

NORWICH ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2015



The guest speaker at our Branch meeting on Saturday 19 September will be **Ian Brown CBE**, who has been Railfuture's Director of Policy since members elected him to the Board in May 2014, writes Jerry Alderson (JA).

After a life-time career with rail, he is still involved in the running of the railway in Britain, the Continent and the United States but now as a freelance consultant. Although not as well-known as some of his peers, such as Chris Green and Adrian Shooter, members should know his name and face from his regular column in Railwatch. Those who attended Railfuture's national conference in London in November 2014 will have enjoyed his entertaining and frank presentation on his involvement in Crossrail – just the latest in a series of rail projects that we can thank him for.

I first met Ian at Railfuture's conference in Shoreditch in November 2010, which celebrated the opening of the London Overground East London Line service. He had just retired as Managing Director of London Rail at Transport for London, and still had a lot to offer both the railway and rail campaigners. I put him in touch with the editor of Railwatch, proposed him as a Railfuture Vice President and in 2014 I persuaded him to stand as a Railfuture director. It has been a great pleasure to have worked with him over the last 18 months and I remain astounded at the breadth and depth of his knowledge about railways, both from a service and technical perspective. I have learned a lot from him and I'm sure everyone who attends our meeting will do as well.

Ian wrote Railfuture's **2020 Vision** (see www.railfuture.org.uk/DL990) in consultation with our branches, and it became our national campaigning document for candidates during the General Election. His involvement in Railfuture will play a big part in the success of our campaigning. He has a lot of ideas about how to improve Britain's railway for both passengers and freight (in British Rail days he was in charge of freight), but he wants to hear your views too. Please take the time to attend our meeting and show your appreciation for his efforts that will benefit all of us.

The venue is the Chapelfields Methodist Chapel in Norwich, our usual venue, and starts at 14.00 hrs. Please see the enclosed Flyer for how-to-get-there details. Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be served." JA

The Way Forward – Report from Railfuture Spring Conference, Newark

Nearly 100 delegates attended the conference in the splendid Grade 1 listed Newark Town Hall. The first presentation came from **Graham Botham**, Principal Strategic Planner from Network Rail for the East Coast Main Line (ECML). Mr Botham explained that this was his dream job with schemes like the recently completed Hitchin flyover, greatly improving performance by cutting conflict delays to long distance main line services.

Other projects being developed included reducing journey times, freight passing loops and additional track to enable extra inter-city services to operate each hour, as well as additional freight trains. Around £250,000 is also allotted to preparing the ECML for Hitachi's new Class 800/1 Inter-City train.

Plans were being drawn up for a flyover at Peterborough to allow freight trains to reach the Spalding line, again without conflicting with the intercity services. The proposed HS2 was essential in the long term for creating more capacity south of York and could enable new regional services such as Leeds to Cambridge to use the East Coast Main Line.

Tom Ingall from the *Great Central Railway* outlined plans to link the two sections of their railway together. The possibility of then running a community rail service over the entire route that would link Nottingham and Leicester was discussed. At present the numbers do not suggest a viable service, but this is being kept under review.



The key-note speaker, **David Horne**, Managing Director of Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) then described the first few months of the new franchise. He said that the company's aims were similar to those from a LNER document from 1946; speed, comfort and convenience. Reducing some fares by 10% had already made an impact, with more passengers and overall income increasing. Mr Horne talked about the 65 new Hitachi trains that were being built. They should start arriving in 2018 and will enable an increase in the number of services provided and allow new destinations to be served. He noted that the Government, who had procured the trains, did not consider buffet cars to be necessary, something VTEC had already corrected!

Local topics covered in the conference included recent improvements to the Nottingham to Lincoln service; the extension to the Nottingham tram system; and ideas to improve services when the East Midlands franchise is renewed

So, a truly great conference with a range of stimulating speakers to show what is and what can be done to improve rail services. Report by Nick Dibben (ND).

Branch meeting in Ipswich – Crossrail Revealed



Our guest speaker at the Railfuture East Anglia meeting in Ipswich was **Richard Storer** from Crossrail. He explained the background and the current progress of this £15bn project. Although ideas for a new rail tunnel across London had been around for some time, the current scheme dates from the Central London Rail Study in 1989. An initial proposal to parliament was rejected but the scheme was given assent in 2008 with work at the new Canary Wharf station starting a year later. When completed the scheme will link the existing railway networks out of Paddington and Liverpool Street allowing direct journeys from Reading in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east.

Up to 24 trains per hour will use the central section and over 200m journeys a year are expected. The tunnel work has been completed and work is underway to build and fit out the stations.

The stations are vast, a typical Canary Wharf tower block, laid on its side would easily fit within the station box. Fitting the stations and tunnels within central London has not proved easy and the station platforms are the only sections of straight track on the system.

The project is more than a railway; it has provided the opportunity for one of the largest archaeological studies ever undertaken and many bodies and objects have been found. Excavated material from the tunnelling has been shipped down to the Essex coast creating a new nature reserve on Wallasea Island. A tunnelling academy had been created in east London to train workers for this and future projects.

Overall 55,000 jobs were created during construction and the completed scheme would help regenerate parts of London and encourage new housing and jobs. Paddington to Heathrow services are due to start in May 2018 with full service to all destinations in December 2019. ND

East Anglia Franchise

The Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the East Anglian franchise will be issued by the Department for Transport in mid-September 2015. In the meantime, members of the Branch Committee have met with representatives of the preferred bidders for the franchise: First Group; National Express; Abellio/Stagecoach.

The bid teams were already aware of our concerns and aspirations from our detailed response to the DfT Consultation, so our discussions centred on the importance of reliability, increased capacity and issues that have arisen since the consultation such as the Cambridge City Deal, and how services to

Newmarket and other key centres across the region might be improved.

All the bid teams were very keen to hear what we had to say and we came away from each meeting with the positive impression that over the period of the franchise, we will get a much improved network. It was recognised that during the recent series of very short franchises, the East Anglian network has not kept pace with the demands made upon it. Users are desperate for reliability, and an improved timetable providing more trains that really work for all aspects for the regional economy. More on this when the ITT is published. PW.

Railway between March and Wisbech

The above is the prosaic heading of Cambridgeshire County Council's recently published GRIP 2 study. It masks good news. We can do no better than reproduce the official summary of the GRIP 2 findings:

"Current investigations into the case for reopening the railway between March and Wisbech commenced in 2012.

Following on from the initial work (detailed below), on 29 July 2015, we published an [Outline Business Case \(pdf, 22.61Mb\)](#) and a [GRIP 2 feasibility study \(pdf, 9.8Mb\)](#). These documents demonstrate a positive case for investment at this stage of scheme development."

"For a preferred option of two trains an hour from Wisbech to Cambridge, the Outline Business Case and GRIP2 documents show a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.27 to 1, representing high value for money. When wider economic benefits are taken into account, the BCR could rise to around 4.41."

"Unfortunately, without additional work in the Ely area, it is unlikely that this service pattern could be achieved. A fall-back option of one train an hour to Cambridge and one train an hour to March would still be possible. This option has a BCR of 1.37 to 1 (representing low value for money), rising to 3.37 to 1 when wider economic benefits are taken into account."

"The figures quoted above presume a Town Centre Station; they increase slightly for a station south of the A47 due to the reduction in cost from not bridging the A47 over the railway. However, a town centre station would increase and widen the economic benefit for Wisbech."

"Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) is Network Rail's management and control process for delivering projects on the railway, and has eight stages. The GRIP 2 Feasibility stage has now been completed for the March to Wisbech re-opening."

"The GRIP 2 study looks at potential scheme costs in some detail. Including risk and optimism bias (a factor allowing for an inherent tendency for scheme costs to be underestimated at early stages of development), the cost of re-opening the line between March and Wisbech is estimated to range between

£70m and £111m. The costings from the GRIP 2 study informed the Outline Business Case."

"The next stage of the project is for a GRIP 3 Option Selection study and a Full Business Case for the scheme to be developed. This work is currently planned to commence in the autumn of 2015."

Click below for the documents:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20006/travel_roads_and_parking/68/transport_funding_bids_and_studies/3

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3885/march_to_wisbech_grip_2_report.pdf

To which our Chairman adds: "at the end of this Wisbech GRIP 2 report under 'Opportunities' there was something of a tantalising postscript..."

Opportunities

The re-signalling of March East Signal box is the key opportunity for the project. There are several other potential schemes and projects that may either deliver or contribute to the delivery of the re-signalling, reducing or removing the £16m to £20m cost of doing so including:

- *The Felixstowe to Nuneaton (F2N) freight project, electrification for which may trigger signalling works at March East*
- *The Strategic Freight Network (SFN) which we understand may be investigating the possibility of reopening the line as part of a March - Spalding diversion, avoiding Peterborough!*

And while we speak of freight

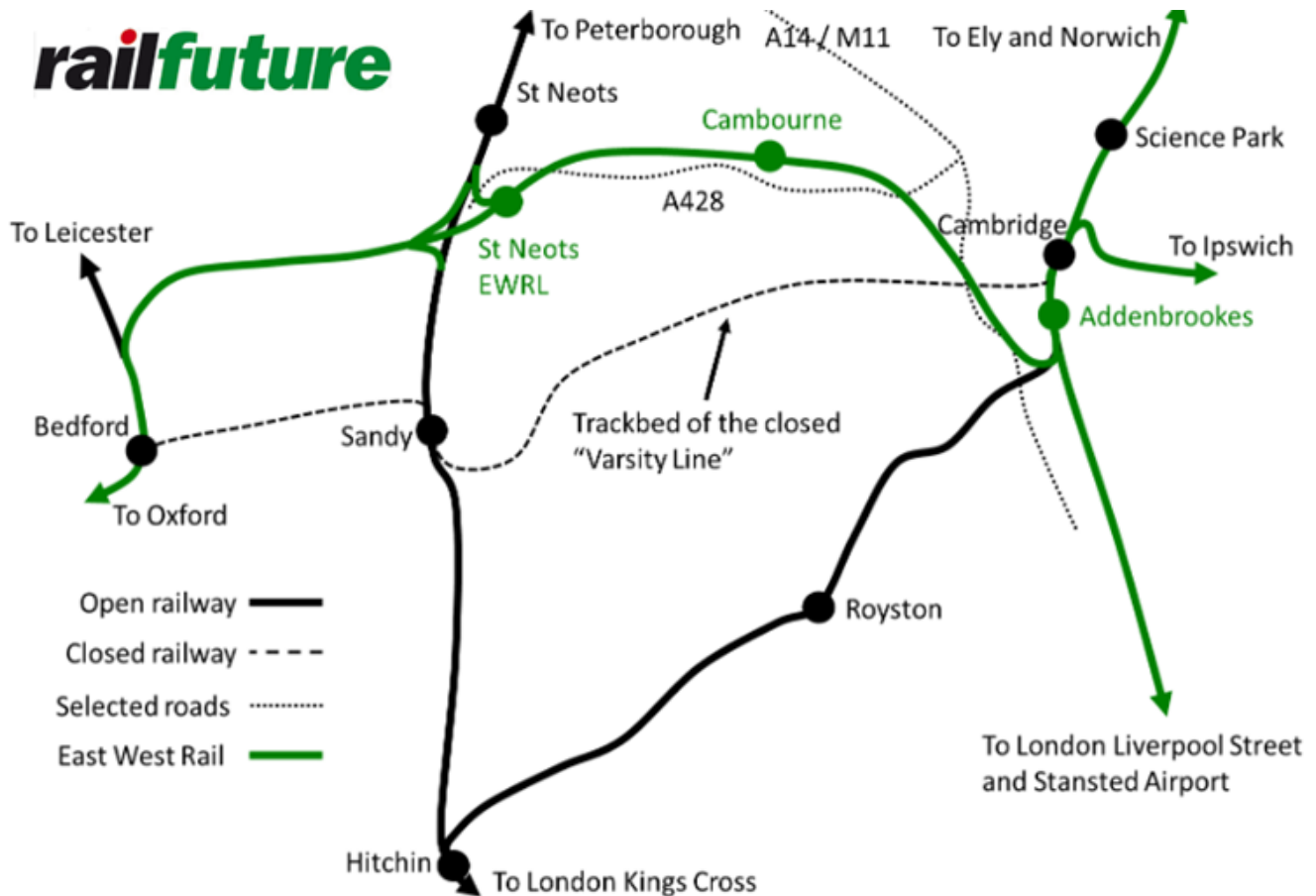
East Cambridgeshire District Council has approved the application to build a straw pellet making factory at the Potter Group railhead near Ely. When it is completed it will have the capacity to produce three train-loads of pellets each week. This gives the 'green light' to transporting these pellets to the 'Generation Park' near Crown Point, Norwich, mentioned at length in Rail East 166. PW

East West Rail – Bedford to Cambridge Announcement

In late July the East West Rail consortium made another major step towards linking Bedford and Cambridge, as part of the East-West Rail project. They announced two preferred broad corridors each of which contains one or more routes, and in the next few months these options will be narrowed down to a single preferred route. See www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+East+West+Rail

One corridor embraces a direct route described as 'via Sandy', although East West Rail have confirmed that this is a broad corridor and could include a route as far north as St Neots and Cambourne (as shown in the Railfuture map on the next page).

This northerly route is the preference of Railfuture East Anglia providing a balance between directness and helping solve Cambridgeshire's poor railway connectivity to the west of the county. The other corridor links Bedford with Hitchin to join the existing line to Cambridge, an option which Railfuture East Anglia considers less direct, would need major upgrading to take the extra trains, and would not add any new areas of Cambridgeshire to the rail network.



With increased interest from local authorities east of Cambridge, Railfuture East Anglia is calling for a package of improvements including the electrification of Cambridge to Ipswich and from Ely to Norwich. Allied to this we're requesting the return of double track line from Cambridge to Newmarket and additional platform capacity at Newmarket and Ipswich. Service frequency should be doubled with a mix of 'fast' and stopping services every hour with the 'fast' services continuing west along the new railway...

Our proposals have been presented to several authorities, to Network Rail and to the DfT, as well as the three bid teams for the East Anglian franchise who will be required to work with East-West Rail stakeholders during the expected lifetime of their franchise. *Railwatch* will carry an extended version of this news item. PS/CB

All change at Haverhill

The campaign for rebuilding a railway back to Haverhill continues well. At the time of writing in mid-August the petition has reached 1800 signatures.

As many of you will know, this campaign did not start this year. Since 1995 *the Sudbury to Cambridge Railway Renewal Association* has been steadfastly laying the groundwork for the present campaign. Under the tireless Chairmanship of the Reverend Malcolm Hill and his team, a petition of over 10000 signatures was collected during that time. The campaign has refocused slightly to take in the huge growth in the economy of Greater Cambridge, necessitating a new petition concentrating on Haverhill to Cambridge, where huge numbers of jobs are being created at science parks such as Granta Park on the line of the railway and nearby Babraham Science Park and Addenbrooke's Bio-medical Campus.



At its recent AGM held in Haverhill on Saturday 27th June 2015, Malcolm and his stalwart secretary, David Edwards, decided that they would like to withdraw from the front line and in their place were elected Heike Sowa, as the Association's new chair, and Sian Hopkins-Smith as secretary. Both live in Haverhill. We wish Heike and Sian well and will offer them as much support as is possible. They have a very good and enthusiastic team, largely from Haverhill district, to back them up.

To Malcolm and David, many, many thanks from all the members of Railfuture East Anglia for all your ceaseless work in getting the project so well-known and much respected over the years.

We very much hope that in the coming years all those who believe in a top quality sustainable transport network nationally, will remember your campaigning work with due respect when the trains once again start running from Haverhill. railhaverhill.org.uk/petition

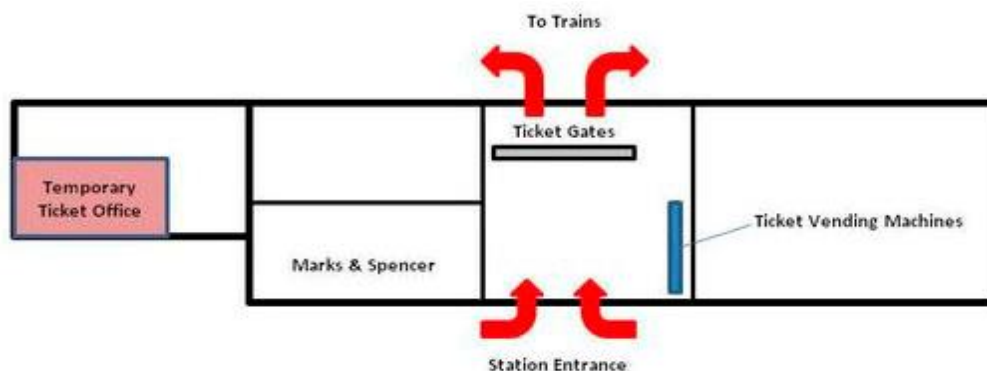
If you live in Suffolk, Essex or Cambridgeshire please do go to the Rail Haverhill website www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Haverhill and sign the online petition. If possible, please ask all your friends and family to do so too. Every signature counts. PW

Abellio Greater Anglia builds to improve

The end of severe ticket hall congestion at Cambridge station might at last be in sight, according to the Abellio Greater Anglia announcement that the current ticket/booking hall would close at the end of Tuesday 25 August to allow rebuilding to start. In the meantime, ticket sales would transfer to a new site, as below. This work is anticipated to last around six months after which the Booking Hall will reopen with far more space for the civilised ticket purchase

and information. After so long it seems almost unbelievable, but deeply wished....

.....by thousands! This work is anticipated to last around six months after which the Booking Hall will reopen with far more space for more civilised ticket purchase and information. The temporary ticket office position can be seen in the diagram below.



On 20 August Abellio also started another modernisation, this time on the island platform at Ely. Here there is to be a new Waiting Room, Toilets, Shop and Customer Service Office, all for completion this autumn. So well done Abellio. May everything go according to plan at both locations. CB

Cambridge's new station: all systems go!

Network Rail's planning application for Cambridge North (or Science Park) Railway Station was approved by the Cambridge Fringes Joint Development Control Committee on 19 August, thus Network Rail may now seriously begin construction. The current date for opening is December 2016.

The disused sidings access from Milton Road along the North side of Cambridge Business Park will become a new public footpath and cycleway to the new station. This will enable the Crown Estate to install two side accesses to the east end of Cambridge Business Park (where 3,000 people work) to encourage use of the new railway station, which will have direct trains to London, King's Lynn and Norwich

The name of the new station will be decided later this year. CB/AM

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

One year into the Great Northern brand under Govia, we're taking stock of successes and challenges. It has been excellent to see that the 50% student discount for Cambridgeshire 16-19 year olds remains in place, having proven itself as revenue generating, and it would be good to see this applied and standardised further afield. What has been frustrating is the progress of minor station infrastructure improvements. We look forward to Govia's annual stakeholder meeting on 9 September to query lengthy delays, for example on improved station cycle parking.

Staff work flat-out for the local community; yet the question arises whether

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Govia is able to deal with the extra workload that Community Rail Partnerships and Rail User Groups bring – even if these are ultimately valuable endeavours. The general state of pedestrian and non-motorised user safety at Foxton Level Crossing could be called comical were it not such a serious matter. A unique level crossing, sitting as it does on an A road (the A10 just south of Cambridge) with pedestrian (and cyclist) passageways on either side, including one that serves the station, all pedestrian gates have been out of action now for six and four months respectively.

School starts soon, and unsupervised young children will like everyone else be forced to tiptoe alongside heavy vehicle traffic to get from platform to platform. Plans to close the crossing and create a vehicle by-pass and separate dedicated non-motorised user crossing have been shelved, presumably due to Network Rail struggling to deliver projects elsewhere. We are told that new gates are on the way for 'late September'. A request for a crossing escort, especially during school peak times, has been lodged, as has the need for clear and helpful information for visitors unfamiliar with the current arrangements.



Sight of the crossing's Risk Assessment is shocking: a document apparently not renewed in five years in spite of multiple, repeated reports of faulty gates and pedestrian mishaps, and with a number of factual errors and omissions. The local community's faith in Network Rail to take a serious approach and deliver results is unfortunately but understandably at an all-time low, and one can only hope that vulnerable pedestrians negotiating this lethal environment on a daily basis, while awaiting remedial action, remain safe. Susan Vandeven (SV)

Happy 50th Birthday to East Suffolk Travellers' Association (ESTA)

ESTA - THE FIRST 50 YEARS will be published on 13 November, but Railfuture members can order it now at £4.95 (postage free) from Trevor Garrod, 15

Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. (Cheques payable to ESTA). This 32-page illustrated booklet recounts the history of one of our region's largest and oldest rail users' associations, which was formed in 1965 by a group of people who succeeded in saving the Ipswich-Lowestoft line from closure.

The title clearly states that these are "the first" 50 years, however, for ESTA is not going to say "Job done" and shut up shop. The association will continue to provide a voice for local train and bus users. Indeed, the final part of the book summarises its input to the current consultation concerning the post-October 2016 East Anglia franchise.

This includes additional Sunday trains on both the Ipswich - Lowestoft and Lowestoft-Norwich routes and additional rolling stock; while good use should be made of station buildings and there must be "robust plans to handle disruption." A study should also be undertaken into the feasibility of reintroducing some Lowestoft-London through trains.

The inaugural meeting of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association took place in Saxmundham on November 13th 1965, some six weeks after a public hearing into the closure proposal and seven months before the then Secretary of State for Transport reprieved the East Suffolk Line.

The book will be launched at a lunchtime reception in Saxmundham Market Hall on Friday November 13th, when there will also be an exhibition of documents and photos. This will then go on tour - its first stop being Beccles Library November 16th-18th and then to several other libraries up and down the line. TG

Meet the Rail User Groups

In this issue the focus is on FLUA: The Fen Line Users Association.

Mike Beckett introduces us to this very active Rail User Group.

Three decades later, it still seems scarcely possible! The Fen Line, with two-hourly services from Liverpool Street to King's Lynn (last train from London at 1835!) may have boasted loco-hauled trains with buffet cars, but thirty years ago it was fading fast.

There was a group of regular commuters who, in the shadow of the Serpell Report and the then recent singling of long stretches north of Littleport, banded together to fight for better things. At the urging of the Railway Development Society's Trevor Garrod, FLUA was formed in November 1985, at King's Lynn. It turned out to be a good time to fight the line's corner.

The gradual running down of East Anglia's rail system had finally bumped against the ever widening spread of London's electric network. With faster journey times and shift of main London terminal to King's Cross, electrification was the goal. Under the leadership of FLUA's first chairman, Rodney Collins (a

daily Downham Market to London commuter) FLUA garnered support of politicians and business people until the wiring case became unstoppable. King's Lynn-King's Cross went electric in August 1992. Some journeys became more than 30 minutes quicker.

FLUA is still here, still seeking better things. Our formula? We employ consistent rational argument, based on hard evidence, on careful assembly of support from political and commercial bodies, and on a willingness to work with the rail industry – for the interests of passengers.

Passenger numbers are rocketing and evening peak time crowding as far north as Littleport, even Downham Market, is routine. The big issue is when the contractually committed, GTR "half-hourly" King's Lynn-King's Cross service will happen and when the necessary infrastructure will be provided.

FLUA didn't use these words back in 1985, but (despite the growth of the line beyond all expectations) the aim then was much as it is today – "more and longer trains." **Mike Beckett joined FLUA at its inaugural meeting, edits their quarterly journal and has been a Committee member for many years.*

From DC to Diesel: a transformation devoutly to be wished?

Railfuture East Anglia (Peter Wakefield, Paul Hollinghurst and Peter Risebrow) were guests of Vivarail on 18th August to see the prototype "D-Train", an inspired project to convert redundant D-78 District Line trains into Diesel Multiple Units for the National Rail network. This comes at a vital time, where severe rolling stock shortages are leading to overcrowding, delays to new services, and where the movement of a small number of DMUs between TOCs can make national news.

Vivarail have bought all the D-78 driving motor carriages and a number of intermediate trailers so they can produce up to 75 two and three car trains, and have the option of buying more intermediate motors and fitting cabs if there is extra demand.



The trains are over 35 years old, but the bodyshells are lightweight and in very

good condition with no sign of corrosion, and the bogies are only 10 years old and still sold by Bombardier. The photograph on the next page shows the three stages of external appearance: the original on the left; the intermediate stage on the right, and centre, completed.

There are two main parts to the conversion, a new diesel drive chain and the new interior. The project aims to deliver a train which is cheap to buy, operate and maintain but gives the passenger a comfortable and modern interior.

Three interior variants are offered, 'City', 'Commuter' and 'Country'. 'City' is essentially a heavy overhaul of the existing interior with its longitudinal seating and retains 4 doors a side. 'Commuter' reduces the doors to two per side (with inward encroaching door pillars being removed) and reconfigures some of the seating to transverse with headrests, while 'Country' provides new seating based on a more comfortable variant of seating seen in new generation EMUs, and adds a retention toilet. New passenger information displays will be added, and reused parts will be deep cleaned to return them to new condition, with, for example, drop-lights being replaced by new parts.

Under the floor each carriage has a pair of enginerafts with diesel engine and generator which can be unbolted and removed by forklift in 10 mins to allow rapid engine swaps in case of failure, but also for overhaul. This work can be performed without the need to take the train back to a maintenance depot.

It is intended that the raft will be maintenance free between overhauls so the units will just require refuelling and emptying of the retention tank, both of which will have three days' capacity. Vivarail didn't stop there and plan to demonstrate a world first for DMUs by fitting an energy recovery unit to the train (battery or flywheel) to allow regenerative braking.

The day started with an introduction to the project by Adrian Shooter, former Chairman of Chiltern Railways, who heads the team. We met Colin Flack who runs the entire Long Marston operation, Andy Hamilton (Vivarail engineering), Neil Bates (Vivarail design) and Alice Gillman (Vivarail PR/Comms).

We were then taken to meet the train for a ride round the 4km test track. A single vehicle is now operational, still with its original interior but in a bright new green and white Vivarail livery, and able to travel round the 4km test track at up to the line speed of 25mph.

We were then shown round the workshops where the other motor and intermediate trailer are being worked on. The motor carriage was up on jacks showing the 3 inch spacers which have been added to the bogie pivot and secondary suspension to lift the body as the LT floor height is too low for the main railway network.

So what did we make of the train? The unit was stable over the rough track at Long Marston and accelerated well although only operating using a single engine raft, and the engine noise was not obtrusive, although final judgement

on these will only be possible in January when it starts operating on the mainline, initially during overnight possessions from Honeybourne. The interiors were harder to judge as a complete interior is as yet unfinished, so there were only small test sections to view. We felt that the 'City' variant would have only limited appeal, possibly for an application where they were used for crowd-busting services for special events. The 'Commuter' and 'Country' variants have similar seating density so we thought the new train feel from the completely new transverse seating in the 'Country' variant would be the one operators and passengers would want. Our vote is for the 'Country'.

What was clear from the day was just how experienced and knowledgeable the team are and how they want to produce a high quality product which passengers will welcome as a new train and TOCs will find compelling. The interiors include attention to detail in seating comfort and storage which is sadly lacking in many new train designs.

Many thanks to the team at Vivarail for our chance to see this project first hand, and to Peter Risebrow (PR) for organising our invitation. PH/PW/ PR

Railfuture National Specialist Groups

Over many years Railfuture and its predecessors has included specialist groups, usually railway customer focused. Of these the Passenger Group (PG) is probably the one whose work is of greatest interest to you, our reader.

Prime concern is feedback from the branches about the services offered by Train Operating Companies (TOCs) in their area: are they fulfilling the franchise requirements; is that franchise seriously deficient and if so, in what way/s; what criticisms have been made by a Branch to a TOC and/or Department for Transport (DfT), and were they successfully resolved?

These days the Passenger Group is concerned primarily with Handling of Disruption, Fares, Overcrowding, Train Design and Station Design. But you the member may expand this at any time, as the PG is fundamentally a mirror of Members concerns. Specific issues within these headings are filtered by the Branch/TOC Liaison Officer to the Passenger Group directly and usually responded to pretty quickly. Answers and remedies usually take little longer!

Topics currently meriting Branch attention are: complexity of fares structure; Single Fares that are irritatingly only slightly lower than Return Fares; inadequate provision of platform shelters; carriage seating and leg room; and disruption management. Which seems enough to be going on with. But if you wish to air a topic of concern, do not fail to contact either our Secretary, Paul Hollinghurst, or me, Chris Burton, as the TOC Liaison Officer. And do provide as much evidence, if appropriate, as possible. With a bit of luck the next issue of Rail East will delve into the detail of another Railfuture group's work. CB

Croxton Level Crossing Brake Point

Those of you who travel between Norwich and Ely have surely noticed the speed restriction at a level crossing just north of Thetford, namely Croxton. It was the scene of a potentially lethal accident in September 2006 when the first Norwich to Cambridge service of the day, travelling at 87 mph, was derailed on hitting a crossing surface panel dislodged a few minutes earlier by a lorry.

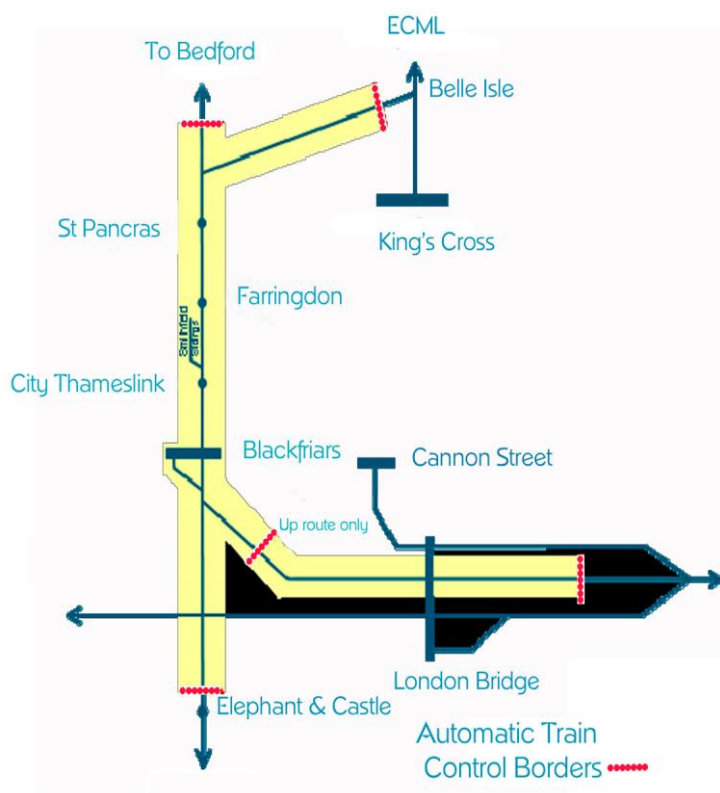
That was nine years ago, so why is it still subject to a speed restriction so long after the event?

I contacted Network Rail who replied: "Our records indicate that the current 40mph speed restriction at Croxton LC has been in place since 2012, following concerns raised about the road / rail interface at the level crossing."

"Our level crossings team is in ongoing discussions with our safety regulator (ORR) about whether the restriction can be eased or removed. If those discussions do not resolve the issue, then NR and Norfolk County Council (who have joint responsibility for safety at this level crossing) would need to decide on next steps."

Let us hope the decision is speedy as three years is far too long for a 'temporary' speed restriction. CB

Thameslink Connects.....



At 07.00 on Sunday 30 August the Thameslink route from Blackfriars to the ECML slow lines at Belle Isle was finally passed for use. Many years back Belle Isle was the exotically named signal box situated in the grim smoke encrusted 'well' between Gasworks and Copenhagen tunnels on the climb out of King's Cross. Today it is a more appealing location with a 21st Century aspect speedily evolving in all directions.

This new connection also means that the latest Siemens Class 700 trains, destined for all Thameslink services, may now make their entrance onto the ECML under *conventional* signaling for various

tests and staff training. Eventually this rolling stock will run under Automatic Train Operation all the way from Belle Isle to London Bridge, as in this modified diagram, courtesy Network Rail, November 2013.

And with this link approved and active, we may quite soon witness a visit from the Class 377 units which are destined to replace our redoubtable 'Bug-Eyed' Cl.365s, around 2016-17 on the Kings Lynn to Kings Cross and Cambridge Cruiser services. At least the air conditioned '377 will bring a very welcome change from the noise and draft pollution of the '365s, sprightly and well thought of though the latter are. CB

The Railway Balance Sheet 2014-15

SUMMARY OF RAIL INDUSTRY ECONOMICS 2014-15

The financial performance of the national rail industry continues to improve, helped by ongoing growth in passenger volume.

Figures released by the ORR show that for the fifth consecutive year premium payments paid to government by TOCs exceeded total government subsidy paid to TOCs. In 2014/15 this amounted to a record surplus of £802.2m thus:

Total premium payments from 11 Train Operating Companies (TOCs)	£1,529m
Total government subsidy paid to 8 TOCs	£727m
Net surplus to government	£802m

The top paying TOCs were: SWT (£374.3m), East Coast (including Virgin/Stagecoach East Coast and DIR East Coast, £266.7m), Southern (£187.4m), Greater Anglia (£187.1m), Thameslink (£179.8m), Virgin West Coast (£93.7m).

TOCs in receipt of the most subsidy were: First Scot Rail (£261.1m), Northern (£112.7m), Arriva Trains Wales (£101.9m), Mersey Rail (£86.2m).

Measured in pence per passenger kilometre, the highest premiums were: SWT (6p), East Coast (5p) and Thameslink (4.5p). The highest subsidies were Mersey Rail (12.4p), First Scot Rail (8.6p), Arriva Trains Wales (8.5p).

Direct grant to Network Rail rose 10% to £3.802bn (2013/14 £3.453bn). PTE grants fell 32.4% to £123m (2013/14 £182m).

Total government support for the rail industry in 2014/15 fell 9% to £4.796bn (down from £5.287bn in 2013/14). However, the 2014/15 figure includes £1.097bn investment in Crossrail which is really a separate issue.

Note that excluding Crossrail investment, total government support for operating, maintaining and renewing the railway was £3.7bn. **Note** also that a study by Oxera for the Rail Delivery Group last year found that £3.9bn was returned to government by the rail industry as a whole each year from taxation,

most of which would not have applied to British Rail, and this would indicate that, far from being subsidised, the government and the tax payer gained a net profit from rail operations last year.

Not included in this analysis is Network Rail debt now amounting to £38bn, accumulated from years of investment sourced from the private sector at governments' behest. Annual interest charges on this debt of approximately £1.4bn are now the responsibility of government following the transfer of NR to nationalised status.

Finally, it should be noted that private sector investment in the railway last year amounted to £647m (up from £423m in 2013/14).

Temporary Speed Restrictions – Just how temporary are they?

For some time I've been aware that punctuality is not just down to signal checks, platform delays, technical faults etc. it is often influenced by the sudden emergence of 'temporary' speed restrictions. So when local member, Mark Read told me he was meeting a senior Network Rail employee and were there any questions he might pose, this was one of them. And the answer:

"..... it is almost impossible in practice to administrate claims for small speed restrictions (which make up the great majority) and it only becomes practical when the delay is equal or greater than 3 minutes. Network Rail have 6 months to rectify a speed restriction." (I didn't get round to asking what happens should that be exceeded!) Apparently when Abellio GA took over the franchise there were approx. 45 restrictions between Cambridge and Liverpool Street which has been reduced to around 28. They said that the loss of reputation caused by late running far outweighed any financial compensation received and that any TOC would be "mad" to see speed restrictions as a revenue earner and that they actively pressure Railtrack to resolve them asap."

So there you are, not a total answer yet informative and much farther 'down the track' than I expected. If you get to ask similar questions, please do let your editor know what, if any, response you got. CB.

*Thank you as ever to our contributors and I hope you will join them with something for Rail East 168, **no later than Monday 16 November 2015.** Illustrations are always valued if there is space, so do please send them preferably as JPEGs, although we can take other formats.*

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And don't forget, Saturday 7 November 2015
Rail Resurgence in the West of England
Venue: Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel and Spa
With another superb line-up of Guest Speakers
including our own East Anglia branch chairman!
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MEETINGS

NEXT BRANCH MEETING

Saturday 19 September

**Methodist Chapel
Meeting Room,
Chapelfield Road
Norwich
NR2 1SD
at 14.00 hrs**

Guest Speaker: IAN BROWN
Retired Transport for London and
British Rail executive,
now Railfuture's Director of Policy

FUTURE BRANCH MEETING

**Saturday 5 December
St Paul's Church, Hills Rd
CAMBRIDGE, CB2 1JP**

Guest Speaker: TBA

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