

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

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Railfuture, FLUA and other stakeholders were invited to join GTR and Network Rail management on a special 'press' train two days before the long-awaited eight-car service finally commenced.

Photo taken at King's Lynn courtesy of GTR.

Railfuture and FLUA review the new Great Northern Fen Line service

Also inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- Solving the Ely capacity problem
- Annual station usage figures
- Greater Anglia timetable consultation
- Resignalling Cambridgeshire
- Railways of North Essex & the "Sunshine Coast"
- East West Rail meets Cambridge
- Train info screen updates
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Focus on Colchester & Tendring Peninsula – p.6

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Two projects designed to secure a more efficient and reliable railway in the east

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Why reaching Cambridge from the south has to be the way forward

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Scope for further improvement as upgrade in PIS brings real benefits for travellers

"Freeport East" – p.22

How a key post-Brexit policy may strengthen eastern rail infrastructure

The Photo Quiz – p.23

The answer to the mystery image in issue 188 – and a new puzzle to solve!



Left: A Greater Anglia bi-mode, at Crown Point in Norwich, getting its first proper external clean for more than a year (photo from GA). Centre: (top, Littleport) one of the signs needed to support eight-car trains and (bottom, Stowmarket) one of, sadly, too many dilapidated station signs (both photos by Jerry Alderson). Right: passengers rush to catch a four-car train at Waterbeach, which inconveniently (and deliberately) stops as far away from the station entrance/exit, or decent shelter from wind and rain, as it possibly can (photo by Jerry Alderson).

ONE YEAR ON...

BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

The East Anglia Branch AGM held in Bury St Edmunds at the end of February 2020 was one of the last events I attended before the start of the COVID-19 lockdown. Since then we have not been able to have our regular Branch meetings, although the committee has met three times using Zoom video calls. At the time of writing, the advice is very much stay at home and do not travel unless for essential journeys for work or medical appointments.



Our 2021 Branch AGM has been delayed whilst we see if a proper meeting can be held in the near future, once people are allowed to meet again in large numbers. The good news is that more than 25 million adults in the UK have had their first jab, both Coronavirus cases and hospitalisations have fallen dramatically and the government has published a plan to exit the latest lockdown. Monday 21 June should hopefully see "all legal limits on social contact removed". Railfuture has booked our usual Ipswich venue (St Mary's at Stoke) for Saturday 26 June 2021 commencing at 14:00. This is provisional, so please put it in your diary, but it will not be confirmed until RAIL EAST 190, which will be published in June.

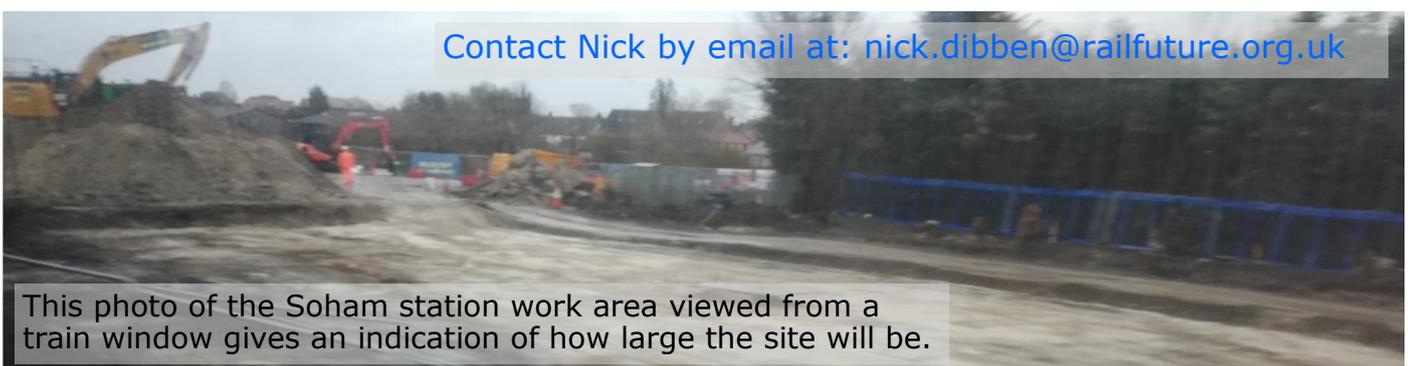
Railfuture also intends to hold its national AGM in Birmingham on Saturday 17 July, subject to confirmation in Railwatch (published in late June).

January 2021 saw the completion of a major piece of engineering work on the edge of our region. Over the course of a week, a new railway underpass was pushed into position under the east coast mainline at Werrington just north of Peterborough to allow freight trains to cross onto the line towards Lincoln without conflicting with traffic on the main line. The use of a pre-constructed tunnel box reduced the time of a line closure from around a month to just over a week. Well done to all involved for a fantastic bit of engineering. You can find out more on Network Rail's website: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/east-coast/east-coast-upgrade/werrington-grade-separation/>.

In other positive news, the site for Soham station has been cleared and prepared. March 2021 should see the start of work to build the platform, and there's a good chance that it will open in December 2021. Some aerial shots from early March can be seen at <https://www.elystandard.co.uk/news/traffic/soham-station-constuction-dates-rail-closure-7815874>.

Railfuture East Anglia responded to the Greater Anglia (GA) timetable consultation for the December 2021 timetable for the Great Eastern Mainline and associated routes. We were able to discuss ideas with GA on a video call and it appears that lack of infrastructure improvements along the route is holding back further service improvements. You can read about our response on pages 10-11. Consultation on the company's West Anglia Route from Liverpool Street to Stansted Airport and Cambridge will be starting soon, so please let us have any thoughts on this subject. The Branch is keen to hear about any major housing or other development along the route that could justify improved frequencies or a change in stopping patterns.

With respect to the recent Sarah Everard murder case, are there things we could be doing regarding safety at rail stations? If you think so, please let me know.



Contact Nick by email at: nick.dibben@railfuture.org.uk

This photo of the Soham station work area viewed from a train window gives an indication of how large the site will be.

EIGHT-CAR FEN LINE TRAINS IN SERVICE

COVER STORY

BY JERRY ALDERSON

The Fen Line Users Association (FLUA) has been campaigning for passenger services to be improved for more than 35 years, having held its first meeting in November 1985. The doubling of capacity – in terms of seats, if not services, although that remains a key FLUA campaign – has been realised. Railfuture was invited by rail management to a special ‘eight-car service launch’ stakeholder and press train two days before the launch, and so was John Grant, FLUA’s chair, who lives in Waterbeach. He writes:



“After several years of planning, and 16 months of construction work, eight-car trains are now stopping at all stations on the Fen Line. Indeed, most services are now eight cars – a pair of class 387s – twice the length of trains before the December 2020 timetable was introduced. There are still a few four-car services, when 12-car trains split or join at Cambridge with both parts running further north. Capacity at Waterbeach was quadrupled by also stopping the eight-car Ely - King’s Cross services (these were suspended during lock-down but reinstated in February). There has long been an aspiration to extend

them to King’s Lynn, but that awaits the capacity improvements through Ely North Junction (see pages 14-15).

“When the platforms at Waterbeach were extended, a ‘4-car’ stop board was placed halfway down and an ‘8-car’ board at the far end. However, they now simply have an ‘S’ board at the far end, so the four-car services (of which there are three a day in the down direction and six in the up direction) now stop with the nearest door some 80 metres from the platform entrance. They are announced on the station CIS as being four carriages, but it’s not made clear at which end of the platform they stop. It has been suggested that this follows problems at Cambridge North when drivers forgot how long their train was and stopped in the wrong place.

“The Waterbeach down platform extension is quite close to some houses and the public address announcements are obtrusive as set at a fixed volume, loud enough to be heard as a train went by, lacking the ambient noise sensing used on London Underground. Efforts were made to fix this and residents reported reduced noise, which was liveable with, but it has worsened. The permanently-on bright lighting issue is ongoing. We hope that it will be fixed quicker than Cambridge North’s lifts.”

The longer platforms coincided nicely with King’s Cross station works, which have led to eight-car fixed-formation Class 700 trains operating to Ely (and less often to King’s Lynn). With the pandemic reducing passenger numbers, the lack of USB/power-points on any Class 700 unit and only half having Wi-Fi (thanks to civil servants with minds set firmly in the last century) the inconvenience has been low.



Both class 387s and 700s announce (audibly and on the PIS screens) to passengers when they must move to the front half of the train. Unfortunately, they also announce this when passengers don’t have to! Railfuture has seen people rushing through the train as it approaches Littleport and told them not to worry as the announcement was wrong: it only applies when travelling south. One would hope that this is short-term teething problem but sadly it’s not.

GTR's passenger information systems advise passengers to alight from the front four carriages when approaching Shepreth and Foxton stations on both up (short) and down (extended) platforms. The incorrect message has been shown for more than three years since December 2017, so there's little hope for it being fixed at Littleport, or drivers making an announcement to say "please ignore this message, you can alight from any door at this platform."

The risk, of course, is that people get so used to ignoring the wrong message that they don't take notice of it when it is correct and find themselves unable to alight in time. One wonders whether the drivers check the CCTV to see if anyone is running through the train towards the front half.

A cynic might wonder whether it would be cheaper to extend the platforms (thereby turning the message off) than amend the software on the entire fleet to detect in which direction the train is travelling!

The railway does, of course, use arguments selectively. In a February 2021 press release Tricia Williams, Chief Operating Officer at Northern, said: "Extending the platforms allows us to run longer trains and that, in turn, gives our customers more space on-board. The additional platform space also means there are more places for customers to get on and off our trains *which speeds up the boarding process and can reduce delays and improve performance*" (author's italics) but seemingly this valuable benefit didn't make the business case for all Fen Line platforms to be extended. The NR/GTR press release *didn't* say "the short platforms mean that there are fewer places for customers to get on and off our trains, which slows down the boarding process and can increase delays and worsen performance."

GTR has one Gatwick Express Class 387 unit that operates on the Fen Line. It is branded "GX" and has a different Wi-Fi login page, which offers only 90MB compared to the 100MB by the Great Northern and Thameslink portals. This didn't matter when only four-car trains ran. Railfuture checked out what happens if the GX unit is on an eight-car train, and it is quite fascinating. You get the GX or GN login page depending on which half you are sitting in, but if you move from one half to the other then your connection will be lost (there is signal leakage into the first carriage of the other unit) and you will then be shown the other login page. However, the original token is retained, so if you then wander back into the previous unit, you'll recover your previous connection! What fun! Clearly GTR needs to modify the GX unit to use the GN Wi-Fi system.

The longer trains have shown us that although the initial case for electrification of the Fen Line may have been borderline at best, once the wires are in place new services can be added (albeit with power upgrades). Double track (i.e. double wire) sections had four carriages per wire per hour when electric services began in 1992 (eight per hour on the single-track sections). In 2018 when the eight-car King's Cross to Ely services began this became 12 carriages per hour on the Cambridge-Ely section, and in January 2020 16 per hour thanks to the new Greater Anglia bi-modes. With eight-car King's Lynn services this has become 20 carriages per wire per hour as far as Ely and then eight (16 on single line section) on the branch to King's Lynn. This omits the thrice-daily Greater Anglia services.



An eight-car Class 387 stabled at the new siding at King's Lynn

FOCUS ON COLCHESTER & TENDRING: THE RAILWAYS OF NORTH ESSEX & THE “SUNSHINE COAST” BY MARTIN COOPER AND PETER WAKEFIELD

Note that article is an overview of the railway in the Colchester area. We will publish a more in-depth study in a future issue of RAIL EAST.

Colchester currently has a population within its continuously built-up area of about 132,500. This is set to rapidly expand as we explain below.

First, a little background to this ancient town, one of the oldest towns in Britain and Ireland in the sense of a “town” we understand today. The Romans some 2,000 years ago chose the site as a vital gateway into their rich new territory as it is the ease of access from the River Colne Valley to the rest of the hinterland they really were after. The River Colne flows 64km from its source just 5km east of Haverhill, creating the valley that is key to the original success of Colchester. For millennia it has funnelled goods and people inland up through Haverhill and Cambridge to the North and Midlands that were brought to shore by long established coastal and cross North Sea shipping. The importance of this road and its later parallel railway continued until the late twentieth century when the link to the historic routeway was broken as the A14 road was established to serve Felixstowe Docks, by then pre-eminent over Harwich and Hythe.

Until the nineteenth century the Colchester economy developed around its port and traditional regional market functions but then several industries based on steam technology emerged, including milling, brewing, printing and engineering, all supported by important banking and insurance functions. Most of these industries have now been lost, increasingly being replaced by a blossoming knowledge based industrial sector, leading to another burst of population expansion. The town’s port at Hythe became and still is the major industrial area of the town, though the likes of Paxman have gone. The regional market function continues along with evolving hi tech industries. The electrified railway has put the town well within the travel to work area of London, with large numbers commuting each day.



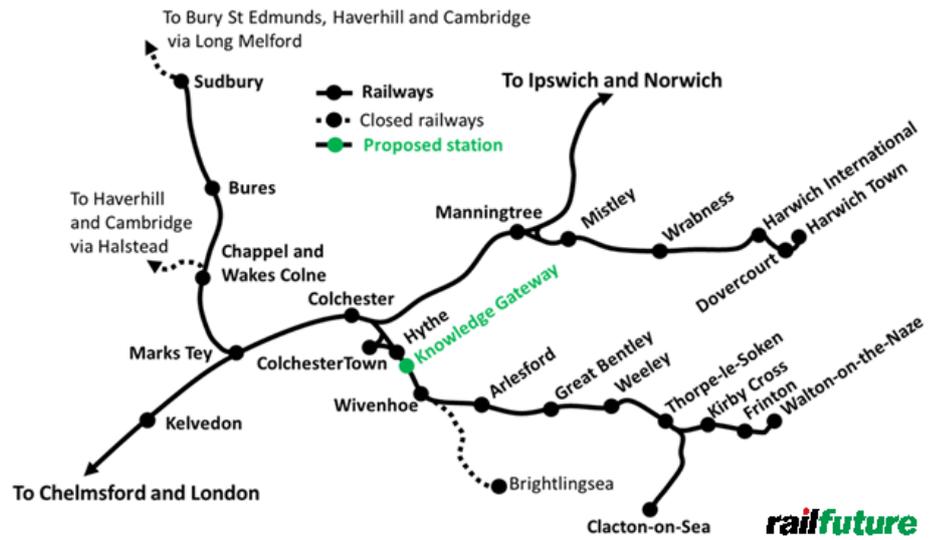
A beautiful poster from the 1930s produced by the LNER. Tourism still a vital industry

Station	Population	New homes	Footfall	Total
* Sudbury	23,482	1,150	334,694	
* Bures	1,512		58,024	
* Chappel and Wakes Colne	1,000		46,258	438,976
Marks Tey	2523		606,914	
Colchester:				
Colchester			4,453,444	
* Colchester Town	132,174		735,814	
* Hythe		11,500	279,464	5,468,722
* Wivenhoe	7,949		403,306	
* Alresford	2,208	299	65,602	
* Great Bentley	2,381	465	78,634	
* Weeley	1,271	898	37,652	
* Thorpe-le-Soken	1,961	187	135,486	
* Clacton	53,768	4,879	763,016	1,483,696
Walton stations:				
* Kirby Cross	1,390		47,842	
* Frinton	4,789	1,289	184,550	
* Walton-on-the-Naze	12,557		130,030	362,422
Manningtree stations:				
Manningtree	5,996	1,423	1,068,816	
* Mistley	1,641		71,784	
* Wrabness	401		29,056	
Harwich stations:				
* Harwich International			109,876	
* Dovercourt	21,041		163,728	
* Harwich Town		1,274	128,454	402,058

*Table 1. The vital statistics: population served, local plan new housing allocation and current footfall of all stations. Note that the local plan for the area around Marks Tey is being rewritten so no housing is allocated yet. * = branch*

The railway network centred on Colchester was completed between 1843 - 1882.

The map, right, shows the greatest extent of the network with important closures shown by the dashed lines. Nowadays, longer distance rail connectivity is very much north-south with two branches to the east and the former east west link truncated at Chapel & Wakes Colne and Sudbury. Onward routes to Halstead, Haverhill, Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds are increasingly missed. On the remaining network most of the original stations still serve their communities.



The lack of east west connectivity is a serious constraint for future modal shift to rail and achieving efficient agglomeration of Colchester's fast growing hi-tech industries with other regional high growth centres.

A quick look at Colchester's railway connectivity

1. Long distance/national/east-west connectivity is poor. Medium distance north/south connectivity is good but only if one keeps to eastern East Anglia.

A good frequency is provided as far as Norwich, with reasonable connections to all the branches on the way. The service from and to Ipswich is good in the travel to work periods, with some gaps. From the London direction there is also good frequency albeit with some gaps and reasonable connections to all communities not served directly. Notably connectivity has been hugely improved via Stratford where even better will soon be available, especially to Heathrow, with the opening of Crossrail.

But national connectivity is very poor – a tenuous link via Ipswich and Peterborough or a trek across London to various termini. Even to western East Anglia links are so poor as to be non-existent. Links to Cambridge are worse than during our Victorian ancestors' time. And forget getting to the main regional airport at Stansted by rail.

2. Is local connectivity any better?

Colchester is the main regional centre for the area shown on the map, though towns like Sudbury, Harwich and Clacton are local centres of significance. The table of population and footfall numbers (page 6) show that all stations have a good usage given their settlement's population.

The above map shows the 22 stations in the Colchester travel to work area but nearly all are on the three branches to Harwich, Walton / Clacton and Sudbury. Unlike the networks radiating from Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge, two of the routes are self-contained from the junction with the mainline, with few trains continuing to Colchester.

Colchester has the advantage of three stations, used by 5,468,722 people a year at the last count – a high footfall that shows the value of three stations to a medium sized town, enabling a good distribution throughout the town.

Colchester 'North' has the highest footfall even though it is some way from the town centre. It has the widest range of services, especially towards London. Over time the station has pulled the residential areas towards it and now the new suburbs have leapfrogged the station as the town grows to the north. It is a well-appointed station with two entrances, links into a good bus service and an excellently way marked pedestrian route into the town centre. But for local travel, the **Town station** is the "jewel in the crown" as it is actually in the town centre. Its disadvantage is being a terminus on a spur off the Clacton direct line. **Hythe station**, close to Town Station, is on the main through route to Clacton, serves its community well and will become very busy as the nearby garden town develops.

But is the railway working as hard as it could to serve actual and potential users?

Sudbury to Marks Tey – "The Gainsborough Line"

Sudbury is about 13 miles from Colchester as the crow flies. But using the hourly train service and involving a change at Marks Tey, the distance is 16.5 miles. Many passengers go on to London from here so even though footfall is high, it could be better if the Sudbury service continued through to Colchester Town. Currently a journey on to Colchester entails at least a 12 min connection penalty time at Marks Tey (pictured right) before recommencing the final 5 miles. If carrying on to the Town station, another change is often needed at Colchester 'North' or Hythe, adding up to 19 minutes to the journey again. Even a journey in excellent new trains that run fast fails to overcome the connectional time penalty combined with the longer distance. A journey of around an hour for just 16/17 miles is poor. When the modest infrastructure improvements are completed at Marks Tey, the commitment made in the former franchise should be honoured.

Marks Tey station looking north, with the Sudbury branch track and platform on the left.



Harwich to Manningtree – "The Mayflower Line"

Colchester is about 18 miles by train and road from Harwich. Nearly all trains run to/from Manningtree at hourly intervals, giving a reasonable service level and excellent three-minute connectional times **from** Harwich for Colchester. There are three through trains to Colchester in the morning peak. However, for just the short distance from Colchester, the connection times at Manningtree **for** Harwich line stations are poor, often up to 30 mins. Add on another eight minutes if going from/to Colchester Town station. An overall time of 52 minutes from Colchester North to Harwich line stations is poor; 60+ minutes from Colchester Town needs two changes for the 19 miles.

Colchester to Clacton & Walton – "The Sunshine Coast Line"

The 2 terminals of this line are both about 19 miles from Colchester. It is a well-used line with all stations contributing good numbers for the given population. Journey times are reasonable. The basic all stations service is hourly with Wivenhoe and Thorpe le Soken additionally served by an hourly semi fast service from London and Colchester North to Clacton. The stopping train precedes it from Colchester North via Town then all stations to Thorpe le Soken, where it waits for the train from London train to connect and then runs all stations to Walton on the Naze. The

largest town on the line, Clacton, does not have a through service to Colchester Town as a change at Thorpe le Soken is always required.

It is an ingenious timetable for the past, but does it serve the community well in this age of climate change, economic regeneration and population growth? We say no, it does not. To decarbonise this busy and fast-growing part of the world and serve the community better, there must be extra services. Initially these do not have to add great mileage to daily fleet rosters.

Greater Anglia's current rewrite of the Great Eastern Mainline and branches timetable ought to be the opportunity to restructure it to accommodate fast passenger trains, long distance freight and some local passenger train improvement throughout all of the network. As we write this, the future situation of travel into London is fluid owing to the pandemic: whilst it must always be served efficiently, future service levels must be re orientated to getting potential users everywhere out of their cars onto an enhanced local train service, helping the "left behind" and enabling local economies along all the route to rebuild and thrive.

More attention must be given to regional centres like Colchester where there is significant economic growth, much of it based on a widely dispersed skilled workforce. The railway must adapt to enable Colchester and the Tendring Peninsula to grow sustainably. The aspirational planning of the Local Enterprise Partnership to create a Freeport based at Harwich (see the article on page 22) should in theory promote more commuting into and out of the northern coast of the Peninsula too.

Referencing the statement above, we recommend that a start to improving services around Colchester be considered as below. No major infrastructure enhancements are required at this stage. (The need for a footbridge connection at Marks Tey station to its car park cannot be regarded as major! A temporary simpler way of eliminating most risk there ought not to be beyond human ingenuity.)

All stations Sudbury to Clacton/Walton: Add one train an hour from Colchester North via Colchester Town, stopping all stations to Clacton, to make the Colchester North/Town to Thorpe le Soken service half hourly. A half hourly service level will attract more people to rail for work, education and leisure purposes. The outcomes are listed below.

To partly resource this service we recommend that the Sudbury to Marks Tey service be extended to Clacton as above.

1. This will make the journey from Sudbury to Colchester Town much faster, serving many more people and thus enabling modal shift from car
2. It will enable better connections at Colchester North for Ipswich and Norwich from Sudbury
3. It will allow direct access to the main leisure and shopping facilities in Colchester Central Business District (CBD) thus boosting its economy
4. It will allow many people more access to jobs in Colchester, particularly via Hythe station and throughout the Tendring Peninsula
5. It will enable the promotion of leisure trips and cross Colchester journeys from the Sudbury area to the coast at Clacton, bringing better quality of life outcomes for Sudbury residents and vice versa
6. The tourist economies of Clacton as well as the Colne & Stour Valleys west of Marks Tey will be enhanced. It will enable modal transfer from car to train
7. It will enable the planned residential development around the stations to be more sustainable, especially if active travel links to the stations are carefully designed as part of the planning process
8. It will enable easier access to the employment available around Hythe station, the town centre and the planned developments around the university in one journey, helping level up access for all parts of the community. Railway operating concerns should not dominate the greater good.

With reference to table 1 (on page 6): 8,017 homes are allocated in the local plan to the communities served by stations **between Alresford-Clacton/Walton**. When completed approximately **20,045** more people will be close to the railway. This is in addition to about **29,000** more people who will be close to the railway and Hythe-Colchester station as the New Garden Town's 11,500 homes are built out. Thousands of new jobs will be created that will be accessible by rail from over a wide area.

The New Town plan has the aspiration to better serve the jobs and homes with a new station, marked as "Knowledge Gateway" on Map 1. This must be built before completion of the New Town – otherwise "bad travel" habits to/from the town will be built in.

Population growth at Sudbury is guaranteed by the approval of about 1200 new homes. **These will represent about 3,000 more people, bringing a grand total of about 52,000 people from these developments alone.**

Conclusion

1. The need to change trains at Marks Tey (and often at Colchester North) as well as just an hourly service on the Tendring routes, creates major barriers to accessibility and connectivity and an impediment to sustainable growth throughout this area. The opportunity offered by new trains and the rewriting of the timetable around their performance should be exploited to run the promised service between Sudbury and Colchester Town and extending it on all stations to Clacton
2. The developers and Colchester & Tendring councils work to together provide the Knowledge Gateway Station together with the vital active travel links to it and Hythe Station
3. Finally, back to the Colne Valley. The natural gateway from Colchester to the rest of the country is still the river valley that links Cambridge in just 51 miles rather than 72 miles via the recommended route along the A14 corridor. The emerging knowledge-based industries must be linked to those in Cambridge and the south Midlands by way of a re-established railway linking to East West Rail.

THE GREATER ANGLIA TIMETABLE CONSULTATION

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The timetable consultation covers the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML) and its branches to Sudbury, Clacton and Walton on the Naze, Harwich Town, Felixstowe, Woodbridge and Lowestoft, Bury and Cambridge, Yarmouth/Lowestoft via Brundall, Sheringham, Thetford and Cambridge. Changes take effect from December 2021.

It is difficult to comment on this new timetable as there is not an actual timetable to study. However, there is a written description of the general proposal for each mainline station and for each branch. Generally it appears to be still very London-centric with little reference or detail as to the importance of the huge growth going on in our major regional centres. We expect the final outcome to be very like the current timetable. Here is Greater Anglia's description of the new offer:

- *All services use new trains, with air conditioning, free Wi-Fi and plug/USB points*
- *Increases in capacity on many services as our new trains offer more seats*
- *Some quicker journey times, usually of a couple of minutes, but as much as five to seven minutes for some longer journeys, such as Norwich to London*
- *Similar service frequency to the normal timetable in place before the changes prompted by the pandemic*
- *Some slightly later last services on certain days on some routes, if practical, where there is a potential demand or need for a later train (though this will also depend on whether there is scope for additional services alongside essential overnight infrastructure maintenance work)*

- *Continued focus on providing a punctual and reliable service. Two other specific points to highlight are that: Amongst the general speeding up of services between Norwich and London, the weekday 'Norwich in 90' services will all be scheduled at times that suit day trips to London and back with two morning services at 08:00 and 09:00 from Norwich and two return services – one between 17:00 and 17:15 and the other between 19:00 and 19:15 – from London.*

Greater Anglia (GA) kindly offered Railfuture an online interview to talk through some concerns. Before we got into our conversation it was emphasised that there is no new infrastructure to support any significant change. Norwich Trowse Swing Bridge, Haughley Junction (north of Stowmarket), Newmarket to Cambridge single line, Ely area capacity enhancements were issues mentioned in this context. Below are our discussion points with a summary of GA's reply.

Q1. The timetable will take advantage of the new trains, improving journey times due to quicker acceleration and braking. Are all sectional timings being revised to take advantage of this? **Ans. Yes.**

Q2. Are we correct in assuming the timetable will be reconstructed as a "blank piece of paper" and that all passenger and freight services will be recast? **Ans. No.**

Q3a. We pressed the need for an off-peak 7-day timetable with the same minimum hourly service provided for all routes and good connections at key interchanges such as Colchester, Ipswich, Stowmarket and Norwich and that the key regional centres of Colchester, Ipswich, Norwich, Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds are major employment centres and there must be appropriately timed arrivals in the mornings for start of work times. **Ans. Seen as important – "we will do our best."**

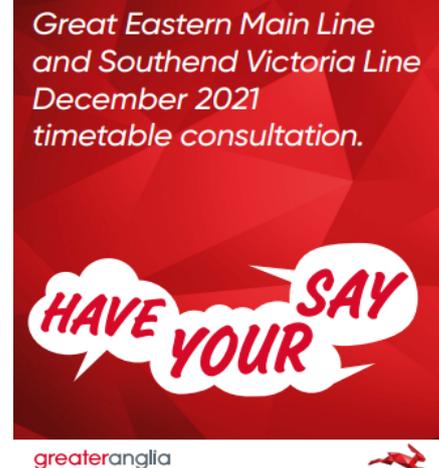
Q3b. The stations at Kennett and Dullingham serve fast growing communities, particularly Kennett. Will both stations be served hourly as the quicker acceleration of the new trains should be used to provide these stops without affecting overall end to end journey times where station stops have historically been dropped on alternate hours? **Ans. This will be considered.**

Q4a. Franchise commitments: We note the apparent lack of a third London to Norwich (off-peak) service by extending the semi fast London-Ipswich service. **Ans. Cannot run until electrical supply problems north of Ipswich rectified.**

Q4b. Hourly Peterborough - Ipswich; we note it is still two-hourly for well-known reasons in the Ely area, but as an interim could a second service run two-hourly from Ely to Ipswich giving the new station at Soham a good service from day one? As a temporary solution the unit could lay over in one of the downside reception roads at Ely. **Ans. We will consider this proposal.**

Q4c. Sudbury - Marks Tey services extended to Colchester: we note that this proposal is not being mentioned as part of the consultation. We would like a rethink on this and additionally thought given to extending the service to part resource an additional stopping train to Clacton. **Ans. Extending the service on from Marks Tey (over the 5 miles) to Colchester would import performance risk onto a reliable branch service. Not worth it for the few extra passengers that may be gained.** (Railfuture hopes this stance will be urgently reconsidered once the promised footbridge replaces the foot crossing between platform 3 and the car park. Given this is a new timetable, the service on to Colchester Town and Clacton should be provided for.)

Q4d. Through services Lowestoft-London: we note that this commitment is not shown in the new timetable. **Ans. The hourly service has doubled the usage of services from Lowestoft to Ipswich. The through services would import performance risk onto a generally reliable railway.**



Station name [code]	Year ended 31st March			% change 2020	
	2015	2019	2020	2015	2019
Norwich [NRW]	4,071,502	4,250,834	4,041,818	-0.7	-4.9
Salhouse [SAH]	9,806	11,778	9,856	0.5	-16.3
Hoveton & Wroxham [HXM]	131,024	136,414	125,260	-4.4	-8.2
Worstead [WRT]	24,394	25,650	25,404	4.1	-1
North Walsham [NWA]	239,934	265,400	226,116	-5.8	-14.8
Gunton [GNT]	16,138	19,188	18,560	15.0	-3.3
Roughton Road [RNR]	12,464	21,766	21,552	72.9	-1
Cromer [CMR]	183,032	219,244	213,936	16.9	-2.4
West Runton [WRN]	26,464	27,212	26,076	-1.5	-4.2
Sheringham [SHM]	196,068	225,894	182,288	-7.0	-19.3
Brundall Gardens [BGA]	11,482	12,248	9,408	-18.1	-23.2
Brundall [BDA]	98,472	97,164	89,742	-8.9	-7.6
Lingwood [LGD]	46,966	46,134	43,536	-7.3	-5.6
Acle [ACL]	48,076	45,336	41,618	-13.4	-8.2
Great Yarmouth [GYM]	436,834	381,002	344,276	-21.2	-9.6
Cantley [CNY]	21,350	20,590	17,048	-20.1	-17.2
Reedham (Norfolk) [REE]	45,336	45,618	41,074	-9.4	-10
Berney Arms [BYA]	1,396	442	42	-97.0	-90.5
Haddiscoe [HAD]	12,832	13,580	12,650	-1.4	-6.8
Buckenham [BUC]	88	216	212	140.9	-1.9
Somerleyton [SYT]	10,610	12,972	10,898	2.7	-16
Oulton Broad North [OUN]	125,506	112,600	106,438	-15.2	-5.5
Lowestoft [LWT]	460,384	438,476	406,440	-11.7	-7.3
Oulton Broad South [OUS]	48,132	47,696	43,518	-9.6	-8.8
Beccles [BCC]	105,254	114,302	110,152	4.7	-3.6
Brampton (Suffolk) [BRP]	8,968	9,532	9,858	9.9	3.4
Halesworth [HAS]	94,702	102,016	99,838	5.4	-2.1
Darsham [DSM]	56,744	59,924	61,534	8.4	2.7
Saxmundham [SAX]	139,246	164,400	165,274	18.7	0.5
Wickham Market [WCM]	43,804	50,932	55,266	26.2	8.5
Melton [MES]	64,710	84,358	82,562	27.6	-2.1
Woodbridge [WDB]	203,574	210,440	209,172	2.7	-0.6
Westerfield [WFI]	9,490	11,642	11,284	18.9	-3.1
Derby Road [DBR]	45,204	47,938	46,808	3.5	-2.4
Trimley [TRM]	36,106	32,178	31,122	-13.8	-3.3
Felixstowe [FLX]	205,176	187,454	170,412	-16.9	-9.1
Ipswich [IPS]	3,295,398	3,416,026	3,292,182	-0.1	-3.6
Mistley [MIS]	77,378	75,366	71,784	-7.2	-4.8
Wrabness [WRB]	20,758	30,348	29,056	40.0	-4.3
Harwich International [HPQ]	100,620	110,944	109,876	9.2	-1
Dovercourt [DVC]	168,052	177,752	163,728	-2.6	-7.9
Harwich Town [HWC]	150,658	151,076	128,454	-14.7	-15
Diss [DIS]	682,142	700,586	671,300	-1.6	-4.2
Manningtree [MNG]	1,169,288	1,106,204	1,068,816	-8.6	-3.4
Colchester [COL]	4,457,306	4,453,178	4,249,444	-4.7	-4.6
Colchester Town [CET]	771,804	771,090	735,814	-4.7	-4.6
Hythe [HYH]	137,440	265,716	279,464	103.3	5.2
Wivenhoe [WIV]	378,700	401,240	403,306	6.5	0.5
Alresford [ALR]	62,098	62,994	65,602	5.6	4.1
Great Bentley [GRB]	75,606	81,144	78,634	4.0	-3.1
Weeley [WEE]	30,100	34,908	37,652	25.1	7.9
Thorpe-le-Soken [TLS]	134,870	131,088	135,486	0.5	3.4
Clacton-on-Sea [CLT]	794,306	799,344	763,016	-3.9	-4.5
Kirby Cross [KBX]	40,430	44,782	47,842	18.3	6.8
Frinton-on-Sea [FRI]	197,916	200,904	184,550	-6.8	-8.1
Walton-on-the-Naze [WON]	121,402	136,708	130,090	7.2	-4.8

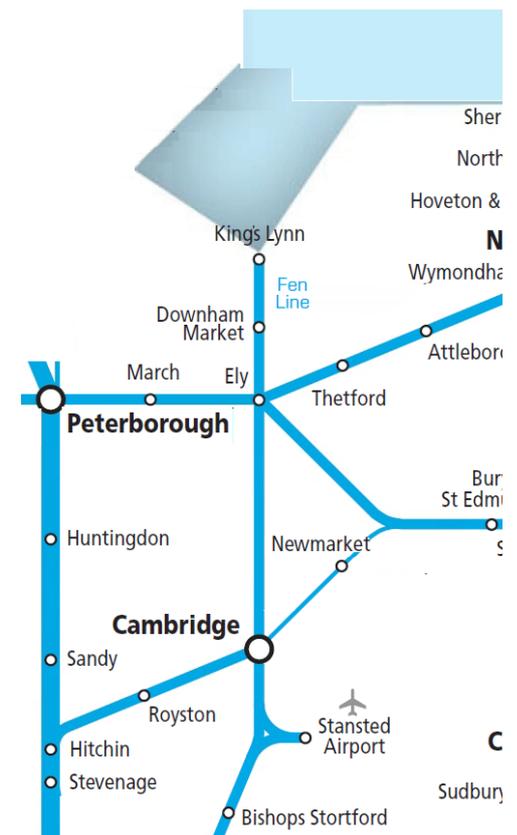
STATION USAGE FOR 2019/2020

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

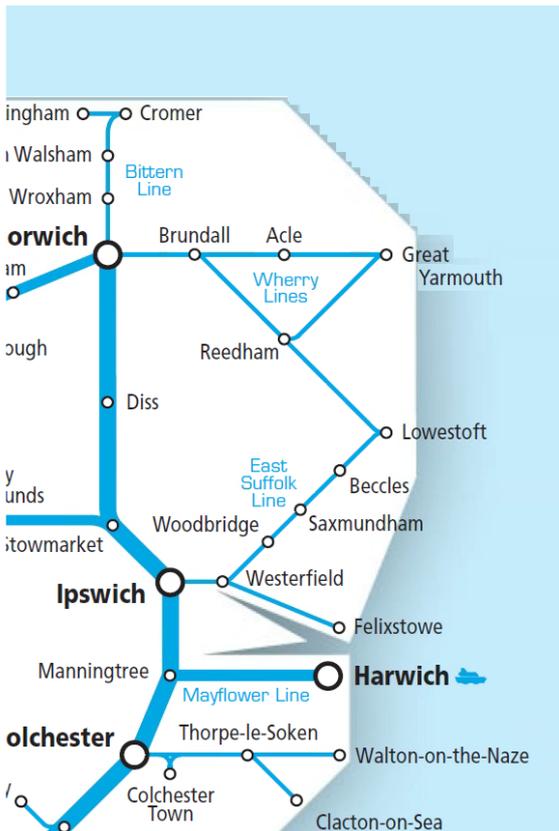
December 2020 saw the issue of the latest national footfall figures by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), which cover the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

It was all going so well until 23 March 2020 when the first national lockdown was proclaimed. It should be borne in mind that it is evident that long before that date, many large office-based employers were telling their employees to stay at home. Off-peak travel was still holding up. So, at the end of the year numbers using Railfuture East Anglia branch stations were down by 4% for the year. (Note the numbers using our stations is still up by 11.6% for the past five years.)

The table tells its own story but it is evident that the greatest increase is still, by and large, greatest in the



west of the region, being driven by the burgeoning economy of both Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. This is highlighted by the remarkable success of Cambridge North station, where even with the lockdown quickly shutting many adjacent offices, growth was up by 16.8% in the year 2019/20. It is frustrating that to the east the introduction of the greatly admired new train fleet has not been allowed to show its “pulling power” because of the lockdowns. Data for 2020/21 will tell a very different story, of course, with the enforced restrictions in travel for much of the year and so the major challenge of recovering passenger numbers across the region. A plus for passengers will be the longer Fen Line trains 2020/21 (photo below).



Station name [code]	Year ended 31st March			% change 2020	
	2015	2019	2020	2015	2019
Marks Tey [MKT]	503,540	604,902	606,914	20.5	0.3
Chappel & Wakes Colne [CWC]	42,868	39,360	46,258	7.9	17.5
Bures [BUE]	60,450	60,432	58,024	-4.0	-4
Sudbury [SUY]	333,374	334,274	334,694	0.4	0.1
Kelvedon [KEL]	854,088	847,748	797,650	-6.6	-5.9
Needham Market [NMT]	92,418	102,320	100,754	9.0	-1.5
Stowmarket [SMK]	932,510	967,114	916,094	-1.8	-5.3
Elmswell [ESW]	74,284	71,078	71,050	-4.4	0
Thurston [TRS]	69,856	77,592	71,562	2.4	-7.8
Bury St.Edmunds [BSE]	595,638	665,112	657,942	10.5	-1.1
Kennett [KNE]	31,896	42,684	42,516	33.3	-0.4
Newmarket [NMK]	289,734	355,068	335,652	15.8	-5.5
Dullingham [DUL]	39,528	41,832	35,086	-11.2	-16.1
Shelford [SED]	159,920	207,478	216,194	35.2	4.2
Whittlesford Parkway [WLF]	454,734	558,134	552,024	21.4	-1.1
Great Chesterford [GRC]	111,046	110,120	110,198	-0.8	0.1
Audley End [AUD]	878,746	979,414	1,006,730	14.6	2.8
Newport (Essex) [NWE]	192,228	188,094	195,984	2.0	4.2
Elsenham [ESM]	194,738	252,716	245,240	25.9	-3
Stansted Airport [SSD]	4,501,996	9,773,870	8,474,784	88.2	-13.3
Stansted Mountfitchet [SST]	526,590	599,478	578,766	9.9	-3.5
Foxton [FXN]	94,080	101,990	105,404	12.0	3.3
Shepreth [STH]	105,802	115,600	117,102	10.7	1.3
Meldreth [MEL]	267,218	295,470	305,888	14.5	3.5
Royston [RYS]	1,394,104	1,467,154	1,435,616	3.0	-2.1
Ashwell & Morden [AWM]	138,638	156,490	159,254	14.9	1.8
Baldock [BDK]	623,898	637,664	654,320	4.9	2.6
Letchworth [LET]	1,751,820	1,856,558	1,834,720	4.7	-1.2
Hitchin [HIT]	3,035,692	3,265,142	3,233,772	6.5	-1
Arlesey [ARL]	627,196	662,676	696,708	11.1	5.1
Biggleswade [BIW]	943,358	1,038,164	1,033,622	9.6	-0.4
Sandy [SDY]	501,652	497,992	495,528	-1.2	-0.5
St.Neots [SNO]	1,272,152	1,325,534	1,261,664	-0.8	-4.8
Huntingdon [HUN]	1,769,702	1,786,548	1,723,088	-2.6	-3.6
Peterborough [PBO]	4,596,144	5,059,576	4,934,692	7.4	-2.5
Whittlesea [WLE]	26,102	31,986	35,230	35.0	10.1
March [MCH]	378,586	407,914	385,956	1.9	-5.4
Manea [MNE]	10,794	18,950	18,834	74.5	-0.6
Ely [ELY]	2,068,240	2,386,744	2,363,818	14.3	-1
Shippea Hill [SPP]	22	432	164	645.5	-62
Lakenheath [LAK]	458	454	416	-9.2	-8.4
Brandon [BND]	103,196	117,798	111,572	8.1	-5.3
Thetford [TTF]	295,044	299,752	286,700	-2.8	-4.4
Harling Road [HRD]	3,292	2,880	3,794	15.2	31.7
Eccles Road [ECS]	1,098	2,952	2,390	117.7	-19
Attleborough [ATL]	153,828	163,062	158,464	3.0	-2.8
Spooner Row [SPN]	490	1,344	276	-43.7	-79.5
Wymondham [WMD]	182,080	200,332	196,036	7.7	-2.1
King's Lynn [KLN]	970,890	991,252	931,394	-4.1	-6
Watlington [WTG]	143,904	153,782	138,366	-3.8	-10
Downham Market [DOW]	491,744	549,562	512,772	4.3	-6.7
Littleport [LTP]	238,062	248,808	238,488	0.2	-4.1
Waterbeach [WBC]	381,202	407,650	377,660	-0.9	-7.4
Cambridge [CBG]	10,420,178	11,983,320	11,599,814	11.3	-3.2
Cambridge North (21/05/2017) [CMB]	N/A	812,972	949,550	N/A	16.8
Total across Railfuture East Anglia	64,088,388	74,631,292	71,514,332	11.6	-4.2

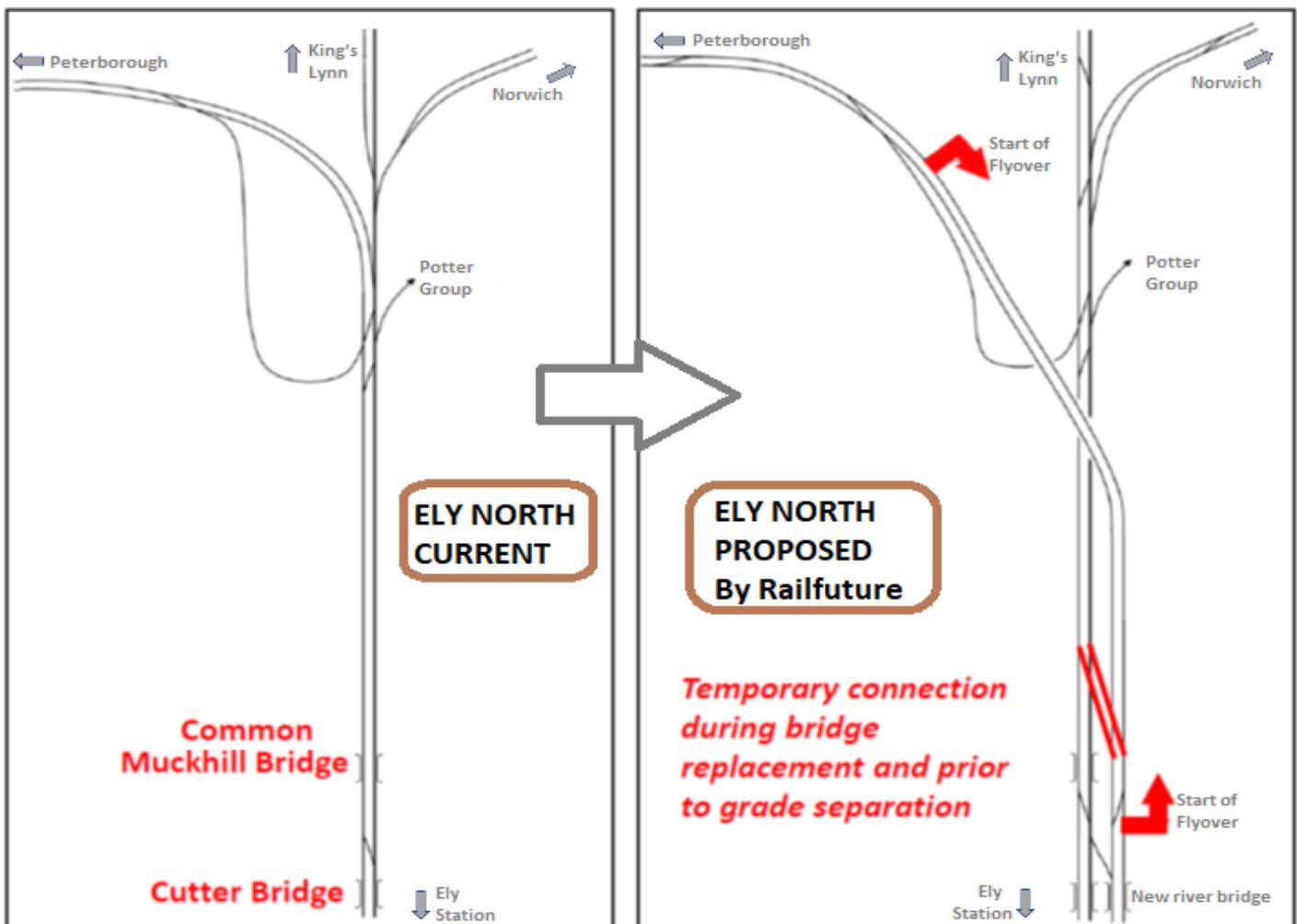
THE EAST'S BIG CHANCE: A SCHEME FOR GRADE SEPARATION AT ELY

BY PETER RISEBROW, PHIL SMART AND PETER WAKEFIELD

It is hoped that by spring 2021 Network Rail (NR) will have published the next phase of its consultation on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements (EACE), which have become ever more urgent if we are serious about moving more freight and passengers by rail under the climate emergency. In advance of this consultation NR undertook a public engagement exercise in September 2020 to which Railfuture responded by setting out what we thought should be the target outputs to meet future growth aspirations. In addition to the current timetable these include: a second train every hour to King's Lynn, an hourly Ipswich to Peterborough service (both franchise DfT obligations), a service to Wisbech, a service from Norwich to Oxford (the eastern section of East West Rail) and the provision up to three freight trains per hour to the Midlands and North from Felixstowe.

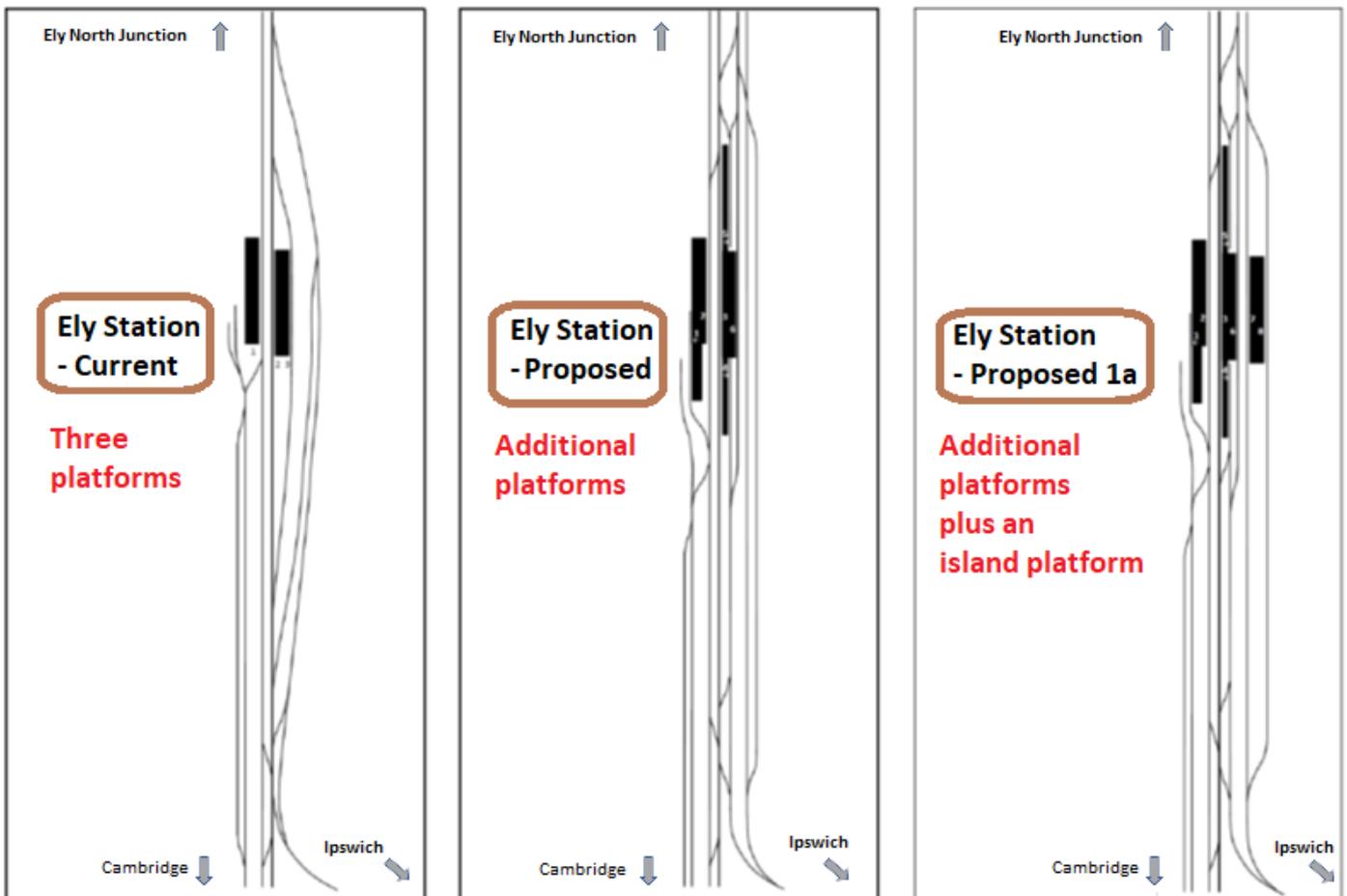
To accommodate this future traffic, the Ely solution must involve grade separation. Examples on the main freight network can be found at Reading, where freight from Southampton crosses the Great Western Main Line, and the Werrington dive-under near Peterborough, where Felixstowe trains cross the East Coast Main Line.

But how can this be achieved at Ely? One option designed by Railfuture members in East Anglia is set out in the diagrams in this article. Below (diagram 1) is Ely North.

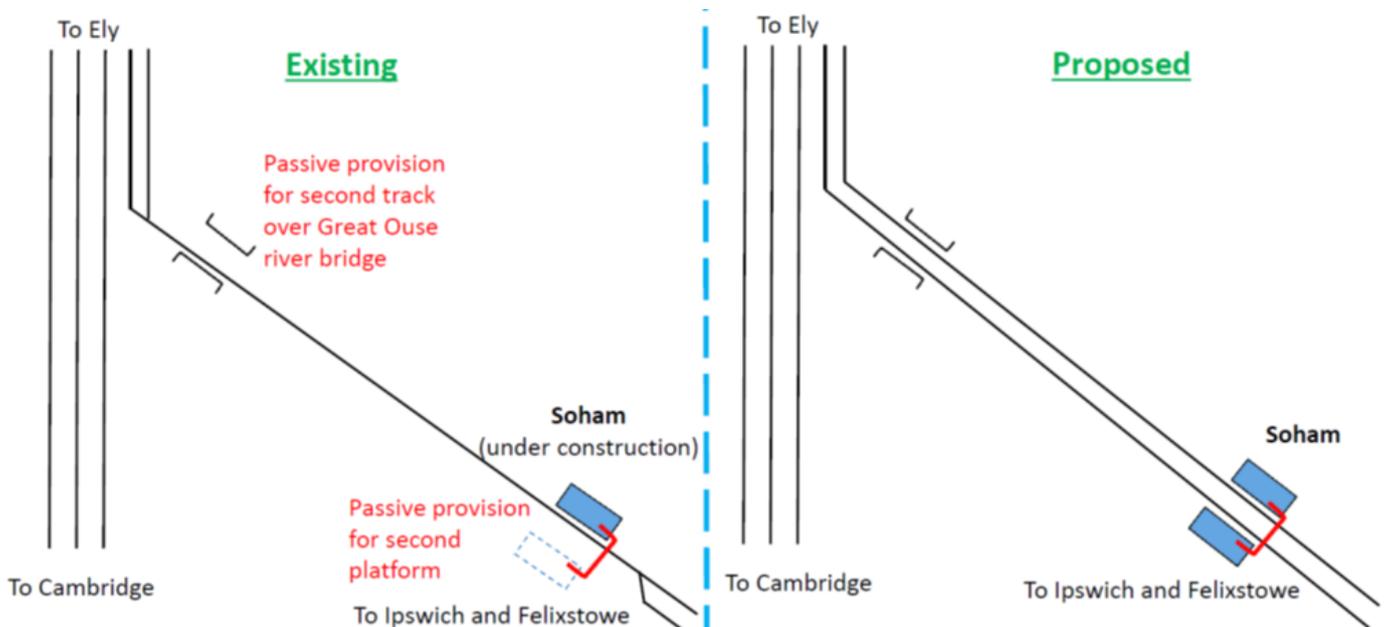


The current layout (left) would be replaced by the proposed layout (right), with the elevated section between the two red arrows. Both Common Muckhill and Cutter bridges date from 1890 and Network Rail needs to replace them. To avoid closing the line, one possibility is to construct the new line in two phases. Phase one would divert existing services over two new river bridges and re-join the present line using a temporary connection. The second phase would be to build the flyover itself when this connection would be removed.

Although NR has stated that remodelling **Ely station** itself is likely to fall outside the scope of this consultation, we set out two options for accommodating future service needs. These include adding bay platforms, allowing terminating services to reverse without occupying platforms needed for through trains (diagram 2).



As so often on the rail network, capacity enhancements tend to move the blockage *further up the pipe!* The additional capacity needed for up to three freight and up to two passenger services per hour will inevitably require the doubling of the single line to Soham (which will only be served by alternate hour passenger services under the present timetable). These interventions, combined with enhancements described in our publication *'From Branch line to Main Line'*, will all need to be provided before the route from Felixstowe to the Midlands and North is electrified (see *'Wise up and wire up'* in RAIL EAST 188).

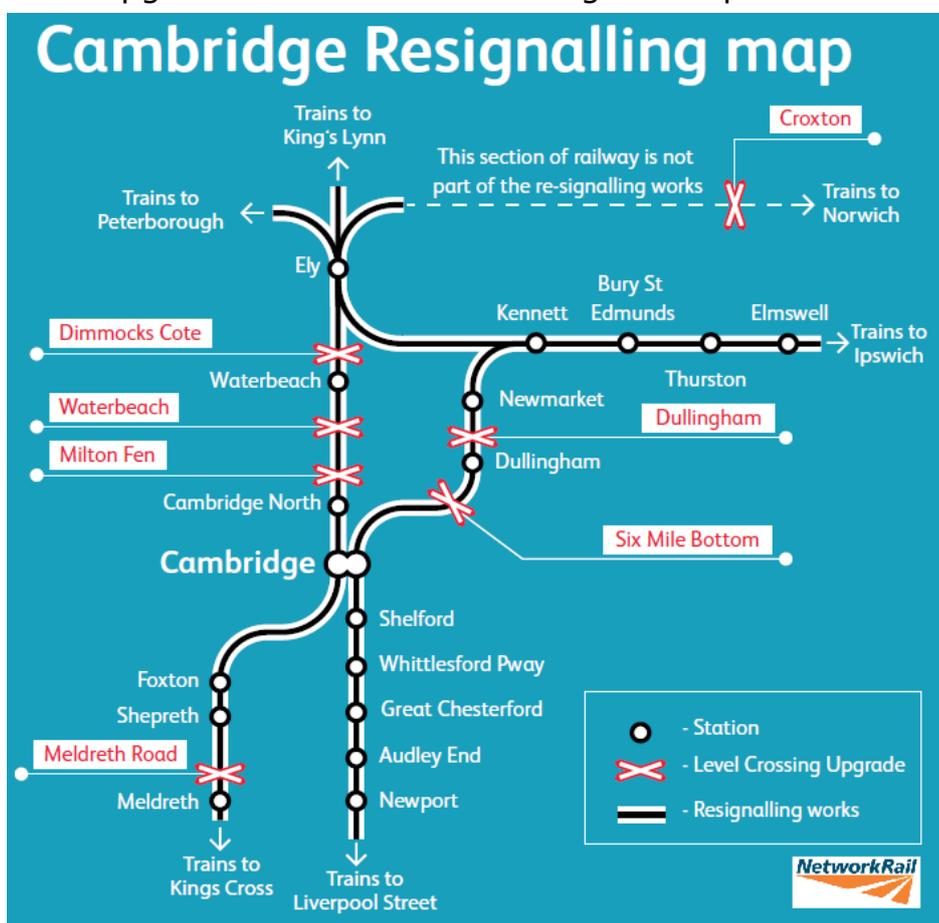


NETWORK RAIL SIGNALS INTENT TO RECONTROL CAMBRIDGE

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

Network Rail Anglia Route announced in February 2021 some good news that will greatly facilitate more reliable working over the Ipswich to Cambridge line. The somewhat fragile control of the line from the signal box at Dullingham will soon be no more. It, together with the boxes at Chippenham Junction and Bury St Edmunds, is to be "abolished" and their operations transferred to a new signalling panel at Cambridge Power Box. This is a part of a very much larger project that Network Rail tells us "aims to deliver state of the art signalling technology, ensuring better reliability and reduced maintenance, while providing a platform ready for digital technologies such as European Train Control System (ETCS). The signalling system being upgraded by the project covers 125 miles of track, stretching from Meldreth and Elsenham to the south, through central Cambridge, up to Ely to the north and Thurston to the east...[and] upgrade...the signalling control equipment at Cambridge power signal box with state-of-the-art computer workstations to improve efficiency and operational capacity. Croxton, Dimmocks Cote, Waterbeach, Milton Fen, Dullingham, Six Mile Bottom and Meldreth Road level crossings are to be upgraded to improve safety at these crossings....Network Rail has awarded the outline design contract for the upgrade to Alstom. This stage is expected to be completed in the last quarter of 2021....and all completed in 2025."

Thoughts occurring – is Croxton "that" Level Crossing east of Thetford? Are we finally to have that very annoying speed restriction lifted? And regarding Chippenham Junction: will the re-signalling include works to incorporate the restoration of the Newmarket West Curve? We hope so. *More immediately – please note that Network Rail is engaged in a public consultation (on the level crossing changes) on its big re-signalling project in the Cambridge area. The consultation runs for six weeks from 1 March 2021 to 11 April 2021.*



Please get involved!

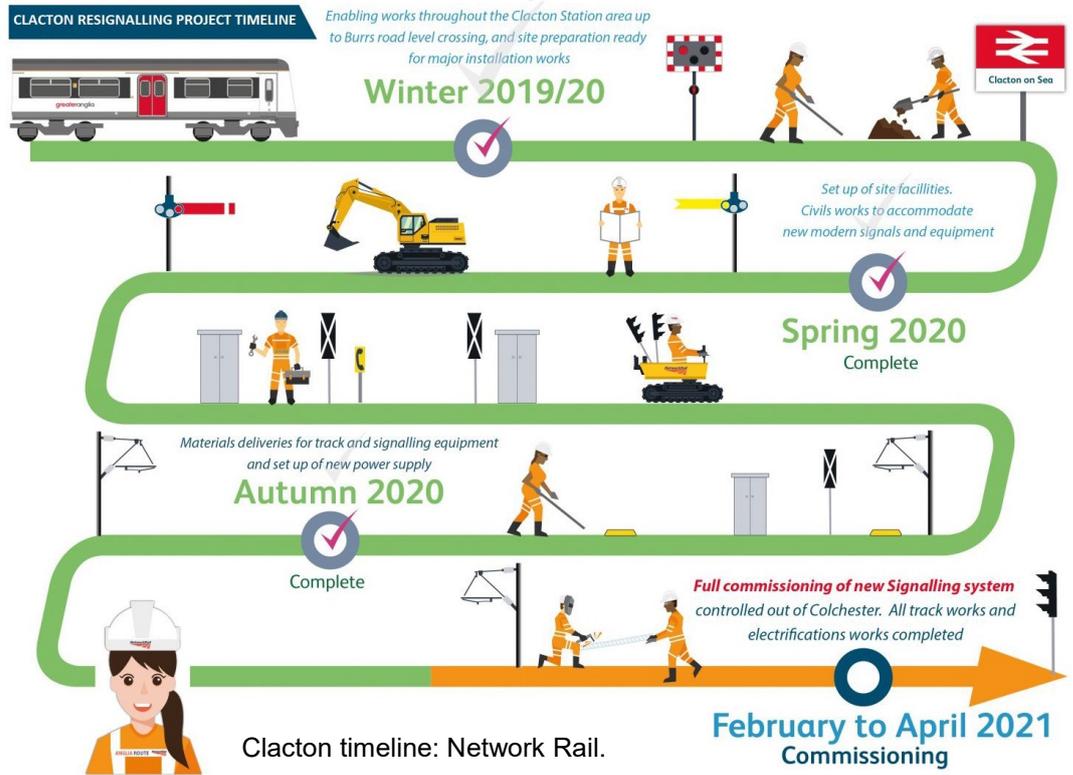
www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/public-invited-to-comment-on-signalling-renewal-proposals-for-cambridge-area

In March 2021 Network Rail completed major work to recontrol **Clacton** station signalling, with Colchester Power Signal Box taking over. This means that the lovely old signal box at Clacton is no longer in use. Network Rail's timeline (below) gives the dates for this big £37m job that involves 500m of new track, signalling, overhead wires, power to 12 new point ends and telecoms.

Network Rail tweet after 23 days of intense resignalling work on the Clacton project

Network Rail Anglia @NetworkRailAng · 15 Mar
 🚦 We've finished our 23-day works at Clacton! The modern signalling system is up and running

The ten remaining mechanical signal boxes in the Railfuture East Anglia branch area will be in the Fens at Manea, Stonea, March South, March East, Three Horse Shoes, Whittlesey, Littleport, Downham Market, Magdalen Road and King's Lynn Junction. However, these will soon be taken out of service as another resignalling project gets under way from the ECML and Peterborough.



Littleport Signal Box definitely "on the Huh".
 Photo by Peter Wakefield

It is good to see investment for the future — to benefit passengers and freight customers — on an ever more efficient, flexible and busy network. It's also sad, for some, to see these so familiar part of our landscape passing after 140 years standing sentinel over the safe movement of millions of passengers and countless millions of tons of freight across East Anglia. Here's to the many generations of signallers who have kept them immaculate and the railway safe. And, of course, still do in those quiet unnoticed signalling centres at Colchester, Cambridge, Romford...and far away York.

EAST WEST RAIL AND THE CAMBRIDGE CONNECTION BY PETER WAKEFIELD

We thought that this is a moment to remind ourselves what the East West Railway is all about and counter some misconceptions doing the rounds.

The Link that makes a Network

Railfuture has campaigned continually for the restoration of the railway west from Cambridge across the South Midlands to Oxford since the 1980s (cover of publication by Railfuture when it was known as the Railway Development Society, pictured right), when it was evident that a new and massive industrial development was taking off across this region. Linking all the emerging centres was deemed an imperative if the scarce skills of those working in these new knowledge-based industries were to be



effectively harnessed. The radial railway routes out of London were to be crossed by the proposed new railway – hence our strapline: “The Link that makes a Network”.

Knowledge-based industry

Move on to today and the knowledge-based industries have developed further and in unimaginable ways, with many more important specialised centres of research developing and moving along the railways to new sites, for example to traditionally important regional centres such Norwich and Ipswich. It is now unthinkable that those major regional towns will not be linked into the East West Railway (EWR).

East West Rail Consortium (EWRC)

It’s been an unrelenting struggle to make decision-makers realise the power of rail, but we have been fortunate that for over 30 years the East West rail concept has been steadfastly developed by a consortium of local authorities (EWRC) — Norfolk CC, Suffolk CC and Cambridgeshire CC have all been steadfast long-term members.



East West Railway – much more than just a Cambridge-Oxford railway line

In 2017, on the back of EWRC’s work, the government set up the East West Railway company to deliver the central part of the railway between Bedford and Cambridge. During 2021, EWR will announce results of its detailed route studies for our new railway but we know that it will connect the Bedford mainline station with the St Neots area, Cambourne and Cambridge Biomedical Campus in south Cambridge. These are fundamental growth points. To achieve logical connections between these nodes the railway will have to enter Cambridge station from the south and to continue across East Anglia. EWR has become much more than just a railway between Cambridge and Oxford. Graphic below from <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/>

Local benefits of East West Rail		
 <p>Cheaper and easier travel</p> <p>With new services and stations, we aim to make east west travel quicker and cheaper for all.</p>	 <p>Jobs and growth</p> <p>By connecting science parks, universities and industry, we’ll provide access to new opportunities.</p>	 <p>Thriving communities</p> <p>By upgrading east west connectivity, we aim to support the improvement of new and existing communities.</p>

Cambridge Station...footfall 12 million a year...Turn up and Go... “Dramatically reducing the number of cars on the road”

By some margin, Cambridge station is the busiest station in East Anglia (see station usage figures on page 12). EWR is expected to operate a “turn up and go” service of at least four trains an hour from/to Bedford and beyond and extending to the east. Suffolk County Council (for EWRC) is developing the case for extending at least two of those trains hourly on from Cambridge, to Norwich via Cambridge North, Ely and Thetford and to Ipswich via Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds. Cambridge station has room for expansion but even then it will only work efficiently if the additional trains just pause there for a couple of minutes maximum. Terminating a train at any platform at Cambridge will see the loss of precious capacity, as most require at least 15 minutes to turn round for the return journey. Say two trains an hour came off EWR from a northern approach into Cambridge, those trains automatically add two unnecessary journeys each hour into the timetable. Would they be at the expense of two new services arriving from a restored railway to Wisbech? Headlines of well-heeled South Cambridgeshire taking precedence over Fenland, anyone?

Railfreight...Western end? Eastern end?

There is an urgent need to decarbonise all transport, especially freight transport, so it will be folly not to provide the new railway with a freight capability. The East West Railway will extend for about 80 miles with three intermediate junctions onto other

important north - south routes. The busiest freight section will be at the western end between Oxford and Milton Keynes, as there is a real need to provide more capacity for Southampton Docks to Manchester rail freight.

At the Cambridge end of the route it is difficult to think of any freight destination that would need to be routed through Cambridge except for **the two a day which operate** from Felixstowe to Bristol and Cardiff – and even these sometimes operate overnight through Cambridge now, going on via Audley End, to keep the driver route knowledge up to date. We doubt many people notice them.

But we all know that there will be hundreds of thousands of new homes built across the EWR route to support this new industrial region. Each home will need up to 200 tons of construction materials, so millions of tons will be needed. There is no better way to carry these materials than by train, so there will be a need to operate trainloads of building materials to local distribution terminals. The homes will be built across the 80 miles, so no point will need more than a train or so a day. But for the South Cambridgeshire region these materials will come into the existing freight terminal at Cambridge North, as they do now, via Ely.

Remember, the railway operates to a timetable. Every train including a freight train, is allocated a “path” in the timetable. If East West Rail is freight “enabled” then a path for a freight train will be allocated. Intense train services operate using standard paths each hour, so a standard path for a freight train will be the most efficient way of operating within the timetable, even though it may be rarely used.

The national rail route for rail-freight to/from the Port of Felixstowe is NOT through Cambridge. Nor will it be

All day long two or three trains of rail-freight operate every hour across East Anglia to/from Felixstowe Docks. Near Newmarket, at Chippenham Junction, those freight trains swing to the northwest towards Soham, Ely, Peterborough, the West & East Midlands and the North of England. Millions of pounds have been spent upgrading this route with much more to come. These trains operate day in, day out without comment from those living nearby. **These trains will not run via Cambridge and on through South Cambridgeshire as they do not need to.**

On the A14 or on the railway?

Railfreight takes only 40% of the freight out of Felixstowe Docks. Most of the rest is on HGVs that roar through north Cambridge suburbs, northeast Newmarket and the middle of Bury St Edmunds. Every tonne of freight on the parallel railway emits 78% less CO₂ than on an HGV and uses less energy; nobody has yet invented a more efficient tool than a steel wheel on a steel rail, thus fewer noxious emissions and no rubber tyre particulates, we need more freight on rail for everyone's health.

Complaining or concerned? There will be a public inquiry

Quite understandably, people who think they may find themselves alongside a new railway will be worried. Often their fears are magnified by those who like to promulgate exaggerations for whatever purpose, but it is everybody's right to campaign against something that worries them (or “for” it if they recognise the greater good). To date we have noted that EWR has been painstaking in its investigations, which it is duty bound to be.

Shortly many more details of the route through west Cambridgeshire will be published and most objectors will find their worries are unfounded simply because the railway will not go anywhere near them. Most of those few who may still feel they are adversely affected will be able to work with EWR to find the suitable mitigation. **Of course, all aspects of the new railway will also be examined in a public inquiry. The Inspector will hear everybody's point of view. Fact, fiction will all be evaluated fairly.**

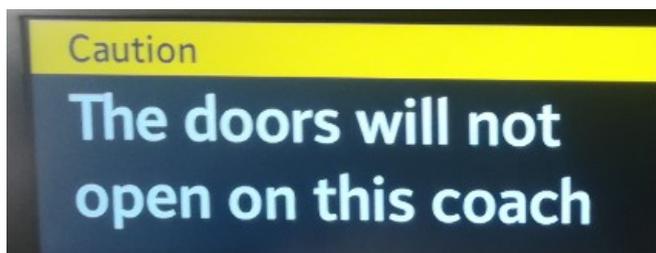
Overall, Railfuture is sure that this railway, like existing railways, will be of huge benefit to every generation within every family and for all across our region.

PASSENGER INFORMATION SYSTEMS — MORE UPDATES

BY JERRY ALDERSON

RAIL EAST issue 188 (December 2020) looked at passenger information systems (PIS) on modern trains in East Anglia, and how they are catching up with the best in other European countries. Greater Anglia (GA) had revealed to Railfuture the further improvements it had planned but asked us not to reveal them until they were introduced. Some helpful features have been rolled out or are now on test on certain units, though because of the COVID-19 lockdown few will have seen them. In this author's opinion, having only been able to make local journeys on its Class 755 trains, thanks to the latest upgrade, GA has amongst the best PIS in Britain.

In late 2020 GA introduced messages about COVID-19, catching up with other operators. Trains also warned passengers that they must move to another carriage if they wished to alight at the next station because of a short platform. This is useful as the conductor doesn't always make an announcement.



In daytime it provides the temperature and weather at the train's destination. It's unlikely that this information is real-time (either now or at the arrival time), and although a nice touch it doesn't really deserve its own page; much better to add it to the train destination page.



The most-useful enhancement has been to provide real-time connection information at the next station, showing a maximum of six connections (two pages of three). Railfuture identified a few teething problems and GA has fixed them, although the page still scrolls too quickly. Two suggested enhancements have not been agreed, yet: add the arrival time (and ideally platform) of the next station on the connections page so that people can calculate how much time they have; also add rail replacement bus connection details.

Next departures from Ely		17:22
17:48	Manchester Piccadilly	3
Exp. 17:58	Kings Lynn	1
18:13	Birmingham New Street	1

One cannot overstate the effort involved in deciding what connecting services to show to passengers who are on the train. It's much more difficult than the customer information screens at stations where every service in the next couple of hours is shown. Obviously, it doesn't show the train that the passenger is on! A particular challenge is not to clutter the screen with connections that very few people would want to do (now), such as going back to where they've just come from (or just passed — the train left Cambridge North three minutes ago, so why show a connection to go back there now, but image, below, does). Equally, would it be any help on a Stansted Airport to Norwich station to tell passengers arriving at Cambridge how to connect to a train for Cambridge North when the train they are on will be stopping there?

Next departures from Cambridge		14:20
14:44	Stansted Airport	4
14:51	Cambridge North	1
14:54	Brighton	8

To avoid alighting passengers having an accident it omits very tight connections, but how is that defined? Ideally the PIS would know which platform the train is arriving at, and the time taken to get to each platform (especially if it involves stairs) to decide which connections to show, but that would be a lot of effort.

Currently the connections page gives only the destination with no indication of which service it is. The name of the train operator could become less important in future, especially if operator-specific fares are abolished, but being told if the service is non-stop, fast, semi-fast or all stations would be useful.

The latest enhancement are "videos", although they are not mini-movies (GA has said that they will be silent, to avoid annoying people), but generic messages:



With the ability to include symbols, have multiple colours and vary the typeface size these continually scrolling messages look more modern than the text-based pages.



Some include limited animation, making use of Greater Anglia's red hare that was used to promote the new trains. This is sure to delight younger travellers.



The animation is not in the same league as Eurostar's new trains (introduced in 2015), but it has a much larger budget, as do the major airlines, which have played animated or filmed flight-safety videos for more than two decades.

The video feature will deliver real value to passengers if messages are selected by relevance to the service the passenger is travelling on. When approaching airport stations it could remind those alighting of procedures that they need to follow, not least how to find their way to check-in or gates. Wayfinding information (especially how to find buses and taxis) would be useful at many stations. For the train operator, it could include marketing information that actually promotes places of interest, not merely mentioning their existence (as it does with Ely Cathedral).

Whilst welcoming these enhancements, sadly, far too often the PIS is either turned off or stuck on one page, and when it is working the set of pages displayed can appear pot luck. In its 2020 survey, Transport Focus found that "accurate and timely information provided on trains" was the eighth priority for *improvement* mentioned by passengers, behind the usual 'suspects' of punctuality, price, seats, delay information, train interior cleanliness etc. Accurate PIS (and indeed CIS, see page 23 photo quiz) should be a key performance indicator that sets operator fees.

FREEPORT EAST – FURTHER STRENGTHENING THE CASE FOR MUCH NEEDED RAIL ENHANCEMENT?

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

As alluded to in this issue's Colchester and the Tendring Peninsula article (page 6), the Department for International Trade (DfIT) has proposed eight "Freeports" spread around the UK. It defines Freeports as "secure customs zones located at ports where business can be carried out inside a country's land border, but where different customs rules apply. They can reduce administrative burdens and tariff controls, provide relief from duties and import taxes, and ease tax and planning regulations." The Freeport can be inland, for example at a rail port, as well as at the coast.

Following the 3 March 2021 Budget we know that East Anglia has been successful in its "Freeport East" bid. The scheme is based on a partnership that includes Hutchison Ports UK, Harwich Haven Authority, Trinity House, Haven Gateway Partnership, New Anglia and South East Local Enterprise Partnerships, Suffolk and Essex County Councils, East Suffolk Council and Tendring District Council.

The bid had met three key requirements set by the DfIT:

Objective 1 – establish Freeports as national hubs for global trade and investment

- a. Trade: increase in trade throughput through the designated Freeport area
- b. Investment: increase in investment within Freeport boundary area, surrounding area and nationally

Objective 2 – promote regeneration and job creation

- a. Employment: increased number of jobs and average wages in deprived areas in and around the Freeport
- b. Economic activity: increase in economic specialisation in activities high in GVA relative to the current makeup of the local economy

Objective 3 – create a hotbed of innovation

- a. Innovation: Increased local involvement and funding in R&D and innovation
- b. Productivity: Increased productivity in each target region, through increased capacity to absorb innovation.

"Just as the sun rises in our region before it spreads across the UK, so Britain's future begins at Freeport East." George Kieffer, Chairman of the Project Board, said that. A hostage to fortune? His team calculated that 13,500 new jobs could be created in the area, with Freeport East attracting more than £500 million of investment and providing £650 million to the UK economy over five years.

The business case argues that Freeport East can deliver on the UK's strategic aims:

- **growing global trade**, combining the UK's largest deep-sea container port at Felixstowe with the short sea European gateway at Harwich
- **being a hub for** innovation, driving the Green Industrial Revolution by creating a new hydrogen hub and supporting development of offshore renewables
- **driving economic growth and opportunity** for more deprived communities both close to the ports and – through its trade connections throughout the UK – across the country.

Ely Area Capacity Enhancements anybody?

Linking into the article (page 14) that sets out Railfuture's ambitious proposal to the "Ely Area Capacity Enhancements" (EACE) planning team at Network Rail, it is to be hoped that there is a realisation at the DfIT and with all others concerned, that the sun will struggle to rise in our Far East if we do not get EACE well and truly sorted...and all the connecting routes electrified. And it is just not acceptable to go for any more road building to accommodate the projected growth.

Another successful bid - Thames Freeport

But wait! Here is also Thames Freeport, a consortium of the ports of London Gateway and Tilbury plus Ford's engine plant site at Dagenham and Thames Enterprise Park – and it apparently has "the very DNA of Freeports in its blood". This

is not in Railfuture East Anglia's area but is in that of Transport East and it will affect our transport network. Already London Gateway Port and the Thameside industrial belt struggle to find freight train paths. This proposal will add more pressure to our transport networks just as it will to London's. Is it time for a new railway northwest from Thameside that avoids London and the GEML?

Use your favourite search engine to find out more about these interesting proposals now confirmed as getting the green light from government.

RAIL EAST PHOTO QUIZ

The mystery view in issue 188's photo, visible only with Superman's x-ray vision, was immediately north of Mill Road bridge in Cambridge, looking eastwards (photo, below taken through a clean window, thanks to Greater Anglia's brand-new washer at Crown Point in Norwich). This issue's quiz is to spot the mistake on the customer information screen at Cambridge North. It is *really* easy (answer in issue 190). If passengers can't trust the railway on something basic, what can they trust it to do?



CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

Please send articles for possible inclusion in RAIL EAST to Peter Feeney, who collates all submissions and prepares them for the newsletter. Good quality photos are appreciated and essential in order to make RAIL EAST visually attractive.

All submissions by **22 May 2021**, please, but articles covering late news will be considered just before sending to the printer two weeks later.

RAIL EAST is formatted by Jerry Alderson.

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The latest RAIL EAST is always at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/rail-east/>.

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Railfuture is funded entirely by the public, who use the railway. This means that it can stand up for their interests; hopefully RAIL EAST proves this. Apply to join online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> using a credit/debit card or PayPal.

railfuture East Anglia

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A flyer for our meetings is always at: www.railfuture.org.uk/east/meetings.
This includes a map of the venue and directions from the station.

MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 26 JUNE 2021

St Mary's at Stoke
Church Hall, Stoke Street,
IPSWICH
IP2 8DA

SATURDAY 25 SEPT 2021

Friends Meeting House,
5 Upper Goat Lane
NORWICH
NR2 1EW

**Meetings subject to
confirmation.**

**COVID-19
DEPENDENT**

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