

Hello and welcome to our 168th Rail East. As we head to 2016 our East Anglia railway can look back at much improvement over the last two decades, both in quality of service and quantity. But alas, not in the past year and especially this Autumn, where Abellio seem to be troubled by diesel unit reliability, with services completely absent for several days on both Felixstowe-Ipswich and Marks Tey to Sudbury.

Other diesel services are being destabilised by outright unit failures or rolling stock shortage because units are in works for refurbishment (the latter we of course support!). Peter Wakefield, our Chairman, has more to say on Page 2.

This Rail East also notes that the word 'PAUSE' has entered the railway lexicon, usually in reference to time-shifting much favoured infrastructure projects.

More too of this inside plus where are the 'Tree Stacked Bikes' to be found (as per photograph)?

Of one thing be sure though: our Branch is actively prosecuting the case for these schemes and their timescales right up to the highest level. Please do your bit too, should you be in contact with local politicians and/or railway management. It truly matters!

Now, despite it being only November, I'd like to wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas, and the all-important good health during 2016



An Unprecedented and Catastrophic Train Service Failure this Autumn

Just as we are finalising this edition of RailEast a very serious situation has developed creating the near ruin of several timetables operated by Abellio Greater Anglia's diesel trains.

This reliability collapse occurred on routes serving some of our major towns, with Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe and Sudbury particularly badly affected. Vital links between our major economic hubs such as Cambridge to Norwich and to Ipswich have been cut seemingly randomly.

Still worse; for several days on end the service between Ipswich and Felixstowe and Marks Tey and Sudbury has been completely abandoned. And from 19 November to Sunday 22 total substitution by bus between Norwich and Yarmouth plus cancellation of entire service from Ipswich to Peterborough!

We gather nearly half the diesel trains based on Crown Point depot in Norwich are out of action. Why?

After some delay, AGA began to explain the situation...here is part of a press release from their website:

".....service cancellations on some local routes in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. The problems are due to some of our diesel trains suffering wheel damage, as a result of poor rail conditions. This situation leads to excessive wear on the wheels which must be repaired before the trains can re-enter service. On average we are currently seeing two trains arrive back at the end of each day with wheel damage, more than double the rate we have experienced in previous autumn periods."

Many users are asking why this terrible situation has been allowed to develop so critically? Why has no other operator nationally suffered to this degree? Why have trains not been temporarily sourced from other parts of the country where Abellio operates trains to cover this emergency? Or more locomotive hauled sets hired and placed rapidly into service?

Is it complacency? East Midlands Trains operating out of Norwich have saved the day on the Thetford route at some cost to its own passengers' journey: their trains are also diesel yet have apparently managed to keep running over the same tracks as AGA without these problems. Why?

There is a lesson here for all the bid teams for our new franchise: they must source enough trains to run the timetable reliably or will suffer the huge damage to their reputation now being experienced by Abellio. This must never happen again. We have written to Abellio with these questions and hopefully by our Cambridge meeting, will have at least some answers for *you*. PW

BRANCH MEETING: CAMBRIDGE 5 DECEMBER

News about Cambridge's three(!) stations.

If you have not visited the current Cambridge station forecourt recently then you will be very surprised by the changes along its entire length. The combined Ibis Hotel and Cycle Point building is several floors out of the ground as is the large block opposite the station called No1 Station Square.

The site of the second hotel, just down Station Road meanwhile has been cleared, revealing for a short time the buried turntable pit from the days of steam.

This bike-stacking picture shows that the Cycle Point cannot come soon enough. The

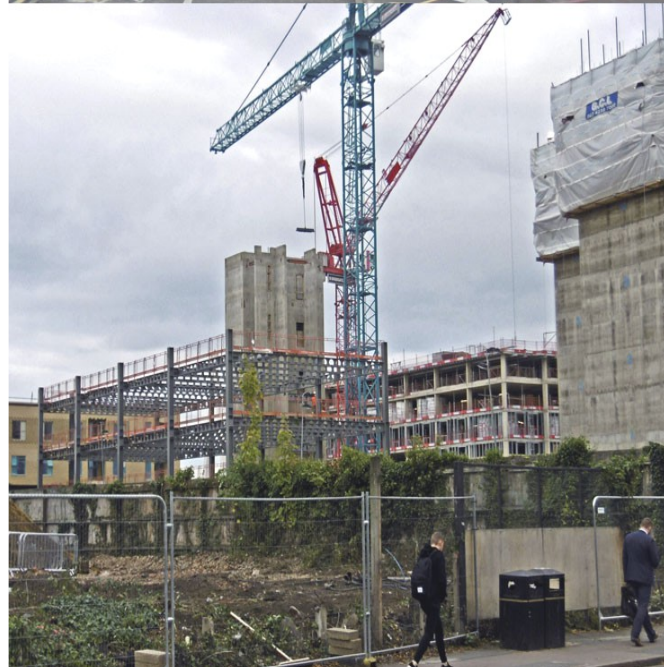


long overdue reconstruction of the ticket hall is also well under way.

Let us hope the finished scheme will reflect more skylight onto the station forecourt than presently seems likely.

Three miles to the north

however it is very much new-from-nothing at the Science Park Station site, with platform formations growing daily out of the levelled spoil, welcoming the advancing new tracks and electrification masts.



There will be some travel-pain here inevitably, as next year weekend possessions will have to take place to permit work on the platforms serving the mainline. So do check your travel plans northward out of Cambridge in 2016.

To the south, there is genuinely serious consideration of proposals for a station at Addenbrooke's Hospital being brought forward for completion within the next five years! So, all round, exciting and encouraging news. PW

..And of Other Stations:

Newmarket

Two new high quality shelters (see photo) have been installed together with improved cycle storage, so, although still a long way from the grandeur of the original structure, it is a very welcome improvement, as is the new customer information screen. A ticket vending machine is also planned

Attleborough

The car park has been enlarged, resurfaced and lined out. A small charge will be levied. Local members will monitor to establish whether the charge "puts people off", or whether it remain full.

Ely

The new waiting room, café, toilet and staff accommodation on platform 2/3 is nearing completion, thankfully, as winter rapidly approaches.



Network Rail Project "Pauses"

The last Rail East outlined the preliminary consultation on solving the emerging major bottleneck for all the East Anglian network; namely the single line between Soham and Ely and associated work in the Ely area. Injecting more capacity around Ely is key to fulfilling service increases, reliability and journey time improvements, for both passengers and freight.

Since then however, Network Rail and the DfT have realised that they have not enough money or resources to finish the network enhancements promised us in Control Period 5. Hence "The Pause" to take stock of what *can* be implemented. A major casualty is the commitment to double-track Soham to Ely. This is of national importance as without this work very few extra freight trains will be able to serve the port of Felixstowe.

Together with Railfuture's national *Infrastructure and Networks Group* we wrote a letter to the NR Chair, Sir Peter Hendy, explaining why we thought that the Felixstowe to Nuneaton line needed to be expanded as planned. We copied it to all the MPs along the route too, asking for their support. We are meeting a representative of their transport group very shortly.

Another worrying 'pause' might be the phasing of the various sections of the western segment of EWRL between Bicester, Bletchley and Bedford as well as Aylesbury Bletchley. At the time of writing we are hearing mixed messages, but

should the Hendy Review seek to delay the project there can be no doubt that the immense public, political and business support for EWRL will mobilise in opposition. We sent a press statement to this effect to a local newspaper.

Ironically as this hugely popular project is seemingly threatened with extended delivery, from the roads section of the DfT comes a statement, part of which reads as follows:

"A study costing £512,000 will explore options into the potential for creating a dedicated road link between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. Roads are key to our nation's prosperity. For too long they have suffered from under investment. That is why as part of our long-term economic plan we are investing a record £15 billion in our roads programme....."

At HM cash-strapped Treasury and DfT, the appeal of greater fuel income is as potent as ever. Old prejudices die hard whilst 'green' issues wither! PW/CB

Our Railfuture Formal Branch Response to the Media regarding extended phased delivery of EWRL project:

*EWRL.... possible pause in final delivery.
The Cambridge to Oxford Railway Project*

It is suggested by the EastWestRailConsortium (EWRC) of local authorities that phase 2 of the Western Section of the route (Bicester to Milton Keynes) may be "paused" as a result of the enquiry being conducted by Chairman of Network Rail, Sir Peter Hendy. His initial findings and recommendations are to be made public later very soon.

Railfuture fully supports the consortium who are calling on Network Rail and the Department of Transport to complete phase 2 to the original timetable.

This project which enjoys huge public, business and political support for its economic and environmental benefits, can be delivered without the impact on the working railway that has beset many other projects. Phase 1 of the project (from Oxford to Bicester) was completed on time and to budget two weeks ago. The trains are already very busy.

None of this should affect the planning and subsequent building/delivery of the Central Section of EWRL from Bedford to Cambridge. This phase is almost at the stage of identifying a preferred corridor with a final decision expected in January. Railfuture East Anglia Branch

**BRANCH MEETING; CAMBRIDGE ON 5 DECEMBER AT
14.00 HOURS IN ST PAUL'S CHURCH CB2 IJP**

D-Train is now the Renatus Project: more new trains from old? Or just brand new trains?

The recent release by the Department for Transport (DfT) of its Long Term Passenger Rolling Stock Strategy showing the high average age of passenger rolling stock caused quite a frisson with our local media. Various branch officers fielded many interviews from the radio stations and local newspapers.

We pointed out that one of the sustainable attributes of the railway is that its coaching stock is robust and built to last a very long time. Yet with internal refreshes it again can look like new several times during its life. One local example are the 2-car units running from Norwich to Liverpool: not so long ago these were utterly transformed from drab, careworn, very unreliable rolling stock to completely the opposite. Many travellers actually thought these 1989 British Rail productions were brand new. The bright, brash livery helped too!



The newly refurbished Greater Anglia Mark 3 Coaches

A further example are the Mk3 intercity coaches used between Norwich and Liverpool Street, now much improved with their refurbished interior and sleek new livery (when clean!). Even better are the Chiltern Railway version including new plug-in doors. 40th birthdays loom nonetheless for these Anglia coaches, and if still with their slam doors they are an increasing anachronism puzzling many with the 'lean outside to open door' instruction. Operationally too, staff beetling about shutting doors can easily impede prompt departure. The door-windows are another weak point, often remaining open during the journey producing air resistance wasting traction energy, as well as losing heat in wintertime.

So we said it is surely time for these vehicles to make way for up-to-date, energy efficient, attractive rolling stock. East Anglia deserves no less.

The DfT's strategy forecasts the number of passenger vehicles will have to grow by between 53% and 100% over the next 30 years, and with the extension of electrification, calculates that between 13,000 and 19,000 new

EMU vehicles will be required by 2044.

Around 3050 vehicles will be delivered between now and 2019 representing a capital investment of around £5bn.. Initially a good number of those will be for our region on the lines from Peterborough and Cambridge to London and Brighton, when the extended Thameslink services open in 2018.

But what of the remaining rolling stock, what do we need?

Currently largely comprising EMUs such as the Class 321 and 317, both 1980s designs, yet good for a few more years if convincingly refurbished. Or maybe not? Certainly the owners of '321 units, Eversholt, think they have prospects. They were well designed and built by BR and ride well. The interiors though are drab and dated; thus Eversholt has a massive programme, called **Renatus** (latin for rebirth), to upgrade the '321s at Wabtec's state-of-the-art Doncaster workshop.

Each unit will be stripped back to its shell and rebuilt to contemporary appeal, with air conditioning, well planned seating areas and with special focus on effecting rapid loading/unloading at station stops. New disability-friendly, non-track discharge toilets are to be fitted. The latest high efficiency traction motors will be installed, also feeding braking-generated current back into the overhead wires. Altogether an impressive project, using existing resources in a creative, sustainable 21st century way.

As for all ex-BR vehicles remaining in passenger use after 2020, they too must comply with Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2010 (RVAR). These require installation of disabled person accessible toilets and other potentially costly modifications to vehicles already more than 25 years old. *Is this always sensible and what should we expect of those fleets?*

One answer must be new replacement vehicles, and quite a lot of them. Bi-mode is surely one way forward. But what is Bi-mode? Quite simply, an electric train when under the wires, but a diesel when it is not. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all our new trains could do this?

So is the DfT giving us clues in the Anglia Franchise Invitation To Tender (ITT)?

While the ITT calls for few specific new train services, it does mandate that the Norwich to Cambridge service should run through to Stansted Airport and that through trains should operate from Lowestoft to London once more. The trains available today are both insufficient in number and inadequate in facilities to effect such a change.

However, with Bi-mode this means Norwich to Ely North Junction under diesel power, then onwards to Cambridge and Stansted Airport (or Liverpool Street) as an electric train. Likewise Lowestoft to Ipswich as a diesel then electric traction onward to Liverpool Street. I am sure you can think of several other

service groups that could benefit from this new sort of train.

Doesn't Liverpool Street to Cambridge and Ely with the pantograph up then the diesel engine being turned on from Ely North Junction to March and Wisbech sound a good idea? Or even a 'round-robin' service from Liverpool St to Liverpool St via Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket and Cambridge. So will our future be Bi-mode? Only time will tell and the depth of the Ministry purse.

We wrote about the Viva Rail DTrain conversions in the last issue. Now it's Renatus and Bi-mode. It is good to see some real ingenuity being deployed by rail industry to cope with capacity challenges. Lease fees will of course rise to pay for whichever traction package is chosen. So, the Franchise bid teams along with DfT will have some difficult but fascinating decisions to make. PW

Urgently required Franchise Improvements: Ipswich to Peterborough

In the last issue we wrote about the disappointment that the EA franchise ITT document did not specify increased train services, particularly to raise the frequency of the Ipswich to Peterborough service to hourly. This is an increasingly busy service, often full and standing. We have written to all our MPs asking that this service be expanded to hourly, come what may. PW

Cambridge to Peterborough

The Cross Country franchise is also under DfT review for an extension. We have asked that extra late evening services be run from Stansted Airport and Cambridge to March and Peterborough after the current last train at 21.01 hrs from Cambridge, and return, of course. The Sunday morning service needs attention too with too late a start to the service in both directions. PW

December timetable improvements for weekend services

The winter timetable comes into effect on Sunday December 13th. There are few changes other than the good news of weekend improvements for the Cambridge to Stansted Airport service operated by AGA which will now run on Saturdays and Sundays too. It is a shame though that this train will run within 10 minutes of the Cross Country train. The Sunday Clacton to London fast service calls additionally at Hythe every hour. Currently there is no Sunday service at Hythe. PW

Our Secretary, Paul Hollinghurst, also notes promised improvements in December from Royston, as he says: "There has been a significant increase in the number of peak hour trains from Royston to Cambridge since January, just leaving one express passing through at 08:20.

This which had 3 mins of pathing allowance on its way from Kings Cross to Royston, so would be worth keeping an eye on to see if we should pressure

them to go to quarter hourly throughout the peak. Thus it now runs;
From January 2015:

07:42 08:07 08:41 09:07 hrs

From December 2015:

07:41

07:49 introduced in May 2015

08:07

(train passes non-stop at 08:20)

08:41

08:49 introduced in December 2015

09:07

We now just need to get the 08:20 to stop which has 2 mins of pathing at Stevenage. PH

Hereward Community Rail Partnership

<http://www.fenland.gov.uk/herewardcrp/>

This CRP covers the stations at Whittlesea, March and Manea which are served by the three TOCs operating between Ely and Peterborough. It is producing some impressive plans for its three stations that include better car parking and platform lengthening at Manea and Whittlesea. To date however, its most impressive achievement has been the renaissance of Manea station where footfall has increased rapidly since trains have stopped there with predictable regularity throughout the day. Recently I travelled on the service and it was very pleasing to note quite a few people getting off and on the train. PW

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

As a Rail User Group and Community Rail Partnership in the brave new world of Govia Thameslink Railway's management contract with the Dept for Transport, we are discovering that GTR's hands are often very tightly tied when it comes to accessing the small amount of cash necessary to carry out even very minor jobs associated with station improvements. A year ago we were led to believe that new cycle racks would be coming soon – a year on we are no further forward. Reimbursements for plants for station platform tubs are not as straightforward as they once were, despite the volunteer hours underpinning the station gardens. This is concerning if station volunteers and adopters are to feel that they are making a difference. Still, we are lucky to have volunteers who are very generous and community minded and keep going .

Meanwhile as I write we are still waiting for Foxton Level Crossing to receive its new pedestrian gates on both sides of the A10. Traversing the crossing in the busy A-road has created new bad but unavoidable habits in the way people move around at the station. Meanwhile another Network Rail department is

consulting on closing one of the very pedestrian crossings that an expensive new gate is being fitted for, as part of the nation-wide level crossing closure programme. Two departments working at cross-purposes would seem a symptom of a huge and unwieldy organization.

The incidence of railway suicide has prompted us to think about what we can do to make a positive difference. A recent meeting of Mind in Cambridgeshire and Govia Thameslink's suicide prevention officer, prompted new work in our area to support people suffering from mental illness and distress. Great Northern staff deserve the highest praise for their compassion and professionalism.

<http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/national-awards-for-the-meldreth-shepreth-and-foxton-rail-user-group/> SV

THAMESLINK NEWS: Class 700 trains prepare for public service

John Henderson reports there are three of these brand-new trains based at Three Bridges, which were due to start test running on the Brighton Main Line on Monday 9 October. Their first trips to Bedford are expected around the end of November. Initially all running will be in late evening or early morning slots and involve only eight coach sets.

Reports from the opening of the new depot and presentation of the trains were that there is still no evidence of on-board cup holders or wi-fi at the moment. We can but hope.



However they are on schedule for public introduction to Thameslink well into 2016 and to Cambridge/ Peterborough in 2018. JH

Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership. www.wherrylines.org.uk/

Abellio Greater Anglia introduced an hourly Sunday Service from Norwich to Lowestoft for the summer just past. The Branch issued a press release drawing

attention to this excellent improvement which will operate again next year. The Norwich to Yarmouth lines saw a 5% increase in footfall over the Summer period, a testament to the good work of the CRP there as well. PW

ESTA ANNIVERSARY EVENTS: 'The rain in vain falls mainly on the train'

Trevor Garrod writes that some 40 people gathered on Lowestoft station on the morning of Friday November 6th as a freshly cleaned class 156 2-car train drew into platform 4-and then it started to rain. But spirits were not dampened.

Everyone was invited to step *inside* the train to learn it was being named "ESTA 1965-2015" to mark the 50th anniversary of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association, which is probably our region's oldest rail users' association. Two colourful posters inside the train give passengers more information about ESTA, whose founder members campaigned successfully to save the Ipswich-Lowestoft line from closure.

Umbrellas were to hand as everyone then went on to the platform to catch Mr Peter Aldous MP (himself an individual ESTA member) perform the unveiling ceremony, (*L-R; Jonathan Denby AGA, Trevor Garrod ESTA & Peter Aldous*)



A replica of the nameplate was also presented to ESTA's secretary, Rod Lock, in recognition of his 18 years of hard work in that post. Our thanks to David Adams for the excellent photograph.

A week later, on the actual anniversary of the inaugural meeting in Saxmundham, a lunchtime reception was held in the Market Hall to launch a book "ESTA-the first 50 Years" and a small exhibition of photos, maps and documents.

The exhibition is being shown in the library in Beccles (November 16th - 28th), Halesworth (December 7th - 20th), Lowestoft (January 4th - 17th) and Woodbridge (January 18th - 30th). It will then be available for display

elsewhere. For this please contact: www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk/ or trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk and from whom the 32-page illustrated anniversary book can also be purchased, at £4.95 post free (cheques payable to ESTA).

Branch Meeting, Norwich September 25. Ian Brown, Guest Speaker. Report.



Revealing that although he had been scared of steam trains as a toddler, he nonetheless became a 'Signalman's Runner' (shopper!) when he was a boy: just a couple of the many facts Ian let drop in his entertaining talk. Apparently the Quid Pro Quo for this shopping job was that he'd be allowed to stay in the signal box for an hour so whenever he wanted. Which was often!

All this kicked off Ian's determination to work on the railway. This he succeeded in doing, joining as a BR Management Trainee. The future of the passenger railway at Buxton was a very early experience for him and of just how effective good lobbying could be. Its passenger traffic was retained as was one of its two side-by-side stations, and all flourish today. This, he added, against the BR instruction that "his job was to close lines"! He was also told off for suggesting extra rolling stock was needed for (Mansfield) Nottingham-Manchester services.

Also under his scrutiny came the Cambrian Coast route, with an annual cost of £1m against £250,000 income, and on top of this Barmouth Bridge was then discovered to be worm infested. He had to try and sort out this deeply political problem. And that route too is still operating. He believed the recent deep local authority involvement with the Borders Railway scheme is a template for rail right across the network.

He was also privileged to work under the slightly dour and very demanding, Dr John Prideaux, later to be the very successful boss of Intercity and the even more 'successful' Angel Trains leasing company. You may remember him selling his shareholding for £15m.

But Prideaux and colleagues certainly showed Ian how to do things properly, whereas, he said, a period of time ensconced with French national railways (SNCF) indicated the complete opposite. For some time Ian was responsible for managing the Docklands Light Railway which when he joined was poorly managed and conveying only 17million customers each year, with lawyers sadly very much in attendance at management meetings. Not good and an approach which had to change. It has, and with a 110m DLR passengers in 2014. That is some growth, as we all agreed.

He said that too many Train Operating Companies depend on compensation payments generated by Network Rail possessions. He does though believe that London Overground is a pretty good model for all franchises. Network Rail had to control costs and, like so many people, asked, was it fit for purpose?

He also had advice for us in Railfuture: we have to be more outward looking, identifying key issues then focussing on them, and with better communication. Local authorities and Railfuture know what they want and need to tell government who in turn need to get Network Rail to deliver. As for the railway as a whole, it needs to decide what its real remit is and what the future might be. A splendid talk and Q&A session. CB/ND

Meet the Rail User Groups

In this issue it is the turn of John Saunders to give us the low down on the high up priorities of the Peterborough, Ely and Norwich RUG, all 83 miles or so of it!

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users emerged from another group two decades ago, under the leadership of Thelma Paines, at that time a county, district and town councillor for Thetford. For some years, we enjoyed observer status on the former Cambridgeshire Rail Strategy and Norfolk Rail Policy Groups. We now work closely with Fenland's Hereward Community Rail Partnership.

www.penrug.org.uk gives membership details and has a shopping list of aspirations for each of the services we support. Items on these lists flesh out the vision on our home page and form the basis of our responses to consultations.

This is a difficult time for our railways, providing much about which to campaign. Direct Norwich-Cambridge services were launched in 2002 with new trains running reliably to an almost hourly timetable. Today, up to a third of trains are cancelled, many toilets are locked out of use and some of the upholstery is filthy.

The big issue between Birmingham and Stansted Airport is capacity. Railfuture is involved, quite rightly, in counting passengers on peak trains in and out of Birmingham. But there is also over-crowding further east, notably on the 0519 from Birmingham, on which the only way for commuters from March into Cambridge to get a seat is to reserve it in advance. And Rail Executive policy is not to authorise extra diesel units for Direct Award franchises.

The Rail Executive still wants to withdraw the hourly expresses from Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield to Peterborough and Norwich from 2018. Fighting alongside others to keep this popular, successful and (before tax) profitable

service is a key part of our activity.

We salute the hard work of station gardeners and friends groups and we welcome the new group for Whittlesea. But there have in recent times been big problems with facilities at Ely, March or Thetford not being available when specified and we are especially angry that the rail industry provided step-free access to westbound trains at Wymondham for two months this summer to suit its own convenience then demolished the access ramp. JS

A relevant message from afar: Scotland



To be specific, the rebuilt Borders Railway from Edinburgh to Galashiels and Tweedbank. This opened to great fanfare and its first fare-paying passengers under the brilliant sunshine of Sunday 6 September last. Your Editor took the picture at Galashiels on this date.

Remember, the original estimate was 54,000 passengers a month rising to 85,000 in five years. Yet again the figures are substantially better thus far, but with novelty value still very much to the fore.

By the 1st October 125,000 punters had bought tickets. With that divided by 192 services run we get an average loading per service of 82: well within the capacity of the two-car Cl.158 almost exclusively running the service.

But traffic is never that smoothly dealt with as there have been many cases of severe overcrowding, especially 07.53 and 16.28 in each direction, ie; rushour! And the same on Saturdays as families decamp to the train for shopping expeditions.

So nothing new there. At October half-term holiday the DMU shortage bit so deeply that Scotrail employed substitute buses! Meanwhile 400+ miles away, 12 Class 170 ex-Scotrail units languish



in Sussex because their door opening software doesn't match the dmus they're supposed to share services with. It's that national diesel multiple unit shortage again. But let us 'Wisbechers' continue to be encouraged by the overall good

news, as despite Cambridge not being the size of Edinburgh, its relationship with Wisbech is rather similar to Galashiels and its hinterland. So Believe in Wisbech Reopening: as ever!

For the nostalgic, the seasonal steam specials running up to Tweedbank and back were a great commercial success too. As they might also be to Wisbech with nearby March offering a triangle on which to turn the locomotive. But enough from 'foreign parts'. Mea culpa! CB

David Horne of Virgin East Coast, speaking in Cambridge in October

Many will have heard Mr Horne speaking at Newark earlier this year, so I will restrict my report to two topics. First, he said that the Hitachi CI 800/801 (IEP) East Coast Main Line overnight commissioning tests have gone very well but the units had now transferred (mid October) to the Western Region, on schedule. Which is good news.



He also mentioned the desirability of the proposed flyover/flyunder at Werrington, four miles north of Peterborough. When asked would it also be connected to the up slow line from Grantham he said "no"! It was then pointed out that at least 80% of Up Slow Line traffic is heading for East Anglia, and not to cater for it might be construed as somewhat short-sighted.

Even if the DfT in the next EMT franchise transferred the Norwich-Nottingham service from Grantham to via Syston Junction, this wouldn't help a lot as freights are vastly longer, slower beasts. We await developments. CB

BRANCH MEETING ON 5 DECEMBER IN CAMBRIDGE, CB2 1JP



This meeting, taking place at St Paul's Church, Hills Road, starts at 14.00 hrs Our Guest Speaker is Keith Jipps from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) updating us on progress with this complex scheme. Cambridge City Deal is on the Agenda too (see website:

<http://www4.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/citydeal/>) with

Martin Yallop from the Association. of Community Rail Partnerships also talking to us.

So an unusually packed programme and therefore not to be missed. Full details about how to get there are to be found on the accompanying Flyer. Looking forward to seeing you there. CB

LATE NEWS: The Future of Network Rail (The Nicola Shaw Report Preview)

This is a preview by the way, and not the report and recommendations themselves which are to be published early next year. Nevertheless, this makes very informative reading laying out as it does so many of the considerations, facts, figures and examples under scrutiny.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476944/the-future-shape-and-financing-of-network-rail-the-scope.pdf

Just to give a taste of the content I include below two extracts, defining the Network Rail issues, and then citing a Scottish high-cost-effectiveness electrification example.

As noted, since being reclassified to the public sector, the government and Network Rail have worked to develop a framework that combines the freedom for Network Rail to operate as an arm's length commercial entity, while ensuring an appropriate degree of public oversight. However, project delivery and performance issues since reclassification have exposed some of the tensions inherent in Network Rail's new relationship with the government. For example:

- *Borrowing limits have reduced Network Rail's financial flexibility and altered its buffer against financial risk (see Chapter 5);*
- *Network Rail has faced greater scrutiny on financial and operational performance, increased reporting requirements and greater scrutiny on pay;*
- *Network Rail has had to adjust to complex and multifaceted relationships with different government departments and with Parliament; and*
- *there has been greater focus on non-core commercial activities and assets for potential monetisation.*

There are diverse views on these changes and their potential impact. On the one hand, they could take management focus away from the company's core activity, and could affect issues such as recruitment and talent retention. On the other, closer government and parliamentary scrutiny reflects the fact that Network Rail's activities, like those of other public sector organisations, affect the public sector finances and have implications for the government's control of overall public sector expenditure.

And secondly, a précis of how an initial estimate for the Scottish Paisley Canal Line Electrification was substantially reduced.

Following devolution within Network Rail, in the early part of the decade the Network Rail Scotland Route and First ScotRail (the former franchisee in Scotland) formed an alliance to formalise the relationship between the companies.

The alliance was put to the test in delivering the Paisley Canal Line electrification. Early estimates had put the project costs at between £20 to £28m, which was considered too expensive for the project to be viable.

However, there remained a strong rationale for electrifying the line as the improved acceleration of electric trains would help reduce the delays on a line where only 16% of trains were on time. It would also bring benefits for First ScotRail as electric rolling stock is cheaper to run and maintain than diesel. The alliance between Network Rail and ScotRail (alongside the contractor on the project) created a shared focus on reducing costs. In particular, cooperation between the two organisations' engineers rationalised the scope of the project by developing an approach to reduce the number of works required on structures along the route. This was done by challenging existing practice and setting a lower specification for the height of overhead wires on the line which required less reconstruction works (such as track lowering) at stations and bridges along the line.

This did, however, require trade-offs. This approach restricted the ability of freight trains (which are larger) to operate on the line without the power switched off. ScotRail also waived its right to Schedule 4 compensation payments in the event of disruption during the project thereby sharing greater financial risk with Network Rail.

The relationship also led to an enhanced focus on efficient delivery. ScotRail extended possession time to allow engineers greater mid-week access which greatly reduced the construction timetable while Network Rail shortened its own design approval process. Working with Transport Scotland, ScotRail also allowed train passes to be accepted on the Glasgow First Bus network to provide a better transport alternative than the usual rail replacement bus services.

As a result of this close working the electrification scheme was delivered earlier than planned.

I do hope this whets your appetite for the 76 page PDF which may be downloaded, printed, and read at leisure as well as on-line.. It may well generate some discussion at our Cambridge meeting this Saturday. So do be there if at all possible, as our Speakers would love to hear from you too! CB

Recent very late completion of East Anglian track replacement:

And as if we didn't need an 'on-your-doorstep' example of what Nicola Shaw's report is partly addressing, we nonetheless got one in the form of engineering works at Cambridge Coldham's Lane Junction. Here very old late 1930's trackwork was to be replaced in a complete weekend possession starting around 12.30 Saturday 28 November. A big job with many staff and infrastructure trains present over the entire period.

By 5am Monday morning all services to and from Ely were restored, thankfully, but nothing at all to and from Newmarket and Ipswich. The first service permitted to run over the new track was the 15.20 from Ipswich, which departed Newmarket on time at 16.17 but was 27 minutes late into Cambridge. But at least it got there (and returned).

The picture below shows on the right, the Tamper waiting to continue its work as the 10.40 from Norwich heads into Cambridge at 11.56 on Monday 30 November.

Unforeseen problems when uprooting 70+-year infrastructure are probably inevitable, thus creating this twelve hour overrun block of the Newmarket branch. Frustratingly disruptive for rail customers though, as well as for the numerous businesses beyond the crossing. CB



Don't forget, issue 169 deadline for text and pictures is Monday 17th January 2016. It is closer than you think. Also we need nominations for Officers and Committee, if you wish to stand, by that date too, please.

A big "thank you" as ever for all the contributions to this issue and indeed, throughout the past year. Your editor would be despairing without them. Relevant photos, diagrams, maps, et al are all vital parts of the newsletter, so do send them. If something needs to be scanned I can do this, but first contact me. CB

**Meanwhile from all the Committee a very
Happy Christmas and New Year!!!**

Railfuture

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**Branch Meeting:
Saturday 5 December**

St Paul's Church,, Hills Rd
CAMBRIDGE, CB2 1JP

GUEST SPEAKER: Keith Jipps
from Govia Thameslink;

'City Deal', Abellio and other
topical issues will also be up
for discussion.

AGM 2016

*Saturday 27 February
Friends Meeting House, Bury
St Edmunds. IP33 1SJ
Starting at 14.00. hrs.
Guest Speaker: TBA*

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