

Norfolk Rail Prospectus Draft for Consultation October 2012 A Response from the East Anglian branch of Railfuture

As Britain's only national independent organisation campaigning for passengers and freight Railfuture responds to all significant national and regional consultations. This is our response to the draft Norfolk Rail Prospectus.

Q1. *Have we identified the priority rail across the county correctly?*

Yes. There is nothing else we would like to add.

Q2. *Across the network, do you agree that these are the priorities for passenger service levels?*

Yes. (Note that some train times shown should be 23.30 not 11.30)

Additional observations:

The least used, smaller stations ideally should have at least one train per day to the appropriate regional centre to enable journeys to work, school/college and return, one per day to go shopping/days out and return. All train times should be clock face seven days a week to help with connections to other train services and local buses.

Consideration should be given for a third train per hour (ph) between London and Norwich which could stop at more stations allowing the speeding up of the other two services. The third train might allow aspirations for an additional station in Norfolk between Stowmarket and Norwich to be taken forward.

Half-hourly services King's Lynn /Norwich to Cambridge are an important short term aim. Even more immediate, is the requirement for an adjustment to the current timetable to enable the Norwich / Ely services to run 30 minutes apart ...(this links in with Q3 and 19 below) An appropriate Cambridge connection at Ely must be maintained for the necessary change of train there.

In the future, the two through trains per hour (ph) between Norwich and Cambridge and the one through train ph Norwich to Peterborough and beyond service, should make up a 20 minute interval service to Cambridge, i.e. one service with a change at Ely.

See also Q19.

Q3. *Across the network, do you agree that these are the priorities for journey time reductions?*

Yes.

Additional observation:

Not only do reduced journey times enable services operated with tight turnaround times at terminals become more reliable, more connections at interchanges are achievable and more modal shift to rail can be assumed.

Q4. *Do you agree that we should support the purchase of tickets by means such as the Internet, or from retail units at stations (or nearby)? Even if this means that dedicated ticket office facilities may not be provided at smaller stations?*

Yes.

Additional observations:

The ability to purchase a ticket at or near a station is important. We are aware that owing to overcrowding on some local services during the peak period or at weekends, it is not possible for the train conductor to sell tickets to passengers once on the train. This leads to some ticketless travel if between local stations or unwarranted delays to the passenger at barriers at Norwich or Cambridge.

An investigation into the possibility of selling rail tickets at local post offices is needed. This would also help preserve this important local amenity.

The County Council should investigate the setting up of an IPSO smart card extension for local bus and local train journeys ; much of the population is already in possession of such a card. (Those having such a card for "free" bus journeys should be able to use it as a "Senior Rail Card" to enable purchase of discounted rail journeys.)

In some areas of the UK, ticket selling is through specially created station convenience stores. We would like to see an experiment in Norfolk at say Attleborough or Thetford or Brandon, where there is a need to bring the station buildings back into community use, and could include a small shop and café whose also sell rail tickets. The TOC could staff it or it could be a local franchise operation.

In the meantime, the current through bus/train tickets such 'Plusbus' and the 'Anglia plus' range of tickets are important and should be frequently promoted as they are not widely known about. (We note that both these tickets ranges are promoted as being available at Yarmouth where there are not any buses connecting with the trains.)

We agree with NCC aspirations of more passengers leading to stable and even lower fares. Promotion of services and fares deals and ease of access to the network by bus, car, cycle and foot is vital. Delay and uncertainty at ticket barriers is a big 'turn-off' if tickets cannot be purchased at the point of access to the network.

Q5. *Have we identified the right priorities at stations?*

Yes.

Additional observations:

Local planning policies need to include support for alternative uses of station buildings including those mentioned previously in Q4.

Key park-and-ride and bus interchange stations need to be identified in the very short term between Norwich and Ely and funding identified for the franchise process.

Q6. *Do stakeholders know of any other infrastructure constraints that need to be overcome on existing lines?*

We support the need for a half hourly clock-face timetable on the King's Lynn – Cambridge – (London) route. This route is already heavily constrained by single track sections. To support the vital service development and a growing number of freight services, additional double tracking is required (probably best for about 8km south of Downham Market). A power upgrade is necessary. Even if this implied in NR and DfT documentation, this need is required to be strongly reiterated in the NCC final document.

To enable the half hourly service to operate reliably and bearing the need to present services on time at Ely, Cambridge and Hitchin, all platforms at Watlington, Littleport and Waterbeach must be lengthened to eight car lengths. Even at half hourly many peak hour services are heavily overloaded a 4-car and will need to be 8-car. "Over-carrying" of any passengers is not acceptable if the user is in the incorrect portion if selective door opening is used.

This will aid adherence to the timetable and use the track layout efficiently. Station dwell times must be kept to a minimum on this route.

The implementation of the installed bi-directional signalling of the Ely West Curve is vital to avoid the unnecessary occupation of the route between Ely North Junction and Ely Station by freight trains to 'run-round'.

The County should support a 3-track section of the GEML north of Chelmsford. (See also ch6.)

When any route is re-signalled, bi-directional signalling and additional crossovers should be provided to allow train services to operate with one track out for maintenance.

Q7. Do stakeholders agree with our analysis of which new stations should be supported over the short, medium and long-term?

Yes

Q8. Do stakeholders agree with our analysis of which new / reopened lines should be supported over the short, medium and long term?

Yes...but.....

Additional observations:

There is considerable support in the Hunstanton area for a reopening of the railway back into King's Lynn. At very large public meetings in Hunstanton, we have observed there is a feeling that area suffers from a considerable loss of 'quality of life' owing to road traffic congestion in the summer when, for example, residents are unable to drive out of town. We do not agree the route has irrevocably been lost as the most difficult piece to reinstate through King's Lynn is mainly unaffected by development. It is true that there will be a considerable cost to reinstatement but so will any highway enhancement works. The feasibility and business case is unproven but that is due to the fact one has not been carried out. We would urge that the Council continues to protect the route with a view to finding a funding mechanism to research the business case in the medium term.

Additionally we note that such a reopening would not necessarily incur additional rolling stock costs if the present 'mid-range' type of emu stock continues to be used.

The East West Rail Consortium, of which NCC has been a long-term member, has achieved considerable success to date. We would urge that the County continues to be a member of the Consortium to enable it to influence the final section's routing and train service pattern.

*Note that Railfuture East Anglia's agreed campaigns in East Anglia are for:

- the East West Rail Link
- reopening of the mothballed Wisbech-March line which serve parts of Norfolk
- Cambridge Science Park station
- upgrade of the Felixstowe-Nuneaton freight railway.

Q9. Do stakeholders agree with these sites as those having most potential for freight facilities (along with sites in existing use)?

Yes.

Additional observations:

We note that the major supermarket companies are, to differing degrees, restocking their stores by rail via rail served delivery centres - TESCO has gone furthest with this, planning to eventually cover the country by a series of 8 daily trains. We would suggest that the County works with supermarkets to provide such service to Norwich or Yarmouth. The trains take back locally produced goods to the central distribution centres in the Midlands.

Q10. Do stakeholders agree that our minimum requirements for the next franchise should be the comprehensive refurbishment of the existing carriages and the replacement of the locomotives and driving van trailers with 125mph-capable stock?

Such is the growth of passenger traffic on the GEML, we feel that ideally new stock should be sort at the outset. This is because the present stock has the "dead" vehicles in the form of the locomotive and driving van trailer. We feel that 23-metre stock of a similar type to the high quality class 444 operated on South West Trains' main long distance route to Southampton and Poole should be sourced. These are in 5-car sets. We would advocate that the GEML sets be configured as 6-car sets.

Train lengths and seating capacities are compared below.

- 10-car class 444 = 230 metres.
- 12-car class 444 = 276 metres.
- 9-car mk3+loco+dvt = 245 metres (note: 11 vehicles - only 9 are passenger carrying).
- Difference in length of 12-car emu against loco hauled = 31 metres (class 444 31 metres longer.)
- Seats 444x12 = 800 seats (About)
- Loco/dvt+9mk3=612 seats (About)
- Difference = About +188seats class 444

If new trains were sourced in 6 car sets, off peak trains could have capacity matched to usage and dividing /joining could take place en route with, say, a fast portion continuing to Norwich with an all stations section following...this option would allow more flexibility in stock provision. As we stated before, in the medium term, when electrification to Bury St. Edmunds and hopefully Great Yarmouth has taken place, portions could be worked on those destinations.

However, if new trains were to be deemed too expensive at approximately £17m per set, the option of a total refurbishment of the mk3 coaches (which would include power doors), new passenger carrying driving vehicles (with seating) and new locomotives has been offered by the ROSCO Porterbrook at a fraction of the cost of new build...which could then be put off for a further 15 years. Porterbrook has shown that the Mk3 can be rebuilt to have the look and feel of a new vehicle...a good example of which is that now operated by Chiltern Railways on the London Marylebone to Birmingham Moor Street route.

The driving vehicle would be new-builds with a full set of seating with the same body profile of the mk3. This would give another 60/70 seats to a loco hauled set of coaches...totalling about 650/700.

Q11. Do stakeholders agree with rolling stock requirements?

Yes

Q12. Do stakeholders agree with our aspirations with earliest and latest trains between Norwich and London?

Yes

Q13. Are there any other station improvements users wish to see at stations on the Norwich to London line?

No, as outlined in the consultation.

Q14. What evidence do stakeholders have that would support our case for half hourly services between King's Lynn and London King's Cross?

We note that the 57 miles of the Cambridge - London King's Cross section of the route is half hourly in frequency...one these trains runs on to/from King's Lynn, the other terminates at Cambridge. Both are full all day

long between Cambridge and London....so already over half the route is half hourly. At the pm peak shoulder there are also relief trains running between Cambridge and Ely/Downham Market...these need not run when the entire route goes half hourly.

In the direction of the peak flows the train service is also already half hourly. Few additional services will be need to bring the entire service up to half hourly.

Additionally we observe that with housing developments planned at King's Lynn, Downham Market, Littleport, Ely, Waterbeach and along the guided busway at Northstowe connecting in at Cambridge Science Park, the second train an hour north of Cambridge will soon fill up. The exact numbers will be available from the district councils in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

Half hourly makes it easier for strong modal shift to rail to take place.

Figures showing increases in usage will be available from elsewhere when train service has doubled e.g. between Norwich and London.

Q15. *If IEP are not specified on this route, what rolling stock attributes should be required of trains between King's Lynn and London.*

The rolling stock should be an updated version of the current very successful class 365 units with door and seating configuration of a similar nature. This is to aid fast loading and unloading of passengers at the **SEVEN** stations of Cambridge, Cambridge Science Park, Waterbeach, Ely, Littleport, Downham Market, Watlington. Many trains on this section of the King's Lynn - London service are full and standing for much of the journey. To keep the journey as short as possible on the end to end journey, the stopping train part of the journey plus the key stop at Cambridge, where a train can nearly empty and then completely refill in two minutes, stops must be as short as possible.

If the route was double track throughout, this requirement would be less onerous.

If class 365 units are retained they must be retro air conditioned and geared to run at 110mph (rather than the current 100mph). If newer emus are introduced, for example class 377 or variants, they also must be 110mph capable to enable them to run at that speed where appropriate on the ECML.

Note: Railfuture East Anglia has concerns about the introduction of IEPs on this route. The narrower END doors on these trains compared with the existing stock would result in longer dwell times which would negate any higher speeds...which will be very limited in any case.

A small fleet of specialised IEP trains would be less flexible in operation than a common fleet of units used on other non-core parts of the Thameslink network.

As a rail user organisation, we are very wary of the increased fares that would inevitably come with very high specification IEP trains.

Q16. *Do stakeholders agree with our analysis of the benefits of stopping at Chesterton?*

Yes - the Norwich to Cambridge train service should also stop there for the same reason.

Note: this station should be referred to as "Cambridge Science Park Station". This is CCC's chosen name.

Note also that the consultation text refers to guided bus way connections for the Addenbrooke's Site from this station. This is not so...those connections are and will be from the current Cambridge "City" station. Guided Bus links from Cambridge Science Park station will be to the adjacent business park and Science Park as well to the business parks in Histon, soon to be built Northstowe and St Ives.

Q17. *Do stakeholders agree with our aspirations for earliest and latest trains between King's Lynn and London?*

Yes

Q18. *Are there any station improvements users wish to see at stations on the King's Lynn to London line?*

No, as outlined in the consultation.

Q19. *Do stakeholders agree that consideration should be given to achieving a half-hourly Norwich to Cambridge service by retiming the direct service and the Norwich to Liverpool service involving a change at Ely, or should we be pressing for direct Norwich to Cambridge services every half hour (as well as the hourly Norwich to Liverpool)?*

Yes to both questions...but ...see the our comments to Q2

Q20. *Do stakeholders agree with our aspirations for the earliest and latest trains between Norwich and Cambridge?*

Yes

Q21. *Are there any other station improvements users wish to see at stations on the Norwich to Cambridge line?*

See Q4 & Q25. Help Friends of Brandon Station with their aspiration to bring the station buildings into community use and rail user use. If this happens a cycle hire point can be developed to enable users to access, for example, Grimes Graves and the Thetford Forest Visitor Centre activities....and as outlined in the consultation.

Q22. *Do stakeholders agree that journey times (on the Norwich - Peterborough - Liverpool service) need to be improved, and if so, how would they suggest this be achieved?*

Yes they do need improving.

The County should obtain undertakings from NR and the TOC that they understand the need to take full advantage of track and signalling improvements along the whole line of route particularly between Norwich and Grantham....and will do so. The aim must be for 90 to 100mph top line speeds over all of the route with rolling stock able to advantage of that line speed.

Capacity improvements at Ely, Peterborough, Nottingham, Sheffield and Manchester Piccadilly stations should be taken full advantage of as they come on stream and improvements to timings should be immediate. When the MML is electrified the current rolling stock for that route should be considered to enable faster services.

We will not support journey time reduction by omitting stops at key interchanges and traffic centres such as Ely and Sheffield.

Q23. *If, as has been suggested in the past, there are suggestions to have separate Liverpool - Nottingham, and Nottingham - Norwich services (to improve planning of services and their reliability), would stakeholders support this?*

Definitely not. East Anglia has relatively poor connectivity to the rest of the country and these through trains are vital and need development as per Q&A to Q22 above. There are significant numbers of through journeys from East Anglia beyond Nottingham, for example 20,000 Norwich - Manchester each year. Previous studies have shown splitting the service would add costs (extra rolling stock) and reduce revenue as many people do not like changing trains.

Q24. *Do stakeholders agree with our aspirations for earliest and latest trains between Norwich and Liverpool?*

This table should also include an earliest arrival into Norwich before 09.00 train from Nottingham and later departures from Norwich with trains running as far as Nottingham & a full 'Saturday' service running on Sunday.

Q25. *Are there any other station improvements users wish to see at stations on the Norwich to Liverpool line?*

See also answer to Q4. A station must be established to serve as the rail head for mid Norfolk...which without proper analysis of the road network and notional bus links, the best fit would appear to be Thetford. This will need enhanced parking, full disabled access, a bus link to Watton, Swaffham, Fakenham, all day staffing to multi-task that would include sale of tickets, dispensing information, supervising a quality passenger lounge/ café, direction and supervision of bus arrivals/departures, parking.

Cycle hire to enable exploration to places in the forest etc.....and as outlined in the consultation.

Q26. *What do stakeholders support in the the short, medium and longer term to increase the potential of this line (eg longer trains, half hourly frequencies, tram train)? (Sheringham - Norwich)*

A half hourly service to North Walsham is the next logical step, although more detailed passenger flow figures would be needed to confirm that it would address overcrowding issues. If figures indicated significant traffic from Cromer and Sheringham then either lengthening to three cars or a half hourly service throughout will be required.

Tram-trains

The reference to tram-train needs to be inserted with careful thought. It might be assumed NCC are promoting a tramway extension, say, into Norwich city centre from Thorpe Station or into Great Yarmouth town centre/seafront from Vauxhall station. Both are good ideas but we assume the reference to tram train-like vehicles that would be smaller/lighter than current vehicles and possible cheaper to operate both as vehicles and in signalling. This does need to be clearly spelt out as to the intention of the reference.

The pros might be:

- cheaper operation; more frequent with implication they could "drive on sight" once away from Norwich station area or if on a line where freight trains ran, such as to North Walsham, north of that point.
- could lead to tram/ light rail extensions as above.

The cons might be:

- a discreet fleet unable to leave Norwich area;
- might not be as comfortable for the long branches out to Sheringham and Yarmouth. They could get a poor reputation like that ascribed to the current Pacer fleet.
- Other trains would not be able to use tracks to Sheringham (& North Norfolk Railway access for specials) and Yarmouth if routes become drive on sight.

It is assumed that such trains would be diesel but any subsequent electrification would probably not be at the national standard so other units used, say Norwich to Liverpool Street, would be unable to access Yarmouth...a through regular interval a service to London via Norwich might be possible if emus such as the class 444 were to be used in the longer term.

Tram-train usually means tram-like vehicles that can travel off tramways onto heavy rail routes. If the signalling is reduced to drive on sight, then heavy rail trains cannot use the route. A chosen route such as Whitlingham Junction to Sheringham, would be "a tramway" if drive on sight were to be adopted. Thus in the context of existing routes around Norwich, we cannot see at present the advantages of such vehicles as there are no planned tramway extensions into town centres. They will not be tram-trains in the sense of a vehicle capable of running heavy rail and tram tracks...the heavy rail sections that could lose signally would be turned into tramways.

The existing network needs to be operated by a common fleet of emus from the medium to long term. A little time ago, it was stated by NXEA, that the whole of the East Anglian network could be operated by the current fleet of emus if all routes were to be electrified.

In the short term to medium term, the present fleet of class156 units must be made fully DDA compliant. We would suggest that the class 153 single car units be refurbished and permanently inserted into the centre of the cl156 to make 3car units. It is our understanding that it is not feasible to make the class153 units DDA compliant.

The plan to use tram-tram in this semi-rural setting, seems to us to be that saying that fast inter urban mainline trains are not needed as our market towns are set to enter period of decline rather than expansion and economic development. All so-called rural route radiating out of Norwich should designated inter-urban and developed on that basis.

In Manchester several routes are set to become tram-train operated as they can feed into the core central tramway system and in any event are not anything like up to 40 miles long.

Q27. *Do stakeholders agree with our aspirations for earliest and latest trains between Norwich and Sheringham?*

Yes.

Q28. *Are there any other station improvements users wish to see at stations between Norwich and Sheringham?*

No, as outlined in the consultation.

Q29. *Do stakeholders agree with our aspirations for earliest and latest trains between Norwich and Great Yarmouth?*

Yes

Q30. *Are stakeholders satisfied with service levels via Berney Arms?*

Yes in general terms but it must always possible for users to get to work, college, shop in Yarmouth and return at **sensible** times from stations such as Reedham and Cantley.

Q31. *Are there any other station improvements users wish to see at stations between Norwich and Great Yarmouth?*

No, as outlined in the consultation.

Q32. *Are stakeholders aware of other potential funding sources or delivery mechanisms?*

All delivery mechanisms and funding sources must pursued by the County Council.

Note additionally: we strongly believe that all train services should be a 7 day service with the Sunday service being that run on Saturday albeit starting in some cases a little later in the day.

Platforms at Norwich

We note the need for an additional platform at Norwich has been identified. We support this enhancement. We would hope it will be within the main body of the station. The very long platforms 4 and 5 are separated by a centre former 'engine release' line. Either of these platforms could be "stepped" out to it at the city end to create the new platform leaving the original platform face at the "country" end.

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Friday 9th November 2012**

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