



THE NEWSLETTER OF RAILFUTURE: EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

www.railfuture.org.uk

www.railfuture.org.uk/east.htm

Issue 153

February 2012

40 years old!

Our Chairman writes "Hello and a belated Happy New Year to you. This month of February marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of Railfuture in East Anglia. Originally called the Railway Invigoration Society, rail campaigners (and we still have a few of the original members) have been campaigning ever since for more effective use of our railway system.

There can be little doubt that our railway network is in much better shape than it was all those years ago: lines have been electrified, there is a more frequent passenger service plus rolling stock with higher speed and greater comfort. Rail freight too is on the increase with Felixstowe Port announcing a new record week last November with 11000 containers moved by rail. Recent announcements on East West Rail between Oxford and Bedford and High Speed 2 indicate change and improvements are probably set to continue.

Perhaps the greatest change over the years has been in the general attitude to the railways. At the outset, many rural lines were under constant threat of service cuts or total closure. Many said the railway had no future. How things have changed! Many rural lines are seeing some of the fastest growth with increasing recognition of the community role they play. We, with local rail user groups, have played our role, a key role, of which we all can be rather proud.

To celebrate these achievements, the Branch is producing a special anniversary leaflet, which will reach you in due course. Thank you for all your contributions great or small, here and there. Here's to the next 40 years!" PW

AND FAREWELL

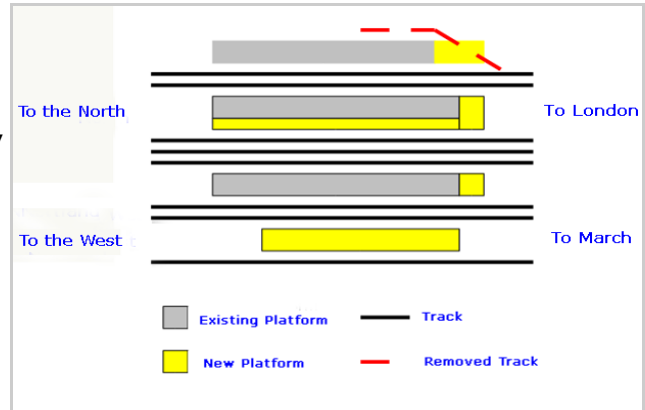
Our Branch AGM approaches, and with it an ideal opportunity to volunteer to help with our campaigning. We certainly need you. This year we will be saying farewell to two long-serving, active Branch Committee members. Lewis Buckingham has been Branch Treasurer for many years and has decided to stand down. Likewise is Peter Lawrence after a lengthy stint as Vice Chairman. Both Lewis and Peter have made significant contributions to the Branch over the years and I am sure that you will want to join me in showing thanks and appreciation. PW

NEWS FROM OUR AREA

Peterborough Station: proposed platform changes

Network Rail has announced its intention to build new platforms at Peterborough station as per the accompanying diagram.

The work, due to be completed in 2014, will create a new island platform to the west of the existing platforms for use by Norwich to Liverpool and Stansted to Birmingham trains. At present these services have to share with East Coast main line services.



Other platforms will be lengthened to take new Inter-City Express trains and an additional platform will be provided on the fast line towards London. As a consequence the existing bay platform at the south of the station will be removed. The footbridge is to be refurbished and new lifts provided between the footbridge and the platforms.



At **Huntingdon**, work has started on a new footbridge and lifts, whilst plans are developing for new station buildings and improved access at **St Neots** station. Network Rail/ND/CB

Photograph shows the area on which the new platform at Peterborough will be built, (on and to the right of where the locomotives stand). Chris Burton

2011 Plenty going on

The past year has seen a number of positive developments within our region. It has been a good year for stations, with the new footbridge and lifts at Ipswich finally coming into operation after many years of campaigning, whilst elsewhere the new Island platform at Cambridge is now in use. Smaller scale but well appreciated improvements have occurred at many other stations too.

Additional coaches have been provided on a number of London commuter routes and new trains introduced between Cambridge and London Liverpool Street. On the 9 December two of these units were named,



one at Liverpool St station ('West Anglia') and the other 'Ely Cathedral' at Ely to the seasonal strains of the Cathedral's boy choristers. Well done National Express for such an apt idea.

These additional carriages have been partly offset by news that some older rolling stock will be moving from East Anglia to provide the electric trains after the Liverpool and Manchester area electrification scheme is completed.

At Hitchin there are first signs of construction work for the new flyover (*resulting in some East Coast services diverting on Sunday mornings during March via Ely*). Funding has been agreed for the Beccles passing loop enabling extra trains between Ipswich and Lowestoft (see item on Beccles). The planning inquiry into the new freight route curve at Ipswich is underway, and the Government has announced funding for doubling the track between Ely and Soham – a significant capacity improvement and a genuine common sense decision.

Whilst there is a lot to be cheerful about, many issues still remain. Train fares remain too high and the fare structure too complex. Railfuture has been calling for the cost savings identified in the McNulty report to be passed onto passengers as lower fares. It is reported that the new long-dated West Coast Mainline franchise will demand 'significant' cost-cutting especially where staff numbers and pay are concerned. If it does you can be sure our new long dated Greater Anglia franchise, when announced, will carry the same remit.

Although the news of Government agreement for the East West rail Link between Oxford and Bedford is welcome, should it take nearly 20 years since the E-W Rail Consortium of local authorities was formed to get to this announcement?

Growth on some rural routes is now leading to overcrowding on some services with no spare rolling stock to cater for special events or emergency repairs. Electrification elsewhere should release some new diesel trains, but there is no sign of a strategy for future rolling stock, new or used. ND / CB

Network Rail: Anglia power upgrade work; disruption probable.

Following the successful completion of work between Stratford and London Liverpool Street during last Christmas and New Year, Network Rail's £200m overhead line upgrade now moves on to Shenfield to Witham.

So, from 9 January to 21 March 2012, Network Rail engineers will be carrying out this work on Monday to Wednesday inclusive after 22.30 each night. Buses will connect passengers from Shenfield and Billericay with Witham.

Dave Ward, Network Rail route managing director, said: "The completion of work between Liverpool Street and Stratford marks a major milestone in this project. It is a once-in-a generation opportunity to deliver a more reliable railway and a better service for passengers. This line is one of the busiest rail routes in the country with maintenance and renewal of the railway crucial to its reliability".

The planned changes to the timetable were published by National Express East Anglia in the December 2011 timetable. Network Rail has 22 scheduled engineering-free weekends through the summer, including the 11-week period

between late June and early September when all disruptive engineering work on key rail lines around the country will be suspended for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Upgrade work on the overhead lines between Shenfield and Witham will then resume on Monday to Wednesday nights between 17 September and 24 October 2012. NR/ND

CAMBRIDGE SCIENCE PARK STATION

Updating us on this , Alan Mayes says that Cambridgeshire County Council's budget for this project includes provision for borrowing the money. However, this awaits decisions on *"a number of matters on the rail franchises from the Department of Transport before any certain announcement can be made"*. Note that the County Council certainly *do* want this scheme to go ahead. AM

MELDRETH-SHEPRETH-FOXTON MATTERS

Now with the end of the franchise on the horizon (see page 8), the Rail User Group (RUG) has been approached by prospective new franchisees, as to its aspirations for the future. This is an opportunity for us to press with renewed vigour on unresolved issues, such as disabled access at Meldreth Station, a half-hourly service at Meldreth where the footfall justifies it, and badly needed cycle and car parking provision at Foxton.

All in all the formation of a RUG has been a success: access to rail service has been improved in small ways, community interest in our sustainable transport network has been harnessed, and new prospective TOCs are asking to meet with us. We'd like to thank Railfuture for its tremendous continuing support throughout. Susan van de Ven

BURY ST EDMUNDS STATION AND 'MARPA'



Ross Taylor tells us that Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association (MARPA), are but one of several bodies connected with the 'Friends of Bury Station' campaign to improve the public face of the station. Their

collective publicity recently gained many column inches in Bury Free Press.

'Friends' are expecting their formal launch date in late March and with that we wish them great success. They'll have something to celebrate, to the tune of £150,000 expended on brightening up the Booking Hall (by removing the former Red Star parcels



office) along with new information screens. New information screens have also been installed on the platforms plus CCTV recording on a 24 hour cycle, whilst the lavatories have been totally refurbished. The project was finished in late January. These photographs were taken just before the work started in mid-November, so do take a closer look at the real thing if you should visit Bury St Edmunds Station. Your Editor will make a point of taking a few pictures when he visits for the AGM.

We know that Network Rail are assessing the business case for re-configuring the track and platforms, not least so that the increasing number of non-stop freights can pass through at rather more than the current 30mph, right at the foot of steep up gradients in both directions. CB

BECCLES LOOP

This important piece of infrastructure should be in use by the end of 2012, allowing an hourly service throughout between Ipswich and Lowestoft. A further step towards it came with a planning application to Waveney District Council in January, for the recommissioned island platform, abandoned 28 years ago. The East Suffolk Travellers' Association studied the application and wrote to the Council, supporting it. Access to the second platform will be via the existing footbridge with steps and a ramp and new footpath. ESTA has, however, asked about the capacity of the shelter to be erected on this platform. TG

LOWESTOFT: PROPOSED STATION ACCESS IMPROVEMENT

Apologies for this rather pixelated image, courtesy of Network Rail, but it was all that was to hand. It does at least convey some impression of the agreed access layout, the cost of which is to be funded by the local authority. That it will enhance this station is pretty certain, so hopefully its completion date will be within the 2012-13 period, at the latest. CB



Railfuture members will be welcome at ESTA's Spring Meeting to be held on Saturday March 17th in the URC Church Hall, Quay Street, Halesworth starting at 14.15. It is 10 minutes walk from the station. There will be a speaker from Abellio and also a County Councillor at the meeting.

ESTA's Annual General Meeting will be on Saturday May 5th in St Mary's Church Hall, Market Hill, Woodbridge. Mrs Julie Houghton of Network Rail and one of her colleagues will give a presentation on the East Suffolk Line resignalling project; and Mr Pip Wright will talk about rural bus travel in East Anglia. The meeting starts at 14.00.

BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
25 February 2012 at 14.00hrs
Bury St Edmunds
Friends Meeting House, IP33 1SJ

OUR CHAIRMAN REPORTS



Red and White Greater Anglia?

Abellio, the Dutch based international transport operator, will have taken over the East Anglia railway franchise by the time you read this. They have it for two years and then will have to reapply for the 15 year version. On December 22nd and January 12th the company held 'road shows' at Stansted Airport and in Norwich respectively, to introduce themselves.

So what will be different? Very little in such a a short time frame... in railway terms that is ... a flash in the pan? The colour scheme on the paperwork is a bright red and white.. a bit like the Polish flag and the name appears to be "Greater Anglia"... to me another meaningless name. (Isn't the Polish name for England 'Anglia'?) What is wrong with East Anglia?

Let's hope they don't try to paint the trains red and white until and if, they can buy the 'long' franchise. In the meantime Abellio is to focus on "the highest level of customer service and care" with staff on the platforms rather than offices.

- They will introduce new technology to help make ticketing easier from mobile phones;
- Print at home;
- Ticket vending machines that will be easier to use, with emphasis on those who currently find them incomprehensible;
- Smart cards further developed including Oyster card being extended to Hertford East from Enfield Lock/Turkey Street.

A 3000 capacity 'cycle point' is to built at Cambridge, and at 45 stations, a pre-order cab system is to be introduced. In the midst of all this, the company will have to deliver a flawless train service during the Olympic Games, which are

based around Stratford station in East London.

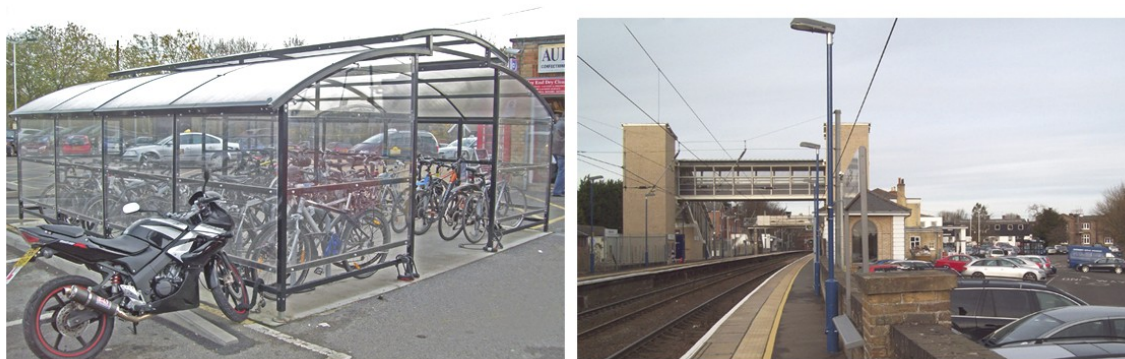
Before then, each train set will receive a 'deep clean'. Abellio has "no plans to close any ticket offices" but will 'optimise' the number of windows. There will be renewed efforts to reduce ticket less travel. So, welcome to Abellio.

Audley End Transport Interchange

Apart from all the above, which might be described as what they should be doing anyway, but none the less a very welcome refocus, the most interesting initiative is the development of a unique bus link between Audley End and the centre of Saffron Walden, just over 2km away.

This bus doesn't just connect with the trains, it also *sells tickets on board* to anywhere on the rail network – a sort of 'virtual station'. Now this *is* a very exciting development and to be commended. We have asked often for the name Audley End to have the suffix 'for Saffron Walden' added to the stations official title to reflect that it is Saffron Walden's station to the rest of the nation. It has so far been in the 'too difficult' box.

The Essex delegates at the Stansted meeting welcomed the initiative but cautioned that Abellio should consult carefully with the bus operators who provide the present, rather hit and miss, service. Let us hope that it succeeds and other dedicated efficient links can be developed. Welcome to Abellio indeed.



Two of Peter Wakefield's pictures of the excellent improvements at Audley End

Meantime, National Express East Anglia, in its twilight days, has been working away at Audley End on major improvements. Most conspicuous is the new footbridge with lifts, high quality cycle storage, and a very well designed bus station built close to the ticket office and Up platform. Of course, there is the existing huge car park, as ever maintained to a high standard.

Attractive new Class 379 trains are now in service giving faster times in the peak to/from London. We would now like to see faster off-peak services competing effectively with the nearby M11. PW

Cambridge Railway Station bus station

As a part of continuing developments at Cambridge station, the first part of the bus/rail interchange has opened for use, although its completion is still several months away. The bus stops are aligned along the new road leading south from the Station entrance, parallel to platform 3, to the southern portion of the Guided Busway and the new bus-only road to a junction with Hills Road at the foot of the railway bridge. (Although designated a part of the guided busway, it is not in fact 'guided' at all, in common with several sections of the busway). In creating a loop it enables southbound buses to cease returning to Hills Road via Station Road.

The bus stops, however, are positioned so that most bus/rail passengers have a lengthy walk from/to the ticket hall: effectively three minutes added to journey




time. (Arrow shows station entrance)

Millions are often spent elsewhere to improve journey times by three minutes or more, but here they are wasted by careless forethought. We have had a site meeting with Cambridgeshire

County Council officials to explain our concerns, and hope for some cooperation on this point, as it impairs perceived value for money. PW.

First Capital Connect franchise 'goes south'!

With the FCC franchise nearing its end the Department for Transport has announced that its replacement will be merged with the  franchise. In our list of aspirations for this new franchise we will certainly include:

- the construction of the new station at Chesterton (Cambridge Science Park) and franchisee to pay for it; AND
- our preference, that south of London, all off-peak Peterborough/Cambridge semi fast trains go through to the same destination, preferably via Gatwick Airport;
- the basic GN timetable on the Peterborough route is adequate and the Cambridge route service levels by and large good, peak shoulder Cambridge fasts should revert to non-stop with additional semi fasts intermediately. A later 'last' fast service to Cambridge , Ely and King's Lynn. Half hourly service most of day to King's Lynn.
- lift access where needed at remaining stations; extra shelters on platforms;
- increase staff hours at stations if anything, but definitely no decrease!

- work with local bus operators on connecting buses and through tickets. Local bus /rail smart-cards.
- Investigate using redundant station buildings at smaller stations for shop/community use/ticket sales.
- Please let us have your own ideas as soon as possible.

As a closing observation, it's good to see the very pleasant main station buildings at Colchester refurbished and brought back into use. May this be emulated elsewhere. PW

Oxford Cambridge Campaign

www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam , John Henderson reports:

On 29th November, I saw in the Government's Autumn Statement, towards the end of the list of new infrastructure projects, wonder of wonders, the rail link between Oxford and Bedford. Was I dreaming? But it was on BBC News, so it must be true. I opened the brand new Infrastructure Plan, and there it was on the map, and later through a quick internet search, further confirmation.

Is there a catch? Yes, though a surmountable one. The Treasury is covering most of the cost, but cannot afford the full project cost of £270 million. Consequently there must be a significant local contribution, which in practice suggests, say £30-40m. The East West Rail Consortium think this is quite feasible. And given that the Consortium comprises 30 local authority members, £1m each seems reasonable: eg. the cost of a new set of traffic lights at a busy road junction. However, nothing is that simple and contributors of varied kinds will be needed. I just hope they do not rely on developer contributions which, firstly, may be withdrawn at the last minute; and secondly, may involve loss of productive farmland or natural habitat which we surely need just as much as a new railway. There are signs that some of the initial design and legal work may be funded through Chiltern Railway's Evergreen 3 Project (the two projects share the route between Oxford and Bicester).

Finance aside, there are a number of issues that we need to address:

How will passenger services be franchised, and when will the decisions be taken? It seems sensible to allow more than one operator to provide services so that there is range of local and long distance services; provided of course, that there are rules to ensure that passenger interests are foremost. In the current EWRC proposal there are only 4 coaches per hour from Oxford to Milton Keynes or Bedford. Is this really sufficient, given the potential numbers travelling? I think there is a danger that the trains will be overwhelmed and this will give the new link a bad reputation.

Will the quality of the trains be good enough to give EWR a good reputation and appeal to car drivers? The current idea is to use the old DMUs which daily coat the stations on the Great Western with black deposits from their 20 year old engines. The newish Transpennine trains would surely be better. Both types will be available by 2017 due to the electrification of their current routes.



The first fare-paying train (a charter) for several decades, trundles over the Bletchley viaduct in the fading light of January 21st.

You'll be anxious, of course, for some news of the Bedford-Cambridge section. Given the good

news about the Western Section, a number of MPs in East Anglia voiced their support, as they do frequently, for finishing the job. And the All Party Parliamentary Group for EWR said they were now turning their attention to it. However, there remains a core of apathy and prejudice in some key areas, so Railfuture will need to convince these doubters that building some fresh railway in England is as feasible in the 21st Century as it was in the 19th. Realistically, Bedford to Cambridge should open in the next-but-one rail investment period, 2019-2024. We must make it happen.



Branch meeting Cambridge 3 December 2011: Guest Speaker Julie Houghton

Julie is East Anglia Route Enhancement Manager with Network Rail (NR). Only 12 weeks into her job, having moved from south of the Thames, she apologised for her less than comprehensive knowledge of the railway in East Anglia. Such was her charm and candour we instantly forgave this 'shortcoming'.

Her prime task is to obtain finance from outside Network Rail East Anglia for general projects and especially stations. The team is six-strong but not project sponsors per se: these, she explained, are responsible for costing and managing individual projects to an on-budget/on-time conclusion. Hopefully.

She declared £2billion was already earmarked for use between 2012 and 2018, primarily for Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) renewal between Chelmsford and Liverpool St. NR is trying to bring track renewals, key junction work, and sign renewals into the same time frame (see earlier news items).

A speed profile assessment of the Great Eastern Main Line (GEML) up to 110mph is complete, with West Anglia route to Cambridge in progress, but only up to 100mph maximum from the current 90mph.

An ultimate aim is 2 trains paths per hour extra between Brimsdown and Stratford and a total of 28tph maximum onward to Liverpool St. Some projects such as journey time improvements or level crossing closures (or changes) are not ultimately funded by NR, devolving to track access charges or Department for

Transport grants. You'll be unsurprised to learn that reducing costs was a prime requirement.

All in all, a much appreciated presentation which vigorous applause acknowledged, and after which we wished Julie and her team great success. CB

LATE NEWS

Felixstowe-Ipswich

Andrew Gee reports that he has had encouraging replies from all the MPs to whom he recently wrote regarding doubling of track over this route. Without exception they had contacted at least one of the major players in this matter, be it Ministry for Transport, Hutchison Ports, Network Rail, Local Authorities, et al. So pressure to fund and start this work is substantial, and without which railfreight and passenger service reliability and growth will be unsustainable. AG

Public Meeting at Ipswich

Andrew also attended this meeting in which, among many very, very familiar complaints about ticket price, reliability etc, the following less common points were made:

- Praise for conductors on trains, but barrier staff need re-training in customer care.
- Refunds of tickets when replacement bus journey disrupted
- Replacement bus service: drivers not knowing the route!
- Compared to other commuter routes into London, GEM tickets cost the most, but has the oldest rolling stock.

Andrew also suggested that we all keep our 'eyes on the ball' with regard to the specification for the 15 year Greater Anglia Franchise from 2014. For example: *"The DfT said the new franchisee will also take on more responsibility for the maintenance of station facilities. Bidders are being encouraged to simplify fares and introduce new ways of selling tickets, including 'print at home' services"* **and** *"The franchise will be structured in a way which could allow the transfer of certain responsibilities to local authorities after the awarding of the franchise, as the government will soon be consulting on decentralising some responsibilities for local rail services. The consultation ends on 31 March"*. AG/CB

AND LEADING ON FROM THOSE LAST COMMENTS.....

There is a new template for the 15year West Coast franchise slowly emerging from 'Stalag' Department for Transport and mentioned earlier by Nick Dibben and Andrew Gee. The Times (21 Jan.) reported that "fares can rise by 8% above retail price index", and that costs, especially staff costs, *must be* appreciably reduced.

Ok, but what about the customer if the result is closed ticket offices, unstaffed stations and so forth? Whether by redundancy, 'wastage', or refusing pay increases, this policy would also guarantee conflict with staff. And would politicians stand by obdurate management in a dispute? Experience suggests a resounding "NO!" So beware the longer Greater Anglia franchise. CB

The **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** on the 25th February, will as ever be proposing people to form the Committee. Would you like to be considered? If you have skills which you think might be useful to our Branch, then please, do put your name forward. Contact Nick Dibben through the details in the box below.

*At which point we must stop for this issue.. As ever, grateful thanks to the many who contributed material, and apologies if I've culled or reworded your text – space is always the reason. Do keep it coming, especially pictures, which are in very short supply. These should be in JPEG format if at all possible; contact the Editor if in doubt. **Deadline for next issue is 28 MAY 2012***

Railfuture

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Railfuture

EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

Dates for your Diary

Annual General Meeting

BURY ST EDMUNDS

25 February 2012

14.00 hrs

**Friends Meeting House,
IP33 1SJ**

Summer Meeting: 23 June
Colchester

Dates to be confirmed

29 September Norwich
8 December Cambridge
23 February 2013 Bury St
Edmunds

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