

RAILFUTURE National Awards Go Local



Dispelling all thoughts of fragile franchising and Transport Department dysfunction, Meldreth, Shepreth, Foxton Rail Users Group (MSFRUG) carried off three prizes in the very first Railfuture User Group awards. Our Chairman, Peter Wakefield (on the right), accepted the award from our President, Christian Wolmar, at the October User Groups Conference in Birmingham on behalf of MSFRUG Chair, Susan Van de Ven. They were deemed Best New User Group and

Best Website for 2012, while Susan Van de Ven herself received the accolade 'Best Individual Campaigner'. A brilliant achievement.

Christian Wolmar commented; *"These new awards recognise the special contribution rail user groups and their volunteers make to campaigning for improvements to railway services and stations. Too often their efforts pass unremarked and unrewarded. As the national champion of railway development and rail users, Railfuture has taken the initiative with these innovative awards."*

The awards should also stimulate all user groups, campaigners and newsletter editors (duly noted.Ed) to 'get competitive' in putting your local railway firmly in the public consciousness ,as well as the railway people who run the services. Hearty congratulations to Susan and her colleagues on these splendid, well deserved awards. CB

A Star is Reborn in the East!



November 2012

September 1979

Beccles Station redoubles....A Major Campaigning Success

After many years of campaigning by ourselves, the East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA) and Suffolk County Council, it has happened; the Beccles loop is installed! One face of the disused island platform has been refurbished alongside the new track and the platform properly surfaced with access across the tracks using the existing foot bridge. Not only that, the route has new signalling and the train service has been doubled to hourly between Ipswich and Lowestoft...effectively extending to Lowestoft the hourly Ipswich to Saxmundham, from December 9th.

We are sure use of this enhanced train service will quickly grow, but needed our own figures to check....so on Thursday October 18th 2012, a team drawn from

Railfuture East Anglia and ESTA, counted all those joining/leaving the service at Halesworth, together with those transferring from train to the bus connecting with Southwold. 235 people were counted using the trains, remembering at that date the service was only every two hours.

Railfuture East Anglia members regularly count footfall at stations all over the region to compare with various 'official' data. At the same time, observations are made on the amenities offered: condition of stations, signage at the station, car parking facilities and the like. At Halesworth we also noted train /bus interchange effectiveness, cycle storage, plus signage to and from the centre of Halesworth.

Car parking there is currently adequate but the better train service might well lure more car users to the station. Parking capacity thus needs to be kept under careful review.

There is a good interchange for passengers wishing to transfer between train and bus. We noted that the trains all ran to time and every bus connection was made except for the last one of the day, when it ran early, leaving a Southwold-bound passenger stranded. Transfers occurred with every bus. Notices actually mentioning 'Bus to Southwold' would be clearer than the one stating, not very helpfully, just the route number.

A list of taxi firms was pinned inside a window at the north gable end of the station building. Cycle storage is ok, although given the size of Halesworth, the sole bike was a surprise.



There were maps clearly showing the plan of the town and the appropriate walking routes to and through it. Walking to the very attractive 'The Thoroughfare' (See photo') takes about 5 minutes. On the route itself signposts are sparse with the station not indicated at all from 'The Thoroughfare' in the opposite direction except for a road traffic sign pointing down Station Road. (We did note that there is an instantly responsive pelican pedestrian crossing at the roundabout. Comment was made about this very friendly feature which compares starkly with the similar crossing in Bury St Edmunds, also in Suffolk!)

As a part of the upgrade of the route, an interactive passenger help-point was being installed during our visit to Halesworth station. There were also CCTV cameras installed although their purpose was not clear . Train arrival/departure tv screen monitors worked accurately on both platforms.

Overall, the station presented a neat and tidy, well cared for appearance. One poor feature is the heavy growth of vegetation on the up track. The Monday - Saturday timetable operating from December 9th is printed on the reverse of the

accompanying flyer (No space for Sunday, sadly). We are sure that Greater Anglia's efforts, together with those of Suffolk County Council, Network Rail and ESTA, will ensure success for the project. Congratulations to all concerned for bringing it to a successful *initial* conclusion.

If you live elsewhere in the region, the new timetable will enable you to make 'whistle-stop' visits to the attractive towns along the line: Woodbridge, Saxmundham, Halesworth, Beccles are all worth exploring, which an Anglia Day Ranger plus the new train service make truly possible. Indeed, add Southwold, using the connecting bus from Halesworth. Do try it. PW



Splendid news greeted would-be travellers from eastern Anglia in September: during 2013 the Great Eastern Main Line will see a reduction from 34 to 7 weekends when engineering would interrupt travel to and from London. This massive reduction was long overdue and in reality will actually be only two complete weekends as the other five will be bus-substitution on Sunday only. The dates are from 23/24 February for a month until 23/24 March inclusive, Easter Sunday/Monday and the following weekend, 6/7 April. Then nothing more until 5/6 October, for one weekend only.

There is a minor caveat; services will turn round at Stratford 19/20 January, May Bank Holidays 5/6 and 25/26. An unspecified number of late evening services will resort to bus substitution. But overall a profound improvement for which Network Rail and Greater Anglia are to be congratulated.

This predictably confirms recently published research by **Passenger Focus** <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction> which stated "55% of respondents claimed that they would not make a journey by rail if part of it was by replacement bus. However, if the train were to be diverted around engineering work, 75% of respondents would tolerate an additional journey time of 30 min to 1hr. For a 15min extension the acceptance rate was 94%. When bus replacement and train diversion were compared, most passengers would prefer to stay on the train unless the bus was at least 40 min faster."

Are we surprised by these revelations? Almost certainly not. It seems the impact on franchise revenue over weekends when there was **no** disruption, confirmed that we chose *not* to travel by train even when we could. CB

Nick Dibben reports that the clear message from our Norwich meeting was that through services from Norwich and Peterborough to the North West are well used and must continue and improve.



Thus spoke guest speaker David Horne, Managing Director of East Midlands

Trains who provided an update on what the franchise was doing especially for the Norwich to

Liverpool route. Stagecoach are around half way through their 7.5 year franchise which is due to expire in 2015. So far they have spent over £50m on train refurbishment and new depot facilities. This investment is one reason why punctuality has improved from 87% in 2009 to around 93% today, for which they deserve congratulation.

With regard to the Norwich to Liverpool service, passenger numbers are increasing and the route now has 4.5m passengers a year. Some additional coaches are due on the route in December that will enable more 4 coach trains to be operated.

The hourly service currently takes around 5 hours but David Horne, noted that there was considerable scope to improve journey times either by raising line speeds or by the introduction of new, faster rolling stock as the current trains are limited to 90mph. He showed us the following Network Rail 'speed profile aspiration'

ROUTE SECTION	CURRENT MAX.(mph)	ASPIRATION
NORWICH - ELY	75	90
ELY - PETERBOROUGH	75	100
PETERBOROUGH - GRANTHAM	80	80*
GRANTHAM - NOTTINGHAM	60	90
NOTTINGHAM - SHEFFIELD	80	90
SHEFFIELD - MANCHESTER	90	90
MANCHESTER - LIVERPOOL	85	90

* 125mph if pathed on main line.

We were amazed to learn that the fragile fenland track base from Ely to Peterborough might be capable of 100mph; and yet depressed to learn that after the resignalling,

Ely to Norwich would still only offer 75mph. It may well cheer Mr Horne to learn that Jerry Alderson later discovered, on a visit to Cambridge Signal Box (see Page 8), that 90mph will be the maximum wherever possible. The route serves 7m

people and with a number of major cities en route such as Peterborough, Nottingham, Sheffield and Manchester, there is a mix of short and longer journeys . Some examples of direct point-to-point annual traffic flows (excluding connections) are given in the adjoining table. As you might expect, annual traffic flows between Nottingham/Sheffield and Manchester / Liverpool are considerably higher.

- 🕒 Norwich to Peterborough – 67000
- 🕒 Norwich to Nottingham – 33000
- 🕒 Norwich to Manchester – 20000
- 🕒 Norwich to Liverpool – 9000
- 🕒 Peterb' to Nott' - 67000

Next year, significant engineering work associated with resignalling will take place at Nottingham Station which will be shut for 6 weeks during July and August. Once the work is complete, trains will be able to access the station quicker and there will be fewer delay-inducing train movements. During the work, Norwich to Liverpool trains will continue but be diverted via Stamford. ND/CB

REMEMBER, REMEMBER

Branch Meeting – Cambridge

Saturday 8th December at 14.00hrs

SUFFOLK RAIL CONFERENCE

Trevor Garrod reports that "Several invited Railfuture members attended a conference organised by Suffolk County Council in Ipswich on October 26th. The event was particularly focused on discussing aims for whoever is running the Greater Anglia franchise from the summer of 2014 and the County Council had expected to have a speaker from the Department for Transport (DfT). However, they were unable to provide one, and so Railfuture President Christian Wolmar spoke twice!

In his first speech he described the current franchising system as "too complicated" and welcomed efforts to bring back some simplicity to it; while welcoming the 5-year HLOS investment plans. In his second speech he predicted a move to concessions rather than franchises and suggested that the Strategic Rail Authority might have to be re-created.

Ben Gummer MP described East Anglia as "the California of Europe " because of its research centres, particularly in Cambridge, Norwich and Martlesham, which needed better communications between them and with London. However, he

said, "We're not asking for high speed lines or motorways, but improvements to the existing rail network."

Richard Schofield of Network Rail described their "virtual alliance" with Greater Anglia and also emphasised the role of third parties (such as Suffolk County Council) in providing investment for the network.

Thijs Jan Noomen of Greater Anglia gave a presentation on their achievements so far (such as taking on an additional 140 customer service staff) and additional information screens. They had plans for a dedicated bus service between Saffron Walden and Audley End station to start shortly, and looked forward to eventual electrification of the route from Felixstowe to Peterborough.

Ian Walmsley of Porterbrook Leasing took us through the options for replacing the existing Inter City trains between Liverpool Street and Norwich. These ranged from class 444 electrical multiple units (*currently working from Waterloo. Ed*), through a version of the new IEP, upgrading existing rolling stock with new seats and power doors, replacement Driver Van Trailers (DVT) to new locomotives - notably the Bombardier TRAXX locomotives, already in use in a number of Continental countries, modified for use in Great Britain.

The conference divided into workshops for detailed discussion of four topics. Trevor Garrod and Peter Wakefield joined one on bus/train interchange. They pointed out how information at Ipswich rail station about bus routes could be improved and said that, in the more rural areas, it was important that existing commercial and sponsored bus services connected better with trains, as was now happening at Halesworth.

The new franchisee (or concessionaire?) should be required to work more closely with local bus operators, not only on time-tabling but also on through fares. In future it should, for example, be possible for a would-be customer in London to type "Aldeburgh" or "Southwold" into a website and obtain a multi-modal itinerary and ticket." TG



Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

A great variety of activities of late: our lovely Victorian station waiting room at Meldreth, where free tea and coffee is always served by our station master David Piggott to waiting passengers, now features a carousel of free 'Books for Travellers' from our local library. Who could mind a late train from Meldreth?

At Shepreth a worrying culture of dodging the closed level crossing barriers in order to catch a train seems to involve mostly young people. Network Rail responded to concerns straight away and with Tina Hughes' help a full risk

assessment, including observation, has been instigated. Network Rail has provided an impressive portfolio of tools for teaching level crossing safety in schools, but without Tina Hughes' help the implementation might be left to schools without a champion to deliver it – so again our thanks to Tina. We have publicized the matter widely in village newsletters.

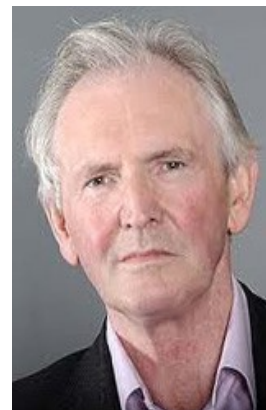
The DfT's experiment with concessionary fares on trains was put to Cambridgeshire County Council at its October meeting – would the council be willing to volunteer Cambridgeshire for a similar experiment? Where local rail is the only meaningful public transport this certainly deserves a try, or an agreement at least to look into the matter. Our next meeting is December 12, 7:30, at Foxton Village Hall – a ten minute walk from the station. We'll be celebrating our much appreciated Railfuture awards with coffee, tea and mince pies, at least. S.van de V

***Updates on our website, which due to Paul Hollinghurst's hard work and imagination, won the 'Best Website' award from Railfuture:
<http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/>***

BRANCH MEETING- -CAMBRIDGE Saturday December 8th 2012.

Our next meeting will take place in the Conference Room of the Central Library, Lion yard, Cambridge. Please see the accompanying flyer for access details.

Our speaker will be Richard Eccles (in photograph), who is Network Rail Director in charge of Network Planning and Strategy, a Cambridge graduate and life-long career railwayman. We have asked him to speak about the Felixstowe to Nuneaton freight upgrade. This is a fascinating project that is turning our important cross country route into a first class mainline.



Work is taking place at Ipswich, Soham to Ely and Peterborough, Peterborough itself, Leicester, Nuneaton, and connecting routes to Doncaster. Indeed some has already been completed, for example; the new north facing spur at Nuneaton, opened in November. Richard will describe and explain the works in hand and those needed in the near future. You will no doubt have many questions to ask.

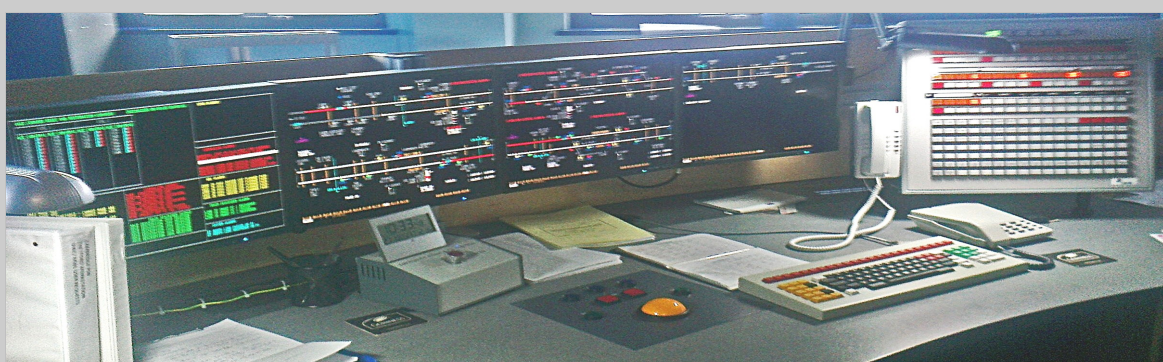
Richard is giving up his Saturday to attend, so do please show appreciation of his kindness by being there yourself. Of course, Cambridge is a vibrant regional centre, especially full of life on a Saturday, so there will be plenty to see and do before and after the meeting! PW

Railfuture Vice Chairman, Jerry Alderson reports on local signalling developments at Cambridge.

Jerry says, "I recently paid a two hour visit Cambridge Power Signal Box (PSB), as it happened, 30 years to the day since it was officially opened by Sir Peter Parker." The development is of course, the control centre for the hopefully soon to be totally implemented Ely-Norwich resignalling.

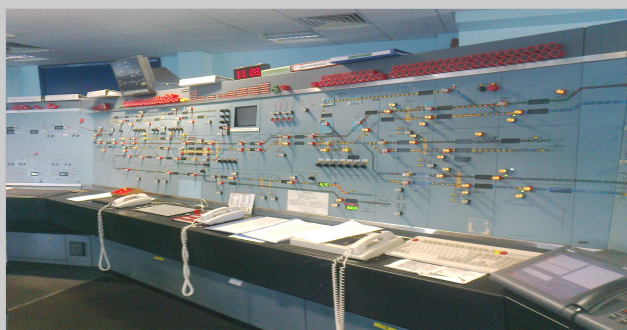
The photo shows the new Ely-Norwich 'panel' – essentially four computer screens: on the left a status summary; then three screens covering the route: west on the left and east on the right. The right screen has a large blank section at the bottom. This is reserved for Harling Road to Norwich, which is due to go live in December. Everything is controlled from the keyboard and a yellow 'roller ball' (which acts like a computer 'mouse') plus some buttons mounted in the desk.

You will notice that there are no CCTV screens on the panel at all, unlike level



crossings at, for example, Ely station. The signaller operates the line solely from the computer screens, which have failed on two occasions and needed to be rebooted, during which time all trains are brought to a halt as the signals all go red.

Whilst a single operator is sufficient to control Ely-Norwich, at least three are required to operate the other lines controlled from Cambridge. The attached Cambridge panel-wide view is centred around Ely station, including the Soham branch, and another operator to the left (out of shot) would control Cambridge.



Five of the signallers volunteered to be trained on this panel. The remainder will have training once the PSB has taken control of the line all the way to

Norwich, which is controlled by Colchester PSB. They are having a lot of problems with the MCB-OD level crossings (manually controlled barriers with obstacle/obstruction detectors). At ground level there is a sensor to check that no vehicle, or person (perhaps having fallen over) is on the crossing. Whilst there have been no problems in urban areas, in the rural, where the roads are very

muddy (e.g. tractors and other farm vehicles bringing mud off the land), the 'OD' tends to get splattered rendering it inactive.

.The signaller lowers the full barriers but does not know whether it is safe for the train to cross so he then phones the driver and tell them to check that the crossing is clear. The signaller then calls out for someone to go and clean the sensor. This is happening on a daily basis, with Network Rail looking at a solution to avoid such disruption. (When I was looking at Ely level crossing it was raining and the wiper cleaned the CCTV camera – perhaps something similar, with water squirter?)

Surprisingly there is no CCTV on the level crossing for the signaller to check. Of course, the purpose of the MCB-OD is for the barriers to descend automatically with no human involvement, as a prelude to fully computer controlled signalling.

I asked about line speed on Ely-Norwich, saying that I did not believe that the maximum line speed was entirely 75mph. The signaller showed me a new line guide booklet, and pointed out that west of Thetford it is 90mph, for example. (*Line speed between Lakenheath, Brandon is up to 90 already. Ed*)

The staff had expected Cambridge PSB to close in 2018, moving to the new Romford Regional Operating Centre, but closure has slipped to around 2020. JA

EAST WEST UPDATE

On 17th October, the government gave its approval to Chiltern's Evergreen 3 project. It involves new track and station upgrades between Oxford and Bicester so that trains may very soon reach Oxford from Bicester and London (Marylebone). It's important for East Anglia because it represents the first step towards the return of an Oxford to Cambridge railway.

However, the approval comes with a 10 page covering letter prefacing 19 pages of conditions. Some are onerous. For example, one requires Chiltern/Network Rail to ensure that instructions given by a horse riding instructor can be heard 30 metres away as a train goes past. Compliance with this condition will be judged by a complex set of noise and voice measurements that will cost the operator thousands of pounds a year.

There are 14 other conditions that restrict noise with yet further objections raised by residents in north Oxford. Over the next few years, there will be intense planning scrutiny of the proposals to reopen the Bicester / Aylesbury to Bletchley line. It is to be hoped those authorities will be less draconian – we do not want the man with a red flag returning! JH

CAMBRIDGE CRUSH-HOUR CONSTERNATION

OK, so Cambridge station wasn't designed for the 9million plus travellers who currently seethe through its barriers each year. And "seethe" is too often the right word: major congestion and missed trains is fraying tempers and furnishing fodder for the local media.



These pictures were not of the 'rush-hour', but from 10.30 am on a November Thursday. There's nothing freakish about them either; they are commonplace, Monday to Saturday.

In one sense it's a joy to see so many customers eager to travel. But not when confronted with such conditions.



The upper picture looks toward the six sales windows with the ticket machines to the left with the queue winding to the left in 'The Maze' behind the machines. Below was the view to the platforms.CB

But this mayhem is to end.....it's

official! Greater Anglia and Network Rail are trying to 'fast track' a planning application to open up this wholly inadequate area and make it fit for the 21st century. But it ain't easy: there isn't in any case a lot of space to play with and Listed Building status doesn't help. But the railway is 'on the case' and determined for real improvement. We offer whole hearted support of these aspirations to ours and your mutual benefit. So, Councillors, don't dawdle over your decision. It matters, now! CB



AIRPORTS ACCESS: RAILFUTURE PUBLISHES STUDY:

Nick Dibben reminds us that Railfuture has issued a report on using public transport to get to airports based on the experiences of nearly 200 passengers. It found that 80% had used public transport for the whole or part of their journey and that 88% had found it easy to find information on public transport options. The passengers also identified a number of areas for improvement. These include the need for more luggage space, earlier and later public transport services to suit flight times and the ability to get through tickets using bus and train from more destinations. Of particular concern was that passengers arriving at Heathrow Airport and using the Heathrow Express service could not buy through tickets to other rail stations. The report can be found on the Railfuture web-site: www.railfuture.org.uk/dl445 ND

Dont forget: if you are connected to the internet Rail East can be emailed to you. Just contact the Editor at the address below. Email has the potential to save us a lot of money on postage each year. CB

Thanks to all our contributors of text and pictures over the past year – you were vital. Meantime, sincere best wishes for a warm and peaceful Christmas, if at all possible. And a Happy New Year , of course!

Deadline for the next issue is 8th January 2013.

Railfuture

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Railfuture

EAST ANGLIA BRANCH :

Dates for your Diary

***8 December, Cambridge
at 2.00pm***

***Guest Speaker: Richard
Eccles, Director Network
Strategy and Planning***

***Venue: Central Library,
Grand Arcade, CB2 3QD***

23 February

Bury St Edmunds

Annual General Meeting

Friends Meeting House

IP33 1SJ

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