

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

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50 Years of Railfuture East Anglia – 1972 - 2022

PASSENGER NUMBERS BOUNCE BACK



BUT WHAT ABOUT REVENUE?

Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- Improvements at key stations
- 2021 census — what it means
- Treasury view of railway finances
- GTR timetable changes
- Bittern Line station proposal
- Tram-Trains for line reopenings?
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- Barry Moore—1941-2022

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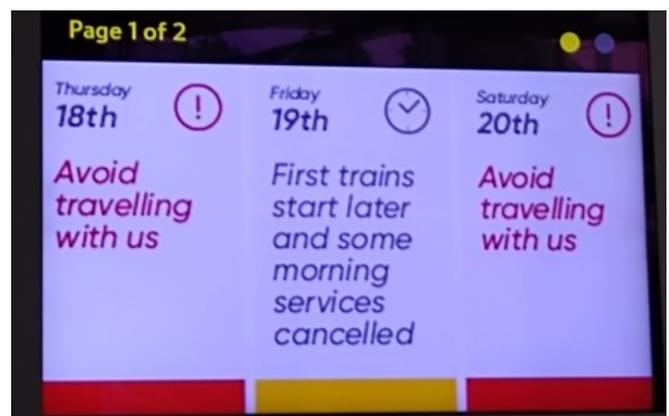
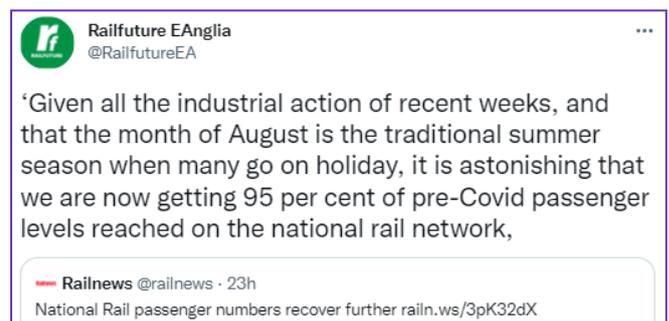
From a new high summer travel hazard to controversy over design plans for Lowestoft station

Industrial action and Railfuture – [p.23](#)

While strikes thwart Railfuture events locally and nationally, we can only hope for an eventual settlement that enables the rail industry to get back on its feet after COVID-19

Top image: Railfuture East Anglia tweeted positive news published in Rail News about passenger numbers.

Bottom image: Greater Anglia used its modern station information screens to warn travellers of strike days, using clear language and symbols with colour coding. Well done!



MORE MIXED MESSAGES

BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH



Not for the first time, the rail industry is sending out mixed messages to both passengers and the politicians. On the plus side, many train operators have reported that passenger numbers to many of our seaside towns currently exceed the pre-pandemic patronage in 2019 (see article on page 7). Locally, Greater Anglia has reported that passengers to Sheringham have increased by 47%, with 25% and 13% increases at Cromer and Great Yarmouth respectively. A combination of problems at ports and airports is encouraging people to look at holidays and short breaks in the UK. There may also be those who wish to avoid flying and give up the car for the benefit of the environment and climate change. Good news for the railways and the local economy.



In early July 2022 diesel reached £1.999 a litre with unleaded not far behind. Prices have since fallen back sharply.

On the other hand, the ongoing rail strikes (see article on page 23) and the fragility of some of the infrastructure are both likely to put people off using the train. On a recent break in the north of England, I spent a week travelling around the region by train. I was impressed by the quality of the trains, both new and refurbished stock, and the frequency with which Northern Trains staff went through the trains checking tickets and offering help with connections. However, many journeys were affected by staff shortages and infrastructure problems. The expression "I will never use the train again" was heard on more than one occasion.

During the summer, work has been continuing on Railfuture East Anglia's Regional Rail Strategy. The team has been looking at the main population centres and the travel demand between them and the existing and potential rail share of this traffic. For example, the study has looked at the impact of having "parkway stations" around our cities for better access to the railway and the possible introduction of additional fast trains between cities and the prospects for new freight flows. This will be a long-term view to illustrate the potential that rail can have in our region in linking the main centres. We will present the findings at our meeting in Cambridge on 3 December. I look forward to seeing many of you at our meeting on Saturday 24 September — at our usual venue, the Friends' Meeting House in Norwich (see below) — when Phil Smart will be talking about rail freight.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 24 SEPTEMBER

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

Our free-to-attend Norwich meeting starts at 14:00 (please be aware that engineering works will be taking place between Peterborough and Norwich). Phil Smart, who regularly writes for RAIL EAST, is Assistant Policy Manager at the Rail Freight Group. His presentation will include some of the material that he had prepared for Railfuture's postponed Annual National Conference in Leeds.



RAIL EAST 194 mentioned that Anthony Dewar, Network Rail's Technical Head of Buildings and Architecture, would be speaking at the December meeting. This has been postponed to 2023.

After that, on 25 February 2023 in Bury St Edmunds, our guest speaker will be Nick Flynn of the Family Friendly Trains campaign. He lives in East Anglia so can give some relevant insights into our trains and stations.

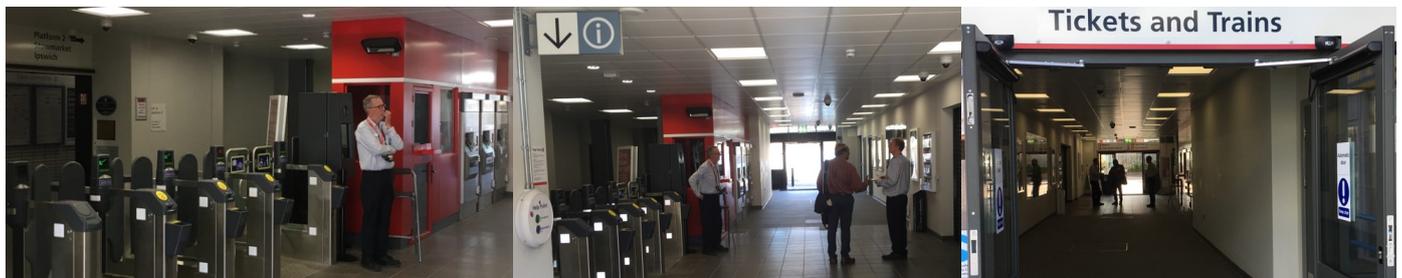
STATION IMPROVEMENTS — PROS & CONS FOR PASSENGERS BY JERRY ALDERSON

RAIL EAST issue 193 welcomed the new station at Soham and issue 194 looked at the major improvements at March station, both of which were funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). With the Mayor being directly elected, the CPCA's priority is serving the public and raising patronage. However, improvements to most stations are funded by the DfT (which can appear to be a subsidiary of the Treasury) with its priority being a combination of operational compliance and revenue (not increasing the number of journeys, you understand, but just getting existing passengers to pay). In the two station improvements described below, both see the introduction of ticket gates and, particularly in the case of Ely, most of the other changes were a consequence of it.

New northern entrance at Bury St Edmunds

In 2020 a large car park for rail users was opened on the northern side of Bury St Edmunds building, quadrupling parking spaces. However, it was necessary to walk all the way around the station to enter via its only entrance, which was on the south side. This could waste three minutes.

August 2022 saw the official opening of a second entrance on the northern side close to the new car park, off Fornham Road. The long awaited £1.6m scheme to improve access was a result of a partnership project between Greater Anglia, West Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council and Network Rail. The reinstatement of a Victorian undercroft (discovered on old records from when the station was built in 1847), which passes beneath the railway lines, links both sides of the station. Using the wide underpass has enabled the booking hall to be increased in size. There are now three automatic ticket vending machines, instead of one, with staff moving from the old booking office to help passengers use the TVMs, assist those using the new ticket gates, and perform other ticket-related activities (such as issuing refunds and selling railcards) from a small booth located between the gate line and TVMs. This is far superior to Cambridge North where Greater Anglia staff can do little more than press buttons on the TVM. There is provision for two new retail units, but neither is currently occupied. (All photos by Peter Wakefield.)



Peter Feeney comments: "The four ticket gates (three normal and one wide), illustrated below, located at the 'throat' where travellers from both platforms enter or leave the ticket hub (above), may be insufficient to accommodate peak demand and are likely to be congested when travellers with bikes or buggies are part of the mix. A further improvement to help travellers' experience at Bury station would be to ensure staff are available on the station throughout the day, so the waiting room and all-important toilets on platform 2 are open when services are operating. It is fair to say that this is not currently always the case."

Staff had an input to the changes. They asked for the large 'mural' (pictured right) to be moved from the corridor linking the lifts and stairs to the platforms to the new position in the ticket hall. "It looks really impressive", says Peter Wakefield.



Funding for the project included an Access for All grant from the government; support from the Bury St Edmunds Rail Station Group and local MP Jo Churchill helped move it forward. The improvements build on work at the station to restore the old station master's house — see RAIL EAST issue 182 (June 2019).

New ticket hall at Ely

Like Bury St Edmunds, a considerable sum has been spent at Ely revamping the main part of the station building that was used by *many* of the passengers. In future, it will be used by *nearly all* passengers (in daytime, anyway), because they'll have no choice. Let's hope it will cope.

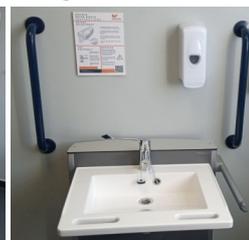
Unlike Bury St Edmunds, the changes will — in the view of some users — bring more cons than pros. But let's start by looking at the undeniable benefits. The front looks lovely: this photo was taken after the new door was added but before any visual improvements.



The entrance is now far superior. There are dropped kerbs for wheelchair users and tactile paving tiles for the visually impaired, plus a pedestrian crossing to the entrance (with obstructions removed), but not as far as Tesco, which many would have liked. Markings on the ground are much better as well. Real effort has been made to improve the appearance of the front of the station, with deep cleaning, repainting, a brand-new station sign and attractive new lighting on the station building. Inside, everything looks brand spanking new and it's a station that the public should be pleased to use and the staff proud to work at.



For general travellers, there are now four TVMs rather than two. Sadly, the real 'wow' factor will be seen by few people. Railfuture, FLUA and MARPA were given a guided behind-the-scenes tour on Wednesday 31 August (RUG representatives and GA's Alan Neville in photo, left), whilst works were still being undertaken, just five days before opening on Monday 5 September. For anyone who has never seen inside a Changing Places toilet it is a wonder to behold with lots of features (the tour guide was eager to show off the sink that can be raised and lowered—there is a handle on the right to control it), the hoist operates in two directions and the room is so large that a dozen people could fit in. It demonstrates a level of respect for those with additional requirements that one could not have foreseen a generation ago. Although several Network Rail managed stations in London have them, it is believed that Ely will be the first station outside London. (There had been a campaign to have one installed at Cambridge North but it never happened — perhaps Cambridge South, which will serve Addenbrooke's hospital, will do.)



Unfortunately, the scope of the project was quite small. Just as the replacement of the waiting room, shop and toilets on the island platform was a wasted opportunity (building precisely within the footprint of the previous facilities, rather than expanding it to meet growing demand), the same is true this time. A new waiting room has been built (through which the Changing Places toilet is accessed), but it is small and cramped. There are three fixed seats (eight more will be added, apparently), a high- and low-level desk for laptop users, a single small customer information screen (the large waiting room on the island platform has two large ones operating as two pages), plus heating and air conditioning. Naturally, the door uses a button, suitable for wheelchair users to operate. There has been some shuffling around, so the old waiting room next to the toilets, which many people didn't realise was there, will now be used for storage.

So, what about the cons? Firstly, Railfuture would argue that having only one ticket office window instead of two is not a con, as previously the second window was often not open. Moreover, the number of customers visiting someone sitting on a chair, at a desk behind a window (see RAIL EAST issue 194) has diminished and will continue to do so. There will be someone standing next to the new ticket

gates able to offer help as well.

Ah, the ticket gates. Yes, it's the con and it has lots of consequences. In fairness, there is some mitigation to reduce the negative effects. There are five gates (one of which is wide) and a second door has been created at the front entrance and onto platform 1. However, as the station was listed, it could only be as wide as the window it has replaced. Greater Anglia realises it will take passengers some time to get used to and will be taking a relaxed approach for the first couple of weeks.

With the TVMs to the side of the gate line, as this photo shows, the previous problem of people queuing to buy a ticket getting in the way should be much reduced, but, like Bury St Edmunds, there will be congestion. It's not just the few seconds that it will take to go through the gate (smartcards are faster than tangerine tickets, of course) but that everyone who previously used either the southern or northern outdoor entrances direct onto platform 1 (avoiding the building completely) will be funnelled through those two doors and five gates as well. That's the cost consequence of a rigid policy that says all gate lines should be staffed (actually some stations in Britain do have remote monitoring of gates), unlike many European cities, which often have a different design of ticket gate where it is difficult to climb over or be trapped in so staff are not present at all. Ironically, Britain has, perhaps, 50 different types of TVMs but only one type of ticket gate, plus a wide one. Has anyone seen a British-style ticket gate in any other European country?



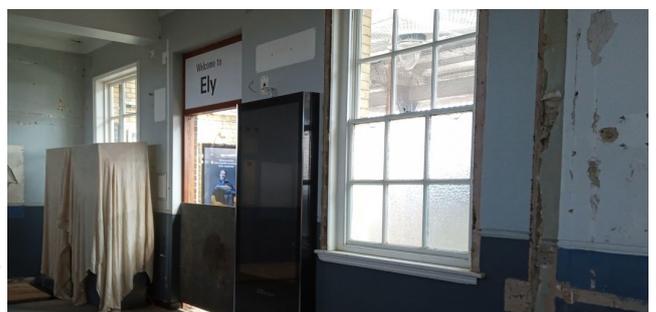
There is substantial cycle parking at the southern end. Rather than a walk of just a few seconds onto the platform after locking up their bike, cyclists will now have a longer walk back to the ticket hall entrance (apart from the evenings when the gate will be open — this can be remotely opened to save staff having to unlock it, see photo on left). The wasted time may frustrate them but hopefully will not deter anyone from travelling. Many passengers on trains arriving at Ely from the south knew to board the front couple of carriages to make a fast exit from the station using the northern exit (opened during the pandemic). Apparently, that was not compliant and will be permanently closed (used only for retail staff to move trolleys) - see photo on right.



Even the Food Station is affected. The vendors had doors at the front and back and one could walk through. Both doors will remain, so they'll continue to get trade from passengers and other station visitors, with a 'wall' inside. The tenants occasionally use the premises for events, so there is a retractable glass wall in the seating area so it can be used as a single room, rather than two, when necessary.

People will live with the changes and eventually forget a time without gates. But the rail industry needs to learn that every minute added to the end-to-end journey involving rail makes the journey by car a minute more competitive.

The photo on the right, from a previous GA tour in March 2022, shows the gutted former ticket hall. What an improvement!



THE 2021 CENSUS AND THE RAILWAYS OF EAST ANGLIA – WHAT’S CHANGED IN A DECADE?

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The initial results of the latest England and Wales census, conducted in 2021, have been released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Here we take a brief look at some of these initial findings and the evidence they provide for continued expansion in rail services factoring in population changes since 2011.

Nationally, the ONS tells us that in 2021 “the total population across the two nations was 59,597,300, with 56,489,800 in England and 3,107,500 in Wales.” However, the census shows that growth has been uneven across the 10 government regions, ranging from 8.3% in the East of England (the highest) down to the lowest of 1.9% in the North East and 1.3% in Wales.

The total population for the East of England* is now 6,300,000. That’s just about 500,000 more people living here than in 2011. Of those 500,000, well over 300,300 more people inhabit Railfuture’s East Anglia branch area. *see note in next paragraph

Regional Variations

Within the East of England there are variations too. Cambridgeshire’s 9.2 per cent rise is higher than the regional average as the number of people living in the county rose by more than 57,000 in the last decade to 678,600. For other counties the data is as follows: Norfolk 916,200 (+6.8%); Suffolk 760,300 (+4.4%); Essex 1,503,000 (+7.6%); Hertfordshire 1,198,800 (+7.2%); Bedfordshire 704,800 (+14.7%). These 6 counties (comprising 45 districts) make up the government’s “East of England” region.

In the local authority table, right, we have extrapolated the numbers for each of district council areas in the Railfuture East Anglia Branch area. You will see even more variations in the increases and a pattern emerges.

The first column gives the name of the Authority (some are unitary rather than District), with the second column having the 2021 census population in its area. The third and fourth columns compare it to the previous census in 2011—the table is sorted by descending percentage change. The fifth column is the 2021 population density per square kilometre of each local authority area. Note: (*) is total for Suffolk Coastal and Waveney DCs.

District/Council	2021 Population	% increase 2011-21	Population increase	Population per km ²
Bedford Borough	185.3k	17.7%	27.9k	389
Cambridge	147.7k	17.6%	22.1k	3580
Peterborough	216.0k	17.5%	32.2k	628
Central Beds	292.0k	15.5%	39.2k	411
Uttlesford	91.0k	14.9%	11.8k	142
South Norfolk	142.0k	14.4%	17.9k	156
Colchester	193.0k	11.3%	19.6k	587
South Cambridgeshire	162.0k	8.9%	13.2k	180
Norwich	144.0k	8.7%	11.5k	3690
Breckland	141.5k	8.4%	11.0k	108
Fenland	102.5k	7.6%	7.2k	188
Tendring	148.1k	7.3%	10.1k	440
Huntingdonshire	182.0k	6.7%	11.4k	200
Stevenage	89.0k	6.6%	5.5k	3446
Mid Suffolk	102.7k	6.2%	6.0k	118
Broadland	131.7k	5.3%	6.6k	239
West Suffolk	180.0k	5.3%	9.1k	174
Babergh	92.3k	5.2%	4.6k	155
North Hertfordshire	133.2k	4.8%	6.1k	355
Ipswich	139.9k	4.7%	6.3k	3536
East Cambridgeshire	87.7k	4.6%	3.9k	135
King’s Lynn and W.Norfolk	154.3k	4.6%	6.8k	107
Great Yarmouth	98.8k	2.8%	2.7k	573
East Suffolk (*)	246.0k	2.6%	6.2k	195
North Norfolk	103.0k	1.5%	1.5k	101
Total	3705.7k		300.3k	

Unitary Authorities tend to be much larger in land area so their density is lower than one would expect from just thinking about the name of the Authority – for example, Peterborough, Bedford, Colchester. They still have very large populations but concentrated in their main towns. Note the many authorities with relatively low density but considerable populations indicating large regional towns, for example Whittlesea, March and Wisbech in Fenland; Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots in Huntingdonshire; King's Lynn in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

The 2021 Census and East Anglia's railway

We must note that our railway serves 500,000 more people now than it did in 2011.

The largest growth is in the west of the region around Cambridge, where it equates approximately to a five-car train load of new residents each month! This growth is set to continue over the next 10 years. We've added Bedford Borough on the western edge of the east as **it demonstrates clearly the need for an East West rail link when added to the growth in and around Cambridge and Peterborough.**

Strong 'Adjacent Authority' growth as in Colchester and Tendring is yet another indicator of the need for better train services there; in Norwich and South Norfolk area where the latter has no town of any significance, but high growth surely linked to the strong Norwich economy, population growth indicates the need for a new station that has been suggested for Long Stratton.

Conversely, the lowest growth is around our coastal communities. There are many reasons for this but better train services from the ever-growing inland areas are surely necessary to stimulate the coastal economies and to offer the health benefits easy access to the coast provides. At the moment connectional obstacles are in place at Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester, affecting Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Felixstowe, Walton and Clacton on the coast.

In summary, the growth of population throughout the region demonstrates the need for improvements to the railway, with a minimum of:

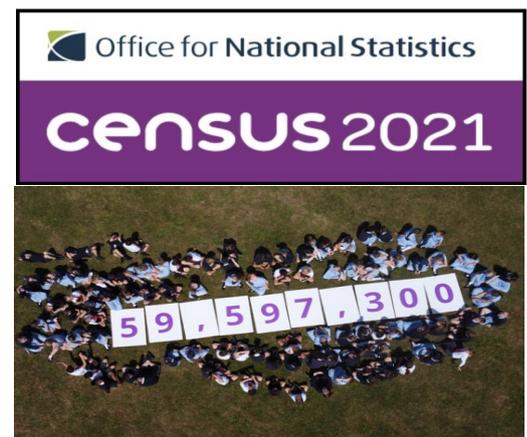
- a minimum 30-minute interval service levels on all our railway routes enabled by continued investment at pinch-points at Ely, Haughley and Trowse
- new stations for growing communities such as around Long Stratton, Cambridge South and Cambridge East
- double tracking between Newmarket to Cambridge and Ely via Soham
- new railways to Wisbech, Haverhill and between Bedford and Cambridge
- more attention paid to the needs of the travel to work areas of Cambridge, Norwich, Ipswich, Colchester and Peterborough as well as towards London
- continual planning for Active Travel links at all of our stations as a priority to make our growing communities much more sustainable as we move into the next 10 years and the next census, in 2031.

See <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+campaigns> for a list of Railfuture East Anglia's current campaigns. This contains links to the PDF leaflets available for downloading, and also links to the page for each campaign, along with research that Railfuture has produced.

The results of the Regional Rail Strategy mentioned on page 3 of this issue will be added in due course.

The Census 2021 results can be found at: <https://census.gov.uk/census-2021-results>.

At the time of writing, only the first results of phase one (of three phases) had been published.



LOTS OF PASSENGERS — WHAT ABOUT REVENUE? COVER STORY

BY JERRY ALDERSON

The cover photo (by Ben Walsh) shows a busy Cambridge station. Leisure traffic has fully recovered and is often more than pre-COVID (at certain times and on certain routes, especially to the seaside), helping to bring total passenger numbers up to 90%. A crucial question is whether revenue is back to the same level in real terms, since this affects how much money the government needs to pump into the railway.

It is wonderful that passengers flocked back to rail (even in 2020 and 2021 during breaks from COVID-19 restrictions), and this has become the norm in 2022, despite disruption such as industrial action and some pretty lacklustre offers to tempt people back (the poorly-received flexi-seasons introduced in 2021 and the half-price tickets in spring 2022 that had restrictions and were often unavailable).



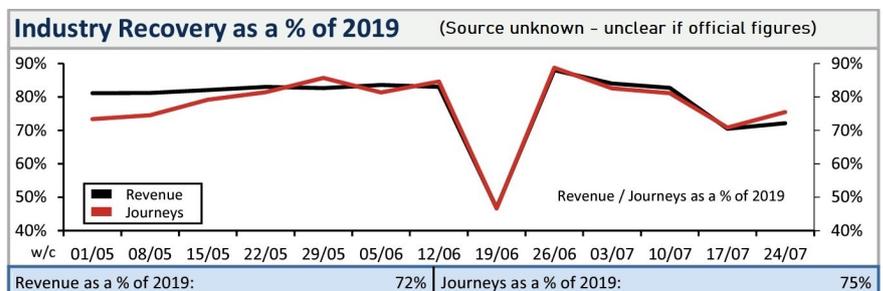
Passengers arriving at Norwich in September 2021.

Railfuture was always confident of a passenger revival because the reasons why train travel is often preferable haven't changed. Even when people have the option to travel by car, the train can be more relaxing, less stressful especially if travelling with children who need to be kept amused, and productive, being able to read and work. Working from home on weekdays can lead to more family leisure trips by train at weekends. Together with an increase in 'staycations', the evidence has been there for all to see.

The railway in Wales has seen revenue recover fractionally more than passenger numbers (95% revenue against 90% passenger numbers) according to Transport for Wales, but it is a very different market, and is very small by comparison. Across Britain, experts might expect a recovery of 90% in passenger numbers to bring revenue of about 80% (in real terms). There is some logic behind this expectation.

A typical season ticket was calculated to give five Anytime Day Return journeys for the price of 3.5 on many routes (there is no standard discount), so a season ticket holder often paid 70% of a high price. Someone using an Off-Peak Day Return (or a Super-Off-Peak where it is available) with a rail card would be paying considerably less (perhaps just 25%), as would those using group save. If children are in the group then the yield (average amount paid per traveller) is ever lower. Partially offsetting this are former commuters who now buy one or two Anytime tickets, or the flexi-season, which costs more per day than a weekly season divided by five.

Respected railway engineer, Gareth Dennis, who regularly writes for RAIL magazine, tweeted the following graphic (source unknown) purporting to show that revenue has recovered just as much as passenger numbers since spring 2022.



Unfortunately there were no notes with the graphic (which shows the impact of three days of RMT strikes in one week in June) and Gareth did not know how the revenue figures were computed. We should all be wary of comparing apples with pears. Statisticians would immediately ask whether the revenue figures were 'normalised' e.g. by uplifting the 2019 revenue to a value comparable with 2022 fares or by downgrading the 2022 revenue to a value comparable with 2019 fares – to present a valid statistical comparison in 'real terms'. Moreover, if the revenue has been normalised then what method is most appropriate? Options can take account

of price inflation (RPI or CPI), rail fare increases or even rail cost inflation. If no adjustment has been made then the weekly yield in 2022 is clearly lower than in 2019. Railfuture has asked the rail industry for clarification but had not received an answer at the time of writing this article or as RAIL EAST was going to the printer.

The Treasury has wanted to reduce railway subsidy ever since Alistair Darling announced the imposition of RPI+1pp back in 2003, with passengers expected to contribute 70% of the cost after a few years. The Treasury is very unhappy that the pandemic has reversed this shift. As well as an overall increase in subsidy, it is delivering less value. More subsidy for fewer people carried is clearly a higher subsidy per person. Worse still, economists in the Treasury will argue that the economic value of the average subsidised journey has fallen as well.

Subsidising a commuter's journey so that they can get to work, or business travellers to sign deals, is vital for the country's economy now. For students it is the country's future economy, along with people going to hospital to be fit to work again. But what is the economic value of leisure travellers?

A good railway encourages people to holiday in this country rather than go abroad, and for people from abroad to come here. More debatable are rail journeys for days out rather than spending that money locally. Travelling redistributes wealth around the country (robbing Peter to pay Paul), but does it increase total wealth?

The Treasury may need reminding that statutory zero carbon targets ought to provide some financial value for the environmental benefits of more rail travel.

The challenge for the railway is to raise revenue to pre-pandemic levels and/or lower the costs so that the total subsidy needed is the same as in 2019 in real terms (if we are lucky, or lower if we are not). Railfuture directors have been particularly concerned about the Treasury looking no further than railway costs, rather than the 'bottom line', which any business looking to the future would focus on. The railway must constantly improve the service to continue attracting more passengers: a virtuous circle rather than a vicious circle.

CHANGES TO THE TIMETABLE FROM THAMESLINK

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

GTR / Thameslink has introduced changes to the Monday-Friday Cambridge to Royston-Letchworth stopping train service as outlined by the Meldreth Shepreth Foxton Community Rail Partnership (CRP) below:

"GTR has announced that, due to significantly fewer people using the railway, **from 4 September 2022** the train service at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton after the morning peak **from 10am** will be reduced to one train an hour. This increases to two trains an hour in the evening peak after **3pm**, then after **8pm** the service will again be hourly."

"In these unprecedented times, regaining rail services lost to the pandemic has been very challenging, with uneven progress as ground is gained, then lost, and gained and lost again. The reduction in service that has been announced for September is disappointing though not surprising in the extraordinarily difficult current climate. Importantly, peak-time services have been protected, as has the 50% student discount for Cambridge-bound students, unique to our area and supporting the school commute by train from day one of the new academic year. Meanwhile, we continue to keep close contact with our train operating company and urge everyone who has the opportunity to choose rail whenever possible, as ridership growth is fundamental to regaining ground."

Currently the stopping trains leave Cambridge at half hourly intervals at xx.28 and xx.58.

- From 4 September withdrawn trains between Cambridge and Letchworth are the 10.28, 11.28, 12.28, 13.28 & 14.28.
- The withdrawn trains from Letchworth are the 10.20, 11.20, 12.20, 13.20 &

14.20.

- The last stopping train from Cambridge to Letchworth and beyond remains at 23.35.

The all-day 30-minute-interval services from Ely-Waterbeach-Cambridge North-Cambridge to King's Cross and Cambridge to Brighton are unaffected. The three service groups that serve the Cambridge to Royston and King's Cross/St Pancras route remains a template for elsewhere in the region – frequent trains 'early to very late' providing an excellent and very well used product.

The introduction of the 30-minute-interval stopping service in 2018 was a bold move by GTR. It is a shame that the 2018 timetable debacle and the pandemic lockdowns have never allowed the service to be properly promoted. As the CRP says, it's been on-off ever since its introduction. The fast-growing population along the route, alluded to elsewhere in this issue, the need to develop active travel, the development of the Foxton Travel Hub and the strong possibility that some kind of road charging will be introduced in Cambridge, all make the restoration of the service in the near future imperative. We suspect this cut back is a result of the micro-meddling by DfT in train operator affairs when it should be leaving / incentivising the management to grow the business, which has reached 95% of pre-pandemic levels.

Other timetables

We haven't heard from other train operators regarding timetable changes, but we again urge Cross Country to restore the full Cambridge to Peterborough service and that from Cambridge to Stansted Airport to an hourly frequency.

Meanwhile, the long-awaited East Coast Timetable revision is still awaited! We have no information as to whether it will be an improvement on its first iteration that so badly overlooked East Anglia. The census results, discussed elsewhere in this issue, show that Peterborough, Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich have populations larger than all ECML destinations other than Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds and Hull. Those connections at Peterborough should be cherished much more and more careful connections developed by the intercity companies.

And on an altogether more positive note, recent trips made by GA services continue to impress. The new Stadler trains are fast, quiet and comfortable. Beautiful trains. Trips to Norwich, Norwich, Sheringham, Lowestoft, Ipswich all very well loaded with large numbers boarding and alighting at nearly every stop.

The Achilles Heel in the network...Dullingham!

One journey was significantly delayed by yet another breakdown in the signalling at Dullingham. Network Rail is really letting the users of GA's Cambridge-Ipswich service down by this continual problem. Hundreds of people inconvenienced every time it happens. Yet we are told it is not a problem. We can only hope that one direct benefit of the Cambridge area re-signalling project (which will see the crossing gates, photo below, replaced by barriers, and the signal box closed) will be far greater reliability for services passing through Dullingham.



NEWS FROM NORFOLK – BITTERN LINE DEVELOPMENTS

BY IAN COUZENS

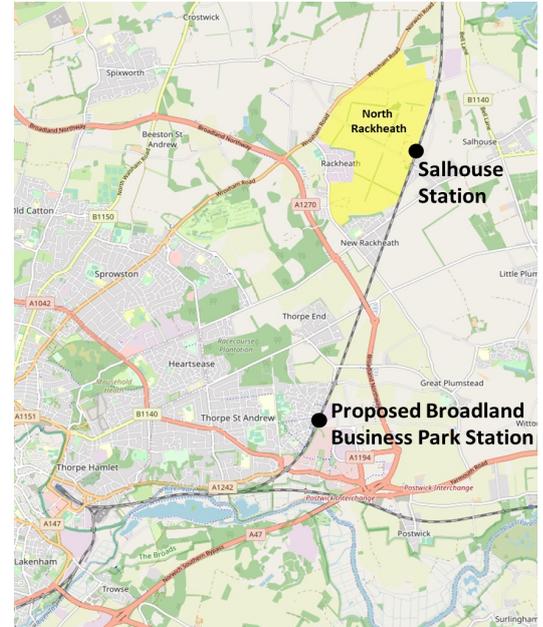


Broadland Business Park Station back on the agenda

Back in 2016 a study was commissioned by Broadland District Council and Norfolk County Council to assess the potential for improvements to the Bittern Line linking Norwich with Cromer and Sheringham. This was in response to the large amounts of new housing planned to the northeast of Norwich and also the expanding Broadland Business Park. The study concluded that a positive case could be made both for a half-hourly service to North Walsham and a new station sited close to the Business Park. <https://broadlandbusinesspark.co.uk>

Progress then stalled, partly at least, due to local authority concerns over the potential risk of ongoing subsidy. While this might have been due to the subsidy requirements of the half-hourly service, it certainly shouldn't have affected the case for the new station.

The good news to report is that the new station is now back on the agenda and is included within Norfolk County Council's list of infrastructure projects to be developed over the next few years. A broad timeframe envisages that further work to identify a single option under Network Rail's old GRIP 3 process could be carried out over the next year, with a project design and development phase running through to 2027 – and finally construction to take place around 2028.



The 2016 study envisaged that the footbridge between the two platforms (with ramps, or possibly lifts) would also provide a useful link between residential areas to the west of the line and the business park on the east. Platforms would be long enough to accommodate four-car trains to allow for future growth – that future of course being already here! There would be a car park allowing for 150 cars along with an expectation that the station would be more attractive to some local residents making long distance journeys, compared to starting from Norwich station.

The cost of the station in the 2016 study was reckoned in the order of what now seems to be a very modest £6.5 million. However, with recently completed station projects elsewhere coming in at far higher amounts, the County Council is currently using an estimate of around £20 million.

There are two realistic locations for the new station. One, already earmarked by the local authority, is about a mile north of Whitlingham junction and about three miles out from Norwich station. The other location would be a little further north compared to the first. The journey time to Norwich station would be no more than seven minutes.

Housing growth impact on Salhouse station

Part of the massive 12,000 new homes planned for the northeast of Norwich involves development on the western side of the Bittern Line at Rackheath, both to the north and south of Salhouse station. The builder Taylor Wimpey has recently applied for outline planning consent to develop this site out with up to 3,850 houses, in what will essentially be a new town.

So, the role of Salhouse station as a sleepy backwater station with a tiny footfall, yet only six miles from Norwich, is going to change radically. As of now the planning documents put in by Taylor Wimpey refer to discussions with Network Rail

and Greater Anglia as to what improvements to the station could be made, but there are no tangible proposals so far.

Railfuture will certainly be keeping a close watch on what happens here.

What will certainly have to change is the level of service provision, since the current level of one stopping train every two hours will clearly not do as the site becomes developed.

A new opportunity for the Bittern Line

The Bittern Line has seen a remarkable growth in passengers over the last 20 years, but mainly focused on the northern part of the line at Sheringham, Cromer and North Walsham. There is now an opportunity to develop the southern section owing to the large-scale housing growth planned for the area. Footfall at Salhouse station will inevitably grow to some extent regardless of what improvements are made. However, the addition of an intermediate station at Broadland Business Park and in due course a half-hourly interval service to North Walsham would enable the railway to make a far greater impact in helping to meet the transport needs of this rapidly expanding part of Greater Norwich – as well as making a significant contribution to addressing zero carbon challenges.



There is also some sad news about the Bittern Line. The respected chair of its CRP, Peter Mayne, died in August 2022.

TRAM-TRAIN — WAY AHEAD WITH RAIL RE-OPENINGS? BY PAUL HOLLINGHURST

RAIL EAST 194 (June 2022) brought progress on restoring the railway to Wisbech almost up to date with the article “Backtracking on the Wisbech Rail Restoration?”. Recent Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) meeting minutes, and the Cambridgeshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) had referred to Very Light Rail (VLR) – Railfuture has serious concerns that VLR would potentially leave Wisbech with a second-rate shuttle service to March, permanently relying on slow and unreliable connections to get to Cambridge and Peterborough.

After several months asking for copies to be released we have finally received copies of two reports from the CPCA so have a much better picture of the current thinking – it is a mystery why this has taken so long.

Wisbech to March: Potential for Light Rail

The first report “Wisbech to March: Potential for Light Rail” is dated December 2021 and was written by Network Rail’s Light Rail Knowledge and Development Team. We were pleased to see that although the study concluded that Tram, Tram-Train or Very-Light Rail could all be used, when the short- and long-term aspirations were taken into account “a Tram-Train solution appeared the best credible light-rail option. Tram-Train would enable future operation on both the national rail network and any on street operation into Wisbech town centre or to the Garden Town.”

The main factors driving this choice were these well-chosen items:

- Requirement to operate on the national rail network (e.g. to Peterborough, Ely, Cambridge)
- The multiplicity of level crossings on the route and the vehicle’s suitability to create a cost-effective solution at each
- Opportunity to operate into Wisbech town centre using the highway network
- Future extension of the service to serve the Wisbech Garden Town development
- Consideration of passenger demand and thus vehicle size

Tram-trains are a major part of the modernisation of the Valley Lines in South Wales and include an interior and ambience which is similar to the new Stadler trains operating in East Anglia, so would be welcomed by passengers, and would have the flexibility to operate to cheaper light-rail standards on the Wisbech branch, but would also be able to operate through services via the national rail network through to Cambridge and Peterborough if paths can be found.

The report details potential station sites and also the interesting prospect of extending the line at the Wisbech end to serve the town centre and the proposed Wisbech Garden Town development.

Wisbech Rail Review

The second report is Network Rail's report assessing the development work completed to date by the CPCA on reconnecting Wisbech and March by heavy rail, along with the recent light rail proposal.

The review concludes that further work needs to be done to complete PACE 1, broadly equivalent to GRIP 3. PACE ("Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment") and the possibly more familiar GRIP ("Governance for Railway Investment Projects") are the processes Network Rail uses to manage and control investment projects, GRIP being the existing eight-step process, with PACE being the new faster five-step development.

The review also concludes that the business case makes several assumptions around infrastructure and timetabling, particularly relating to Ely, which need to be looked at in more detail. For engineering it observes that more work needs to be done looking at level crossings, and also the requirements for freight.

The way ahead – Tram-Train?

We will continue pushing for the reopening of the line from Wisbech to March with through services to Peterborough and Cambridge where suitable paths can be found on the National Rail network. This could be achieved by a reopening based on either heavy rail or Tram-Train so we are pleased to see these two technologies taking the main stage in the review, with the significant advantages of Tram-Train over VLR being noted.

Tram-Train could have a role elsewhere in Cambridgeshire. Railfuture's recent bid to the Restoring Your Railway fund for a re-opened link to Haverhill which was rated as "a good case for future development" was assessed by the Network Rail light-rail team who noted that "this proposal has potential as a Tram-Train scheme, especially if the access to West Anglia Main Line (WAML) into Cambridge is required. A light solution would reduce capital infrastructure costs for the reinstatement to Haverhill. The development of a Tram-Train fleet in the area could also tie with other opportunities such as Wisbech."



Stadler Citylink Tram-Train soon to be transforming services in the Cardiff Valleys. Image from TfW.

These two schemes in Cambridgeshire could be implemented with a shared Cambridgeshire depot, which could be the start of a flourishing Tram-Train network in the region transforming access to other places such as Peterborough and Cambridge.

We ask for the CPCA to continue pushing this work forward, look at wider opportunities such as Tram-Train for Haverhill, and make sure we get a scheme which looks to the future and not one which permanently locks Wisbech into nothing more than a shuttle to March.

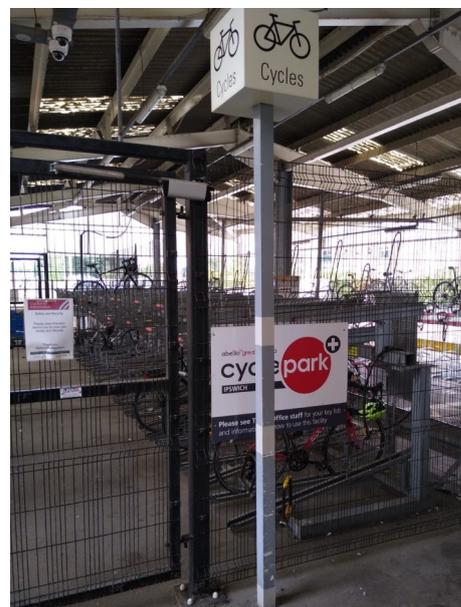


WHY RAIL NEEDS TO TAKE MORE INTEREST IN ACTIVE TRAVEL BY EDWARD LEIGH — PART TWO

In issue 194 of RAIL EAST, I looked at why the rail industry needs to advocate for and help deliver schemes to give more people safe and convenient access on foot or cycle to their local railway station(s). Here I examine what more the rail industry could be doing to improve provision for active travel at stations and on trains.

Cycle parking

Sustrans' 2003 [Safe Routes to Stations](#) campaign stated, "Sustrans thinks that every person travelling is entitled to secure weather-protected cycle parking, bike repairs and additionally other cycle services at transport hubs. In addition, cycle storage on trains should be flexible, convenient and secure."



One of the campaign's justifications was "to allow [Train Operating Companies (TOCs)] to reduce the need for costly car parking provision and make better use of their station buildings." For context, about 16 bicycles can be accommodated in the space required for one car (including space for access and turning).

Although more cycle parking is being provided at most railway stations (photos from Ipswich, above, and Bury St Edmunds, right), the investment is small compared with the investment in car parks.

Cambridge station leads the country in having a 2,800-space multi-storey cycle park. Greater Anglia even agreed to a franchise condition to provide a further 1,000 spaces. However, it then successfully lobbied DfT to remove that condition so that Brookgate, Network Rail's development partner, can instead build a 238-space multi-storey car park, an aparthotel and offices on the existing surface car park. (Eventually, Brookgate was persuaded to design the car park building so it may be converted into a cycle park in the future – though the upper floor won't be linked by a bridge to the existing cycle park.)



Elsewhere, Brookgate is also applying for planning permission to convert Cambridge North's 428-space surface car park into a 622-space multi-storey (also designed to be convertible in future to cycle parking). The Greater Cambridge Partnership is planning to build a 500-space car park over the road from Foxton station; plans are still afoot to increase parking capacity at Whittlesford Parkway; and the proposed new Waterbeach station would include 200 parking spaces. It is costing tens of millions of pounds to allow perhaps 1,500 people to drive and park at a station to catch a train. Elsewhere in the east of England, car parks are being enlarged at [Bishop's Stortford](#) (401 extra spaces), [Stevenage](#) (283 extra spaces), [Biggleswade](#) (50 extra spaces), [Manea](#) (112 spaces) and [Witham](#) (326+ extra spaces).

Now consider the university town of Utrecht in the Netherlands, which has [22,000 cycle parking spaces](#) available at its railway station (image from opening publicity). That enables well over 22,000 people to travel by train, as some people commute in and leave their bike during the day, whilst others leave their bike overnight and commute out in the morning. By contrast, car parks serve home-side passengers only.



If the [government's ambition](#) for "half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030" is to be met, the rail industry will need to provide a lot more secure and convenient cycle parking spaces. In most cases, that will entail surrendering car parking spaces and forfeiting the associated income. This will need to be taken into account in the new GBR Passenger Service Contracts.

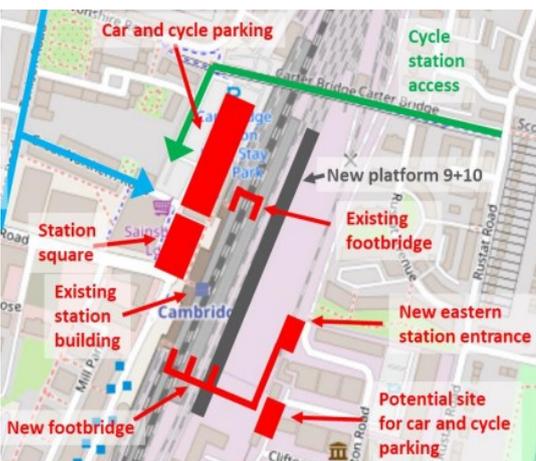
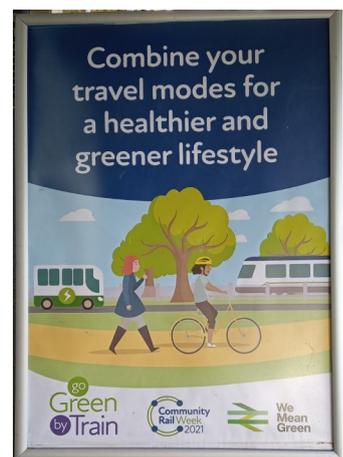
Security

Thefts at the Cambridge station Cyclepoint have been a problem ever since it opened in 2016. If cars were being stolen on a regular basis from the station car park, you can be pretty sure that there would be serious action to deal with it. A car may be worth considerably more than a bike, but the loss still entails temporary loss of mobility or additional costs. For some people, the loss is enough to put them off cycling entirely.

Although Cambridgeshire police are upping their investigations of cycle thefts, it is difficult for any constabulary to allocate significant resources to a crime that does not rank highly on the basis of Threat, Risk and Harm. Cycle parks need to be inherently theft-proof. That means designing them with clear sightlines to all areas, actively monitored by CCTV; good lighting; high-quality cycle racks that cannot be simply unbolted; and having staff on site to intervene quickly if and when suspicious activity is observed or reported. This requires funding. A one-off grant of £530,000 from Active Travel England is paying for improvements at Cambridge station. But there needs to be long-term funding for all stations, for one-off upgrades to security equipment and additional staff. This too will need to be included in the new Passenger Service Contracts.

Buses and cycle hire for the last leg

If the last leg of a train journey is too far to walk, then taking a bus or hiring a cycle or e-scooter are the most sustainable alternatives. But people need to know they're an option before they ring ahead to be picked up or jump in a taxi. TOCs should be actively partnering with bus operators and rental providers and promoting their services on trains and at stations. Then people can save time by downloading and registering on the relevant app using free Wi-Fi available on the train.



Station access

An eastern entrance to Cambridge station has been on the cards since 1950. The Holford & Wright Cambridge Development Plan 1950 stated, "We see no difficulty in getting an Eastern entrance to Cambridge station by 1953". Almost seventy years later, we're still waiting (Railfuture is promoting it — image on left is from 2018 campaign document). With the main station platforms (1 and 4) and single overbridge uncomfortably busy much of the day, we cannot wait for the central section of East West Rail to

get the green light (if it ever does) before Network Rail builds an eastern entrance and additional overbridge.

Many other stations would also benefit from a second access, including Peterborough. It would mean fewer people needing to drive or be driven to or from the station: everyone benefits. Except the rail industry doesn't see it that way: more entrances mean more ticket gates requiring more staff (because, under its current rules, gates must be left open if there isn't a member of staff present). This too needs to be addressed in the new Passenger Service Contracts.

Lifts

The lifts on platforms 7 & 8 at Cambridge were out of action for weeks (possibly still are at the time of publication). Cambridge North station's lifts were out of action for up to [32 days](#) in the first two years after opening. This is not just an inconvenience; it is a physical barrier to travel for many people. And for those who arrive, but find they have to lug their cases or buggy up the stairs, where's the assistance from staff or volunteers organised by the TOC?



Of course, for most stations in the region, lifts are a luxury only to be dreamed of. The DfT [Access For All](#) programme is pitifully under-resourced, delivering step-free access at an average rate of 17 stations per year since 2006. Across the UK, there are still nearly 1,000 stations to go. To take one egregious example, Whittlesford Parkway has no wheelable route to cross the tracks, and desperately needs a new passenger bridge and lifts. A partnership of DfT, Network Rail, the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Combined Authority could have funded it years ago, but their priorities lie elsewhere.

Getting onboard

The lack of level boarding onto trains has to be one of the industry's most signal failures of empathy, imagination and regulation. Wheelchair users must still depend on a pre-booked member of staff to let them board and alight nearly all trains. For every person with a child buggy or heavy suitcase, or afflicted with arthritis, a step makes boarding or alighting a few seconds slower. That lengthens dwell times, stretches timetables, and reduces railway capacity.

Greater Anglia is to be congratulated on being one of the few companies in Britain to take the issue of level boarding seriously, putting into service Stadler Class 745 and 755 trains with low floors and retractable platforms to bridge the gap between the train and the platform edge. One small step for Abellio, but not yet one giant leap for the rail industry.



Bikes, buggies and luggage

Every rail operator has its own rules around when bikes may be taken on their trains. In general, cycles are banned from peak-time trains that are heavily loaded at the main terminus (e.g. London).

Travellers between stations outside of London are the ones most likely to need to take a bike on a train. Even at peak times there is plenty of space on stopping services at least some of the way. So, TOCs should publish and enforce more nuanced rules around taking bikes on trains.

It's great to see train interiors with flip-up seats that create space to park a bike or buggy without obstructing other passengers. However, they're missing straps secured to the wall to loop around a bike frame to stop it falling over when the train lurches sideways.

Similarly, luggage storage compartments need a lip across the front to stop four-wheeled suitcases rolling out when the train lurches sideways.

Luggage storage at stations

People visiting a city by train with luggage need somewhere to store it. If and when they cannot leave it at their hotel, B&B or apartment, they need access to storage lockers, ideally close to the station. Amsterdam station has a huge and very busy locker hall, and several private storage places nearby. By contrast, Cambridge station has nothing. I wonder how many people choose to hire a car rather than take the train partly because a car provides secure space to store luggage.



Since the days of IRA bombings more than half a century ago, British stations have been without luggage storage facilities (and also bins). The threat of terrorist attacks hasn't gone away, so we're not going to see a change of policy imminently. But that doesn't mean the rail industry should ignore the need. Station management could arrange and promote offsite luggage storage with nearby partners.

Britain seems to suffer from a "can't do" attitude. Other countries find solutions. A bomb exploded in the Brussels metro in 2016 — it has since installed these attractive bins.

Luggage forwarding

Having luggage storage at stations also opens up the possibility of reviving the [Red Star](#) service. In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, the service carried parcels and luggage between major stations, including school trunks for kids going to boarding school and luggage for families heading to seaside resorts. [Intercity RailFreight](#) carries packages on a few routes, closing off part of or a whole passenger car at off-peak times to carry parcels. [Orion](#) and [Varamis](#) are also testing the concept of dedicated freight services using converted passenger trains. Imagine travelling by train, even with kids, for a holiday in Cornwall, sending all your paraphernalia on ahead and picking it up, along with a hire car at, say, St Austell.

Conclusion

SAFER
GREENER
HEALTHIER

The rail industry has a crucial role to play in decarbonising transport and reducing car dependency. But it faces a hugely challenging decade, currently beholden to a government that is Janus-faced about public transport, extolling the virtues of public transport, but ideologically attached to the notion that users, not society at large, should cover its costs — completely overlooking the fact that society pays the large and devastating external costs of road transport: carbon emissions, pollution, deaths and injuries, damage to property, etc.

Nevertheless, there are clear opportunities for DfT and the rail industry to build patronage by improving the experience of potential rail users, starting with how they get to and from stations. That means abandoning the mindset that rail's best complement is the car. Instead of expanding car parks, the industry should help local authorities build cycle paths; replace car parking space with cycle parking and bus stations; create new access points to stations; and install lifts and ramps in all stations.



Far too often pedestrians and cyclists have to fit around other road users. It doesn't have to be like that.

The new GBR Passenger Service Contracts need to recognise that costs and revenues will and must change in order to support a growth in passenger numbers, with many more people arriving at and leaving stations by foot, cycle and bus. Car parking revenues will fall; more staff will be needed to supervise additional station entrances (unless rules change) and cycle parks, assist people with reduce mobility, and move freight on and off trains.

In short, the rail industry must adapt its business model, and be much more proactive in working with local authorities, bus operators and other partners to create a seamless and comfortable experience for travellers.



About the author

Edward Leigh is a transport policy officer working in local government. Previous to that, he founded and led Smarter Cambridge Transport to advance sustainable, integrated and equitable transport in the Cambridge region. He holds a masters in Transport Economics from the Leeds Institute for Transport Studies. Edward also campaigns for a National Road User Charge to fund public transport, and has provided written and oral evidence on the subject to the House of Commons Transport Committee.



Most photos on pages 15-19 by Jerry Alderson. Cycle parking photos by Peter Feeney.

Comment by Jerry Alderson: There is a lot that the transport industry and planners can learn (and adopt) from other European countries. These ticket gates on the Brussels metro are specially designed to cater for wheelchair users, parents with children (including those pushing a buggy) and people carrying suitcases. Moreover, there are no staff standing beside ticket gates at any of the metro stations. This is possible because the gates are designed to make it difficult to climb over (though some inevitably do) but not get trapped in the gate (as shown by the gap between the two lift-style half gates). If a new type of ticket gate had been tried at Ely, it would not have been necessary (on operating cost grounds) to close the gate between the secure cycle storage area and platform 1.

NEW USES FOR ABANDONED BIKES

Abandoned bikes are a problem for most train operators and passengers who struggle to find a secure space to leave their cycles. From time to time, the train operators carry out a purge of such bikes. They put a label on any that look abandoned and any cycles that still have a label after a time period are considered abandoned and removed. Rather than being destroyed, the train companies work with cycle charities to refurbish them and then find new homes. Over the years, thousands of bikes have been treated this way. Greater Anglia has recently sent 40 bikes to various African countries where they help increase mobility in rural areas. GTR has sent bikes to NHS workers in the UK.

RAISING A GLASS AND THE PROFILE OF FREIGHT

BY PHIL SMART (Assistant Policy Manager at Rail Freight Group)

The Platinum Royal Jubilee in 2022 was, for many, a time both for celebration and for reflection on the various societal changes over the last 70 years, as well as on humankind's technological progress since 1952 — whether it be in space exploration, scientific discoveries or on those things, such as advances in medicine, telecommunications and in personal computing, that affect our everyday lives.

The rail freight industry too likes an excuse for a celebration, and a chance to raise a glass or two! Whether it is to mark the opening of a new terminal, investment in a new maintenance depot or the delivery into service of new wagons and locomotives, all are examples of progress and expressions of confidence in the future.

But 2022 also contains another important anniversary; that of the raising of the first glass in celebration of investment in the freight railway. The date 22 May marked 200 years since a group of merchants and industrialists witnessed the laying of the first length of track on what became the Stockton and Darlington Railway when it was completed in 1825. At the time, they probably had little idea of its significance, but what they were laying down was not a mere length of rail, but the very foundation of the global economy, and today the rail freight industry can look back over two centuries of investment and marvel at its achievements.

It is something of an irony, that the early railway was powered by burning carbon in the form of coal and was invented to serve the primary economic need at the time, that of moving vast quantities of carbon around for other people to burn during Britain's industrial revolution. Yet today we look to the railway to play an expanding role in decarbonising freight transport as we transition to a *net zero* economy.

Although coal was phased out in the 1960s for traction purposes, the use of carbon in diesel form still dominates the locomotive fleet. Private sector investment in its replacement cannot happen unless there is confidence in the UK's ability to sustain a steady roll out of 25kv overhead wiring with a power supply to match. The recently published Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) has some mixed news for freight. Electrification of the Transpennine route is welcome but needs to address capacity and capability on the routes that feed it. Electrification of the Midland Main Line too is welcome but of little use to freight without key elements, such as from Corby to Syston, included in the project scope. The IRP is rightly focused on the Midlands and North, yet the changing pattern of freight distribution reflects the changing economic needs of these regions. The railway that once moved carbon continued to do so until the phasing out of coal from the electricity generation mix around 2015. Moving coal from pit (or port in the case of imported coal) to power plant, was an activity generally confined to the north. This has now been replaced both by construction traffic and by the movement of maritime containers that have come to dominate the freight scene. The demand for aggregates is nationwide yet the sources are fixed, mainly from quarries in the West Country and the East and West Midlands, requiring trans-regional flows. Similarly, international shipping has become dominated by ultra large vessels (ULVs) that serve the UK via the deep-water ports in the south as part of their Europe wide calling patterns. Moving containers from south to north requires a fresh look at electrification priorities and the opportunity seized to exploit some quick wins. Relatively short sections of overhead line between London Gateway to Stanford-le-Hope (4 miles) and from Felixstowe to Ipswich (12), for example, would enable electric traction on whole routes at relatively little cost.

An early start on this programme is essential. The target dates to rid the network of diesel-only trains by 2040 and to decarbonise the whole economy by 2050 draw ever closer the longer we take to make a meaningful start. Although the achievements of the last 200 years have been considerable, the rail freight industry will be judged by what happens over the next 20.

A version of this article appeared in the May 2022 edition of Modern Railways.

BARRY MOORE 1941-2022

BY PHIL SMART

RAIL EAST does not often publish obituaries of Railfuture members, particularly those whom we may not have seen at meetings, but in May this year we lost a true hero.

Barry Moore was the General Manager, later MD, of Ipswich Buses until his retirement in 1995. He continued his interest in transport matters, serving on the Rail Passenger Committee and as secretary of the Ipswich and Suffolk branch of Transport 2000, later the Campaign for Better Transport. He also served a term as a Suffolk County Councillor.



Barry had a great appetite for knowledge and whenever you met him you always learned something new. Barry would have made a wonderful teacher had his career taken him in that direction, yet it was public transport that was to benefit from his talents. And for Barry it was not just a job, for he was a true missionary for public transport. He was able to work with the town's planning officers, not always the case in some other places, and his approach to integrating the bus service into the wider needs of the town has often been described as 'a breath of fresh air' by those who worked with him.

If asked to nominate someone other than your parents who had the greatest influence on your life, I guess most of us would think back to our formative years and pick, say, a particular schoolteacher, or a favourite uncle or aunt. For me however, Barry would be high among my nominees.

I first got to know Barry nearly 40 years ago when, as a new councillor in Ipswich, I was made the vice chair of what was then the 'Highways and Transport sub-committee'. Later, as chair of that committee, I would be a regular visitor to his office at Constantine Road depot.

It was around that time that a long shadow was cast over the bus industry, one from which it is only slowly emerging, the 1985 Transport Act. This legislation was to end the operation of the bus undertaking as a council department and establish it as an 'arms-length' company. Together with Bob Caley and myself, Barry's task was to ensure that the new company had a good start in life. We studied waybill analysis, to identify which parts of the network to register and which to go out to tender, to ensure that the fleet was modern, and the depot was in a good state of repair. The continuing success of Ipswich Buses owes a lot to the foundations laid by him.

He was loved and respected by his staff, local politicians of all parties, officers of the council and by others in his profession.

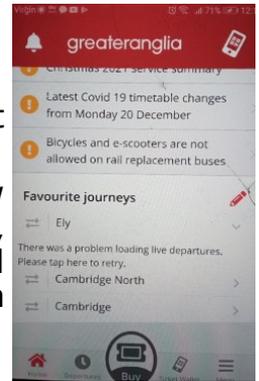


NEWS IN BRIEF

GREATER ANGLIA REARRANGES THE DECKCHAIRS

As the Greater Anglia ship approaches the iceberg named Great British Railways its orchestra plays on.

GA has just revised its smartphone app (image from 2021) for new functionality (arguably it makes it worse, but that's irrelevant), surely just months away from a GBR app and website being launched that will replace the ones from all of the 'DfT TOCs'. It seems a waste of your money, whether you are a farepayer or taxpayer.



LOWESTOFT STATION PLANS FOR CONSULTATION

East Suffolk Council (working with Network Rail, Greater Anglia and a firm of Ipswich architects) has announced plans to restore the former refreshment rooms at the station to a new bar/dining facility. A public consultation was held at the end of August 2022. The plans form part of the Lowestoft town centre strategy and involve creating a new entrance onto station square and an extended second floor. The latter, which according to the images would comprise steel and polymer construction, has proved controversial with some local groups who say it is out of keeping with the design of the original station. Railfuture shares these concerns and has also noted that the images show a lot of steps to the new building and no ramps for disabled access.



See details: <https://thinklowestoft.co.uk/railway-station-public-consultation-faq/>.

CAMBRIDGE'S OLD TICKET OFFICE SERVES ON PLATFORM 4

Someone at Cambridge station has some business acumen. The Old Ticket Office (OTO) bar is popular but you had to leave the station to visit it. Now a fixed window has been converted into a window that opens with staff serving passengers drinks and snacks, giving a greater choice (very useful when AMT and other outlets were closed on strike days) and increasing revenue from the existing staff. Picture from Peter Wakefield.



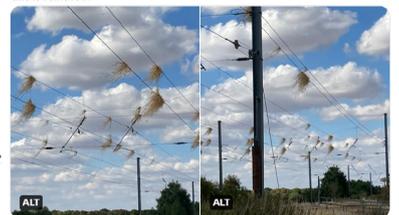
UK MANAGEMENT BUYOUT FROM DUTCH STATE RAILWAY

In August Dutch national rail operator Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS) announced the sale of its Abellio UK subsidiary to the UK management team. Abellio UK owns approximately 60% of Greater Anglia, and varying percentages of three other rail passenger services — East Midlands, West Midlands and Merseyrail — as well as operating services in the London bus network, so this is a significant development in terms of English public transport operations. In 2021 NS made a decision to leave the UK market, although the idea was mooted pre-pandemic. The new company will be known as Transport UK Group Limited. The remaining 40% stake in Greater Anglia will continue to be owned by the Japanese conglomerate Mitsui. The deal remains subject to approval by the DfT and ORR. What this means for the East Anglian network in terms of future investment is hard to gauge at a time of huge uncertainty in the rail industry, with the imminent arrival of Great British Railways and the demise of the franchising system for train operators.

THE FINAL STRAW?

Films from the American mid-west often show scenes of tumbleweed rolling across the prairie but it now appears that something similar can happen in our region as well and it is affecting the railway! This GTR social media post shows straw stuck in the overhead lines near Biggleswade during August. Trains had to be suspended for several hours whilst the overhead line was cleared due to concern that the straw might get caught in the train pantographs and bring the wires down. Is this a sign of things to come due to the dry weather or a one off caused by a careless farmer?

Great Northern @GNRailUK · 15h
Network Rail have provided us with photos of the hay caught in the overhead electric wires.
Our trains have pantographs that could potentially get tangled up in this, causing further damage. For safety reasons, we can't run through until this is removed.



RAILFUTURE'S 2022 PLANS HIT BY RAIL STRIKES

BY JERRY ALDERSON

When the next history of the railway is written, 2020 will be the year of COVID-19, the collapse of commuting and the end of franchising as we knew it; 2021 saw the announcement of the Williams–Shapps plan for rail to create (in England, at least) Great British Railways, although to observers the industry has merely trod water (and continues to do so—let's hope the much-predicted departure of Shapps is not the nail in its coffin). Now, 2022 will become the year of the 'big' strikes (or perhaps just the start of a two-year conflict until the next General Election).

Railfuture, like other campaigning and representative groups along with rail users and practically everyone, didn't want a strike. It was the last thing that a recovering industry needed. Failing that, we all wanted the strike to be short lived with successful negotiations (as Railfuture Chair Chris Page, photo right, said in interviews). Out-going Boris Johnson had sought not to tie the hands of his successor financially so no deal could be done quickly, but unions chose not to put their action on hold. With the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, expected to take an extreme position on most things (if the hustings are an accurate signal), then we can kiss goodbye to our fallback aspiration as well.



Given protracted industrial action, Railfuture's hope is that the outcome will settle things so that the next occurrence will be many years away. But simply ending disruption is not guaranteed to bring back passenger confidence nor to return to pre-COVID passenger numbers, and crucially revenue; the latter is a considerable challenge. It will take years before rail subsidy is reduced to pre-COVID levels.

The settlement must lead to a better customer experience. The most important improvement will be an end to frequent cancellations, owing to 'lack of train crew'. A full seven-day-a-week service must be ensured by contract, not good will. As RAIL EAST has argued before, 20-plus separate pools of drivers exacerbates the shortage—flexibility across the industry (not impenetrable silos) is the way ahead.

As if enough Railfuture events hadn't been cancelled since 2020, our June 2022 Ipswich meeting fell foul of a Greater Anglia strike. Now, Railfuture's national conference in Leeds (ironically titled 'Turning Point for the Railway') has had to be postponed until 30 March 2023 as its organisers, speakers and attendees couldn't get there. The much-hyped National Rail Awards in London had the same fate.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

Please send articles for possible inclusion in RAIL EAST to Peter Feeney, who collates and prepares submissions. Good quality photos are essential in order to make RAIL EAST visually attractive. All submissions by **Friday 4 November 2022**, 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.

RECEIVING RAIL EAST BY POST OR ELECTRONICALLY?

You can be emailed a copy of RAIL EAST on the same day that it goes to the printer, so you will receive it more than a week before other people. To switch to receiving it by email, please contact Lloyd Butler, who manages our database, at renewals@railfuture.org.uk. Your co-operation will be appreciated.

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

JOIN RAILFUTURE — FOR A BIGGER, BETTER RAILWAY

Annual membership fee is **£20** (£22 for joint membership); under 26 years can join for just £14. Join online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> using a credit/debit card or PayPal.

railfuture East Anglia

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Also see <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Contacts>

MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 24 SEPT 2022

Friends Meeting House,
5 Upper Goat Lane

NORWICH

NR2 1EW

SATURDAY 3 DEC 2022

Signal Box Comm. Centre
Glenalmond Avenue

CAMBRIDGE

CB2 8DB

SATURDAY 25 FEB 2023

Friends Meeting House
St John's Street

BURY ST EDMUNDS

IP33 1SJ

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.

Follow Railfuture East Anglia on Twitter <https://twitter.com/RailfutureEA>

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