successful timetable, and to the Treasury actually receiving what it is promised by the franchisee, Abellio.

Another significant aspect listed in the franchise commitments is this: “.....investment to improve the journey experience, including nearly £60m for stations, with major schemes at Broxbourne, Cambridge, Cheshunt, Harlow and Southend Victoria, digital information screens at all 131 stations, improved ticket offices and more ticket vending machines, nearly 1,800 additional car parking spaces and 4000 additional cycle parking spaces”.

Quite a list, but dovetailing neatly with a deliberation at our last Branch meeting about running an “Easy Stations” competition in connection with PRM (Persons with Reduced Mobility). Therefore, while welcoming the new rolling stock, which will comply with PRM regulations by 2020, the same cannot be said of every station. A point made in Railfuture's evidence to the Transport Select Committee in June 2016.

In the light of this £60m to be spent on station improvements, Railfuture will run this ‘Easy Stations’ award scheme to encourage Abellio to invest in better access for

everyone. There will be an annual award featuring a certificate and special plaque for the station which we adjudge has been made most effectively attractive to 'PRM' passengers. PS/CB

Phil Smart, reflects on how the award process thought it was heading into port, when up sprang the Referendum storm and suddenly all bets were off.....

Franchising Slips on 'Leave': East Anglia goes to extra time and penalties

The invitation to tender (ITT) for the Anglia franchise, issued in 2015 encouraged significant investment in new trains and a challenge to achieve 'Norwich in 90 minutes' by 2019. Railfuture met with all three bidders (Abellio, First Group and National Express) to call for further improvements including an hourly Ipswich-Peterborough service. Tenders were submitted in December 2015 and we confidently expected the award announcement by early June. After previous stalled attempts, most recently the 'direct award' that followed the West Coast challenge, what could possibly go wrong this time?

In February, the government decided to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. The vote was scheduled for June 23rd which would delay the franchise announcement until the following Monday (27th), but it never came.....

The majority for leaving the EU had thrown the franchise competition in doubt.

The bids all included replacement of between 85% and 100% of the rolling stock fleet, up to 1,000 new vehicles at about £1m each! Most rolling stock is priced in Euros and even those from UK factories are assembled from imported components. Sterling (£) was trading at €1.40 when the bids were submitted but less than €1.20 after the EU vote, adding around 15% to the cost of new trains. Of greater concern though is the impact on projected revenue. Franchises are bid on making premium payments to the DfT based on increasing passenger numbers linked to economic growth. With the Bank of England now forecasting a slowdown, or even recession, the bids were no longer viable.

Financial support is available from the DfT if there is a reduction in GDP or CLE (Central London Employment) during the life of the contract, yet this one required a 'bail out' before it had even been awarded! Negotiations would therefore have needed to involve all three bidders to avoid any legal challenge from unsuccessful rivals.

Resolving this is expensive and it is not just East Anglia's problem, recent awards for East Coast, ScotRail, Northern and Trans-Pennine may also need bailing out in the post 'BREXIT' climate. Railfuture opposes any compromises to either fleet or service ambitions, or a return to 'RPI+' fare increases, in order to pay for it. Responsibility must lie with the DfT and Treasury, not passengers. PS

Whittlesford Parkway Station....can you help please?

Whittlesford Parkway station is becoming increasingly busy and not just with local users heading off to London or Cambridge. Increasingly people are alighting each morning en route to one of the several ‘Science Parks’ (Babraham, Granta Park, Hinxton Genome, Chesterford Research Park, et al), then back again in the evening.

As a result of this rapidly growing activity and the aim to build many more houses, Railfuture and others are trying to work out how best to link Whittlesford station effectively to its catchment.



One of these poorly linked communities, Sawston, is a sizeable neighbour itself. As many of these train users cycle onward to their ultimate destination, secure pathways for them and pedestrians need to be considered.

With facilities at Whittlesford of growing concern as well, there’s no avoiding the fact that the station needs a plan to make itself much more user-friendly. Many of its customers think it already a mess with poor signage, and increasingly inadequate cycle and car parking space.

With this and more in mind, Railfuture has been in informal discussion with the local District Council and developers.

So where do you come in, how might you help?

To get a better understanding of the situation and what needs improving we propose three things:

- Conduct a station facilities audit, similar to that recently carried out at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton.
- Conduct a footfall count: there are four trains an hour in each direction and such a count will enable us to work out passenger destinations related to time.
- Form a rail user group embracing Whittlesford, Shelford and Great Chesterford stations.

To this end any volunteer help would be greatly appreciated. So whether you live in the area or in Cambridge, do contact me, Peter Wakefield, if you would like to be involved. Contact details are on the back page of this newsletter. Our aim is to complete these tasks during the coming Autumn.

Station Adopters also needed.

Paul Oxley of Abellio Greater Anglia asks members in the Whittlesford area if they would consider becoming a station adopter at Whittlesford, or Great Chesterford or Shelford. What does it comprise? Just go to <https://www.abelliogreateranglia.co.uk/about-us/station-adopter-scheme> if you want more details, or please contact paul.oxley@abelliogreateranglia.co.uk PW

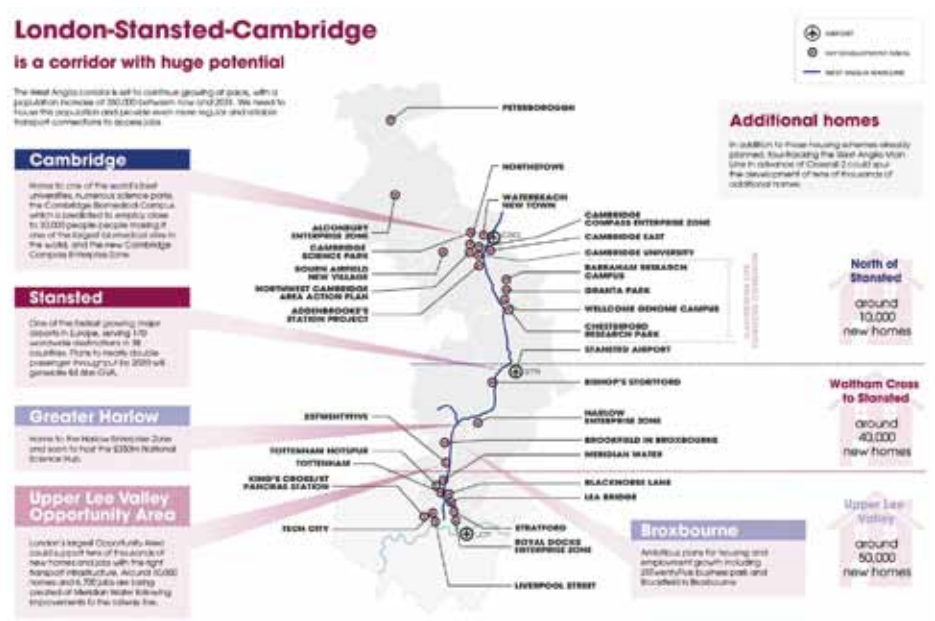
London-Stansted-Cambridge Corridor Taskforce Report

This can be found via the link below, and very much connects with the work we wish to undertake at Whittlesford.

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/taskforce_brochure_a4_24ppv11.pdf

The Taskforce notes: “Currently, Cambridge’s transport links are being held back by the limitations of the West Anglia Main Line. Irregular services to and from London, combined with long journey times and issues with reliability are the greatest potential obstacle to future growth. A chronic housing shortage is also pricing some of the region’s most capable employees out of the region. Investing in the railway would help to spur the development of thousands of much-needed homes and improve the attractiveness of the region to even more high-skilled technology and life-science employers.”

The report assesses development throughout the corridor from Stratford and Liverpool Street in London to Stansted Airport and north of Cambridge, noting the huge growth in industry and housing. It points out the need for substantial capacity increases along the West Anglia Mainline if it is to do its job sustaining this growth. It says that though the route will ultimately be linked into London’s Crossrail 2, before that happens the necessary expansion work further north must be started, and very soon at that.



Cambridge Cycle Point officially opens

Monday June 27th 2016 is one of those days when something truly transformational happened on our transport network....Robert Goodwill MP, the then Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, performed the opening of the Cycle Point at Cambridge station.

This building, next to Platform 6, holds nigh on 3,000 cycles over three floors....it's the largest in the UK...though hopefully not for long. Mr Goodwill said: *"The superb new Cycle Point here in Cambridge will undoubtedly help get people out of their cars and make cycling the natural choice for short journeys, improving health, air quality and cutting congestion. The number of people cycling to catch trains has increased by 40 per cent since 2010, so secure cycle spaces at rail stations are critical.*



Cycle Point..Second floor: Paul Oxley of AGA explains this new cyclists facility on opening day



The Cycle Point is easy to access via shallow ramps to levels 2/3. The ground floor entrance for cycles faces one of Cambridge's newest streets: Great Northern Road! The cycles are secured to a mixture of Sheffield Stands and FalcoLevel Premium+ two-tier racks allowing much denser storage. The lifting mechanism for the top deck has a gas filled strut to aid and control positioning. All floors are surveyed by a total of 86 CCTV cameras under the control of British Transport Police. It is free to use and open 24/7, as they say.

The quality of the Cycle Point is enhanced by a superb piece of public art called "Continental Drift", spread above the stair well, as you can well see from the accompanying photograph by our Branch Chairman, and leading down to the new station square.

Designed by Troika (a London-based art collective), it projects an image of continents which drifts languidly to and fro on the ceiling; a fitting start in a very international city to journeys wherever: by train of course!

Incorporated within the Cycle Point is Rutland Cycling, a shop where bikes may be repaired, bought or hired. Hiring can also be done online – with machines returned to the station shop or to one of Rutland’s four branches in the City (www.rutlandcycling.com). National Rail has produced a downloadable ‘app’ that allows you to book a bike when you buy a rail ticket. All very cycle-friendly in the UK’s most cycle-aware city, so congratulations to Abellio Greater Anglia on this cycle ‘palace’! PW

John, Jerry and Ben go-a-huntin’ for an EAST-WEST route



Many people are keen to know about the route options for the new line from Cambridge to Bedford. To find out exactly what lies along the way, three Railfuture members set out on a warm and bright Saturday in June. We followed mainly the route recommended in the Railfuture report ‘Route options for the Central Section’, but looked at some of the alternatives along the way. Map courtesy of Googlemaps

Leaving Cambridge station, we headed over to the Hitchin Line at Little Shelford where we saw a good site for a junction for the new line. Driving north along the M11 leaving at the Coton turning, we noted the ground rising steeply in front of us: this stretch will need a tunnel. We joined the A428 at Madingley and headed west to Bourn Airfield – the site of a new community of 3,500 houses. We passed Cambourne - still growing - and then Papworth, where there is a long-term plan for a massive expansion south to the A428. We stopped for coffee at Caxton Gibbet. No one being hanged today.

Feeling caffeinated we continued along the single carriageway A428 where there are three-mile tailbacks at peak periods. A new dual carriageway is being built to relieve it, probably across the ‘table top’ to the north of the existing road. There is plenty of room for a railway to run alongside the new road. We skirted St Neots driving along the edge of the two-mile swathe allocated to new housing, between the road and the East Coast Main Line. Stopping at Little Barford power station we saw how the lie of the land sets up a good site for a rail junction and/or station. Soon we crossed the Black Cat roundabout with its spare turn out, ready for the new road towards Cambridge. Taking the A421 to Bedford, we climbed a gradual rise with open country on both sides. We left the A421 near Renhold and skirted the northern outskirts of Bedford. This route has the advantage of bringing the new line into Bedford from the north, via the Midland Main

Line, so avoiding reversing in Bedford for the journey west. It is rolling countryside (quite a bit of cut and fill needed) but close to the new housing and commercial areas of Bedford. Coming to the west side we threaded the golf courses and business parks completing our westward leg in Clapham village, alongside the A6 trunk road, as you can see from the map (courtesy Ord.Survey).



The wheel in Bedford River Valley Park, commemorating closure of rail line. Clapham Ben and Jerry relax.

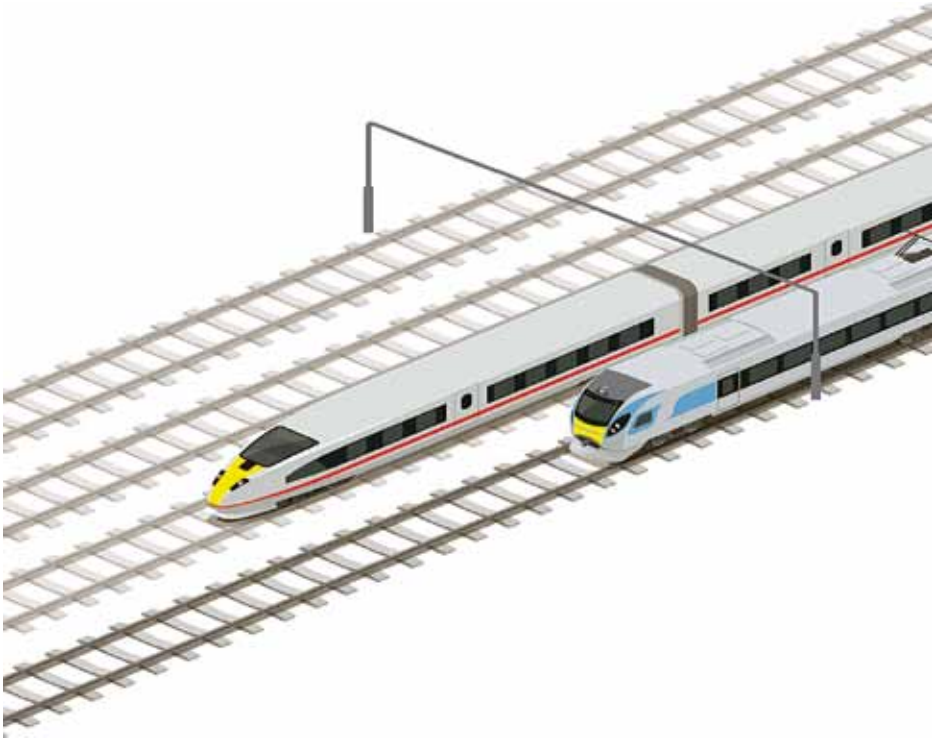
Our return was via the two Bedford stations, keeping quite close to the original route to Cambridge. We visited the historic village of Willington (not indicated on Googlemap) and then started on an alternative route back keeping close to a straight line towards Cambridge. We moved on quickly passing through some villages with a cricket green: Blunham, Northill and Ickwell. They looked expensive areas and well able to finance a fight against new development – housing or transport. But then down to earth in the bustle of Biggleswade, and a kink north to Potton – the centre of fruit & veg in the past - before striking due east along the straight, flat and quiet A603. A super-fast route for a railway, but over too soon. Near the dishes of the Mullard Observatory we glimpsed the original rail route, but it soon disappeared under the M11.

Perhaps this will be the Cambridge Connect portal one day, but for now we join the queue of buses heading for the historic centre. JH (*and for the photos*).

“Looks like really active campaigning is called for as Government announces (19 August) the feasibility of a Oxford-Cambridge Expressway ROAD at up to £500m cost! Ed.”

<http://www.gov.uk/government/news/study-shows-oxford-to-cambridge-expressway-improvements-could-boost-the-economy>

Fourth track to be restored on East Coast Main Line

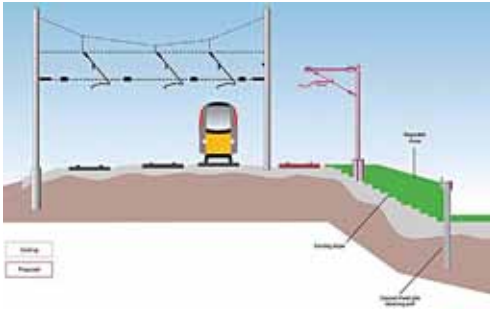


Network Rail has announced plans to restore the fourth (southbound Slow Line) track to the East Coast Main Line (ECML) for 6.25 miles between Woodwalton and Huntingdon.

The track was removed in the 1980s to lower the cost of electrifying the route. As the diagram below indicates, the space for the work already exists and can be carried out within the existing railway boundary, although some minor earthworks will be needed and the bridleway crossing at Abbots Ripton will be closed. There is a loop just to the north of Woodwalton starting at Connington South Junction where the turnout is already 70mph, this ends in a 25mph reconnection at Woodwalton to the Up Fast Line. Whether the loop will be retained or not is as yet unconfirmed.

Network Rail's Project Sponsor in York tells us, however, that this new track will be passed for 100mph running, thereby ensuring current running times are maintained for Govia/Thameslink services. As it happens, it will also represent the very first stretch of 100mph 'Slow Line' anywhere along on the East Coast route (which desperately needs much more!)

Adding extra tracks like this creates timetable space; space which benefits passengers and freight companies equally. It encourages better reliability through filtering those services running at much less than 125mph, to the fourth, slower-speed, track. Obviously preferable to allowing the fastest trains to catch up the slowest.



Ideally, in this neighbourhood there would be four tracks all the way from Peterborough to Woodwalton. But not on this less than stable fenland soil, hence a 105mph speed limit from Yaxley through to Connington near Woodwalton.

Work is due to start in Summer 2018 and will take around two years. On completion it will allow an

additional long-distance high speed service each hour to operate, as well as encourage the construction of a new station to the north of Huntingdon. This would serve the forthcoming Alconbury Weald development of 4,500 new homes and business space for 5,000 jobs. ND/CB

https://consultations.networkrail.co.uk/hw4t/huntingdon-to-woodwalton-four-tracking-scheme/supporting_documents/ECML%20HW4T%20Leaflet.pdf

Might a Combined Authorities Mayor unlock rail potential?

During the summer a consultation has taken place regarding the creation of new Combined Authorities (CAs) in the region. Earlier in the year, the proposal was a single combined authority that covered Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Peterborough. This idea was rejected by many councillors and a new proposal for separate CAs for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Norfolk and Suffolk has been tabled. The CAs get agreed amounts of money from Government to spend on areas such as transport, high-speed internet, skills and training and affordable housing. Government says this is additional money and as the money is agreed over many years, it can be used to lever in additional money from the private sector and developers. The CA would have a directly elected Mayor as its leader with a cabinet formed of representatives from the local authorities and enterprise partnerships. So what might it mean for the railways?

The CA would be required to create a transport strategy and would then have the money to develop the schemes without getting agreement from Government each time. In theory, this should speed up the delivery of projects. The Cambridge and Peterborough CA proposal includes a number of rail projects as priorities. These include the re-opening of the Wisbech line, a new station at Soham and development of East-West Rail between Cambridge and Oxford. The importance of sorting out Ely North Junction is recognised. The Norfolk/Suffolk CA document mentions similar schemes. Although some of these rail projects are of national importance, it is not clear what proportion of the funding would come from the Government.

If councillors back the plan, an enabling Act would be presented to Parliament in November and if passed, the new CAs would come into force in early 2017 with elections for the new CA Mayors being held in May 2017. ND

Good news for Whittlesea and Manea stations

In early July it was announced that money had been allotted to assess engineering feasibility of proposed improvements to Whittlesea and Manea stations. This £359,000 grant to Fenland District Council on behalf of Hereward Community Rail Partnership, has been agreed by the Greater Cambridge and Peterborough Enterprise Partnership.

The proposals include lengthening platforms at both stations and installation of a footbridge at Whittlesea. The study will take up to 18 months to complete. CB

Capt. Charles Fryatt



One hundred years ago, Captain Charles Fryatt, an employee of the Great Eastern Railway was captured when his ship, SS Brussels, was surrounded by German naval vessels off the Dutch coast.

Despite being a civilian non-combatant in the First World War, he was court-martialled for previously having chased down a German submarine earlier in the war.

He was found guilty and executed shortly afterwards. The event caused international outrage. After the war, his body was returned to England and a memorial erected at Liverpool Street Station. To mark the centenary of his death, an Act of Remembrance, attended by his family, the Mayor of Harwich, railway staff and representatives of rail user groups, including Railfuture, took place at the station on the 18th July. MF

The new Class 387 has arrived, but thus far, for crew training only

Yes, the next generation of trains for our Fen Line service from King's Lynn to King's Cross are arriving. But until the autumn, only for crew training and test running. The pictures show one unit sitting in Cambridge No.2 platform before returning to Welwyn Garden City, plus a quick peep through the window at the seating.

Sadly, these ironing board-like constructs, ostensibly designed to fulfil fire protection and light-weight requirements, could not be called plush but are more tolerable, we are told, than they look. What is good is the doubled-glazed, air-conditioned ambience; far quieter than our redoubtable hopper-windowed Class 365s, especially during the summer months and through the tunnels south of Hitchin. The '387s





also offer a better turn of speed to 110mph, thereby cutting the length of time spent in the Welwyn double-track bottleneck and reducing congestion. I for one am very much looking forward to using this significantly improved service. CB (and photos)

Smart new Ipswich station concourse opens to customers



With the building work complete the refurbished Ipswich station concourse opened officially in the second week of August, and very shiny and effective it looks too, as these two photographs confirm. One indeed features a member of the friendly concourse staff, Bob.

Privatisation may not be an unalloyed success in everyone's eyes, but it is very obvious across the network that a substantial number of stations have been brought thoroughly up to 21stC standards, for which we should be immensely grateful. Phil Smart and Ben Walsh furnished the detail and the pictures.

OUR NEXT BRANCH MEETING IS IN NORWICH

at 14.00 hrs on Saturday 24 September 2016 in

Friends Meeting House, NR2 1EW

Our Speaker is Steven Ashling of Network Rail, talking about
in-cab signalling and related East Anglia developments

Another Franchise, of sorts, starts along the Norfolk coast

Coincidentally, another 'franchise' began operation on the very day Abellio were handed the new nine-year franchise. This time it concerned tripartite cooperation between Abellio, Network Rail and the North Norfolk Railway (NNR) to extend NNR's operation occasionally to Cromer. Here, as you may well realise, there are two platforms; very convenient for a steam/vintage diesel service from Holt to decant its passengers into Cromer itself, or connect with an Abellio service to Norwich. This inaugural service, The North Norfolkman, a dining-car train, is intended to run to and from Cromer on about ten occasions each year.

On this date 10 August, the Abellio diesel unit on the 12.45 from Norwich was cancelled, for one reason or another. This resulted in those passengers waiting at Cromer for the customary diesel unit, being joyfully surprised to be invited aboard the inaugural VIP special as a substitute and steam-hauled to Sheringham. Far better than the usual bus replacement service and first rate public relations on everyone's part, of course. It once again shows that the railway is very much a part of the local economy. And that is entirely your editor's excuse for a partly steam-hauled train invading the pages of post-modern Rail East! CB/DP



"Thank you" to David Pearce of Norwich for these two excellent pictures at Cromer.

ERTMS Norwich to Yarmouth/Lowestoft installation cancelled

David Waboso, Network Rail's managing Director Digital Railway Group, announced in late July that the plan to install ERTMS (European Railway Traffic Management System) along the Wherry lines to Yarmouth and Lowestoft has been abandoned. It was thought that the long overdue replacement of the manual signalling would be unnecessarily complicated by overlaying with the ERTMS. Ely to Norwich-style 'Modular' signalling will now be applied to these routes.

This will not, however, affect our Guest Speaker, Steven Ashling's talk at the forthcoming Norwich meeting, as ERTMS seems certain to be applied elsewhere in our area, especially on congested routes. And it is a fascinating story. CB

Members Branch Meeting in IPSWICH on 25th June 2016 St Mary Stoke Church Hall.

Network Rail's Steve Hooker lays it on the line.

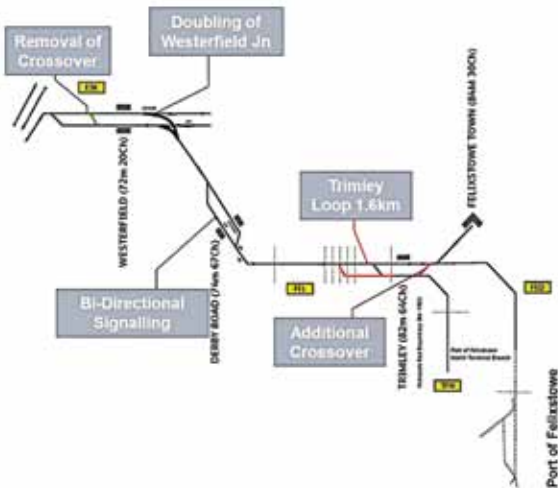
Thirty five members attended our afternoon meeting to hear Mr Steve Hooker, Network Rail Anglia Route Area Director of Great Eastern Main Line (GEML), Thames-side and London Overground, With over 43 years' experience working on railways at home and abroad he seemed impressively qualified for his job.

Steve certainly briefed us most informatively on several important projects across East Anglia confronting Network Rail (NR) particularly over Control Period 5, the present one.



The week prior to our meeting had seen very heavy rainfall creating disruption across the network particularly along the GEML...a reminder of the havoc caused by our increasingly extreme weather, and thankfully, how quickly NR usually recovers from it.

The most positive news was that work was going ahead with interim improvements along the Felixstowe branch. This work is funded. A diagram of Felixstowe branch improvements explains much.



On completion this will increase the total number of freight trains possible over 24 hours to 45 from the present 33. It should also make the appallingly-fragile passenger service much more robust. And not before time too.

However, a failed business plan means that work to add a line to the Soham to Ely section is paused until Control Period 6 (2019-24). Associated with this is the Cambridgeshire County Council intent to reopen Soham station, which is at GRIP3 in

the NR planning process, but is as yet unfunded. A solution is being sought by NR working with Cambs CC and East Cambs District Council. As Steve reminded us, “NR no longer promises what it cannot deliver”.

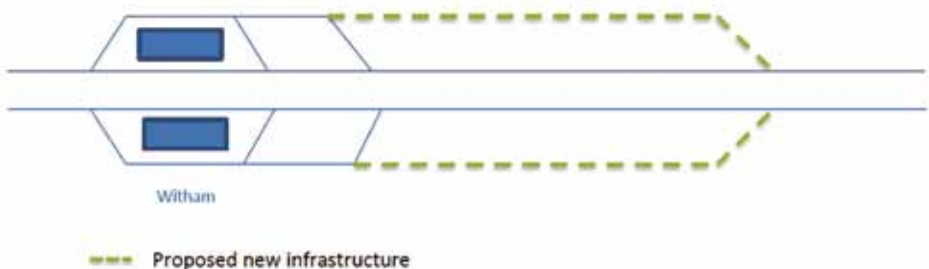
As we know all too well, the British Rail 1980s remodelling work at Ely North Junction, as part of the resignalling for electrification, is now the Achilles’ Heel of service development across East Anglia. Steve stated that ongoing work for a third track from Ely station to the junction plus restoring the double track junctions to King’s Lynn and Norwich, could well solve much of the capacity shortfall in the area.

But this still leaves the many local level-crossings to be dealt with; just a few of the 133 crossings throughout the region that will have to be suppressed/replaced, where affordable and or feasible, ultimately via Transport and Works Act applications. Shortening journey times requires active attention to level crossings, of which Steve told us, 748 of one sort or another exist on his patch including the 133 just referred to. A consultation on and further set of East Anglian crossing closures has just ended but may be found at: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/anglialevelcrossings/>

Incidentally, Steve has since explained why this level-crossing consultation has never included Norfolk: “it is simply that no crossings in Norfolk met the criteria of having suitable (in our opinion) alternatives”, he says. For “suitable” possibly read ‘affordable’! A bit surprising, but there it is.

Other works, which will be needed in order to implement the new East Anglia franchise demanding GEML journey-time reductions and reliability improvements, were also discussed. The Beaulieu station project, and its bi-directional third line, is still placed in the “uncertain” category.

Otherwise, these journey-time reductions are to be achieved through improved rolling stock acceleration and braking, better timetabling, as well as track capacity enhancements. These are mainly extended loops at Witham (see diagram below), as well as redoubling across the River Wensum at Trowse Swing Bridge, Norwich. PW/CB



And, of course, the ever present level-crossing dilemma where half-barrier examples prohibit speed in excess of 100mph. Fourteen of those exist between Ipswich and Norwich alone, probably ruling out 100mph+ over that stretch in the near future. Happily only two level crossings of any sort occupy the Chelmsford to Colchester section, another potential 100mph+ distance.

Steve raised the point about major track possessions and sometimes they are not merely unavoidable, but also very expensive in compensation payments to the various train operators, freight as well as passenger: Ely North Junction and Haughley Junction projects are inescapably in this category. “Franchise-unfriendly” was the phrase used by Steve.

So all-in-all a splendidly-illuminating presentation followed by close questioning. If there was one overriding message, it’s probably that as a nationalised company servicing £32b+ of debt, projects had to stack-up financially and funding has to be found. So keep lobbying hard...and maybe get The Prayer Mat out too! PW/CB

Four Wheels on My Wagon.....but not for much longer!

This is certainly true of those wagons used to convey silica sand from Middleton Towers near King’s Lynn to south Yorkshire. GB Railfreight has confirmed it is to lease 41



new 101.6-tonne hoppers from Nacco Leasing for a minimum of five years, to support a contract extension with Sibelco Europe in UK. These wagons built by Greenbrier in Poland, lift the load per vehicle from 36 tonnes to 70 tonnes and will ride on efficient track-friendly bogies.

The Sibelco contract begins in August 2017, along with the arrival of the first of these new wagons, running until December 2022.

The trains will serve Guardian Industries in Goole, and Ardagh Group’s UK glass factories at Barnsley and Doncaster. Good news for an otherwise very hard-pressed railfreight industry. CB

Autumn Conference

Railfuture's autumn conference is to be held at the Priory Rooms Quaker Meeting House in central Birmingham. It is only five minutes' walk from Birmingham New Street and Birmingham Snow Hill stations. The Midland Metro from Birmingham New Street also stops right outside the venue. Travelling to the conference could not be easier.



It is an excellent venue in terms of its location, facilities and accessibility for those with disabilities. The West Midlands branch has managed to secure six speakers from a range of backgrounds including Stephen Joseph, Director of the Campaign for Better Transport and Alice Gillman from Vivarail whose innovative D-Train will soon start running on the Coventry - Nuneaton line. The conference will be chaired by Railfuture's Honorary President, Christian Wolmar. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham has agreed to open our conference and he has worked for the former British Rail.

We wish to have a really good attendance and the venue holds up to 200 people. So please do come to Birmingham at the heart of the rail network and see for yourself the Midland Metro now running through the shopping and business areas of the city centre (a tram day pass is £5), the redeveloped New Street Station, which now forms an important gateway to Birmingham, and we even have an Ian Allan Bookshop close to New Street Station.

Included in the price is a buffet lunch, unlimited supplies of tea and coffee throughout the day and excellent conference facilities.

Members can book at £25 (a £5 reduction on our normal conference price). For non-members it is £30. Holders of a 16-25 Railcard pay just £15, which is a real bargain!

Can you persuade a friend to attend and join Railfuture? If so, they can get a special discount book and join at the same time on our website.

A flier was sent with Railwatch in June. Bookings can also be made online at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences, which has a full list of the speakers and a list of future events.

Railfuture's volunteers put a lot of effort into organising these conferences. We hope you are able to join us.

And there we have to close this RE edition: nothing more until late autumn for which contributions, please, by Sunday 13 November. Stories with photographs are always favoured, if you can. Otherwise, thank you very much for everything you have contributed, it is always greatly appreciated. Thanks too to John Clark who volunteers his great design skills in page layout.

Autumn Meeting

Saturday 24 September at 14.00hrs.

Friends Meeting House, Norwich NR2 1EW

Guest Speaker: Steven Ashling from Network Rail

Talking about In-Cab Signalling in an East Anglia Context

**Our Winter Meeting will take place on Saturday 3 December
in the Friends Meeting House, Cambridge CB5 8BA
Speaker TBA (but hopefully from Abellio)**

Branch AGM 25 February 2017 - Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1SJ

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