

# raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

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## THIS ISSUE LOOKS AT EAST ANGLIA'S STATIONS AND THEIR FACILITIES

ONLINE VERSION  
TWO EXTRA PAGES  
"KING'S UNCROSSED"

## STATIONS SUITABLE FOR CURRENT USERS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS?

### Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- Railfuture says work together for a better railway for all
- Putting passengers first
- Making stations accessible
- Inspiring tomorrow's travellers
- Community Rail Partnerships
- Rebuilding Sheringham station
- Speeding up rural line services
- Timetable changes Mark 2
- Hunstanton reopening campaign



# WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER RAILWAY FOR ALL

## BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

In this issue we are focusing heavily on stations and their facilities, topics that matter so much to passengers, and may determine whether someone makes their journey by train.

The railways in East Anglia benefit from having not just active rail user groups, but a growing number of Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs). Members who attended our Branch AGM in February 2019 would have heard about some of the work that has been happening on the East Suffolk Line and the North Norfolk Line. To give an example, probably in June 2019, the former Parcels Office at Lowestoft station will be re-opened as a community arts space. On the other side of the region, the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton CRP has achieved many good things, as you can read about on page 8. Although CRPs are normally associated with rural routes, perhaps all lines should have them. At my local station, Huntingdon, which does not have a rail user group, the train operator recently put up signs asking for volunteers to help create a garden at the station. So there is great potential to bring the train operators, local authorities and rail users together to help improve the rail experience for passengers.



A big thank you to everyone who contributed to our "easy stations" survey mentioned in the February 2019 issue of RAIL EAST (see form, right). Eighty-five of the 110 stations in our area were covered and we have formed a team to review the results. Please come to our Ipswich meeting on 15 June 2019 to hear the results. Cambridge North, as a brand new station, ought to be a winner. But is it, or have our eagle-eyed reviewers spotted something not quite right?

It would be a fair guess to say that the vast majority of our easy station surveys were carried out by men. There have been a number of articles in the railway press recently that suggest this is a big problem and that transport in general and railways in particular are very male-dominated topics. The articles point out that the journeys women make are often for different purposes and to different destinations from those by men. When it comes to accessing their local railway station, women are less likely to drive and have different concerns regarding safety and security. As an organisation, Railfuture is aware that we need to get more women involved in our campaigns and your ideas on how we might achieve this will be welcome.

**railfuture** Campaigning for better services over a bigger railway

### "Easy Stations" survey checklist – East Anglia

Railfuture's national campaign to put passengers first, where every journey matters, is looking at what makes a station easy to use and is asking both its members and the public to provide feedback on the station they use most often. Railfuture will assess where stations are "easy" to use based on feedback from this checklist.

Station name	
Date of survey	

Please tick the "Y", "N" or "?" (don't know) column and add brief comments in box 30

Getting to the station		Y	N	?
1	Step free access			
2	Signage from town/village centre			
3	Parking within reasonable distance			
4	Bus stops within reasonable distance			
5	Cycle racks/stands			
6	Good local onward journey information			

Station and platform		Y	N	?
7	All-weather access to trains from entrance			
8	Platform depth to allow 2 persons of reduced mobility to pass			
9	Tactile paving			
10	Even surface			
11	Passenger information screen(s) functioning			
12	Screens showing more than simply train time and destination			
13	Help point(s)			
14	CCTV			
15	Ticket vending machine with legible screen (e.g. with sunshade)			
16	Good clear signage			
17	Seating on each platform with some under cover			
18	Free Wi-Fi			

### Brandon station building faces demolition

Greater Anglia (GA) has applied for planning permission to demolish the station building at Brandon Station. The building (photo right, by Nick Dibben) has been boarded up for several years and GA says it is not practical to restore the building, which is in a poor state of repair. Railfuture East Anglia is not objecting to the proposal, but has asked GA to confirm what is being put back in its place. The station, like many in our region, has step free access to each



platform but not between the two platforms. At present there is only one ticket machine on the Ely-bound platform, meaning that passengers with mobility problems being dropped off at the Norwich-bound platform are not able to purchase a ticket as they cannot cross via the footbridge. Of course, this assumes that any potential passengers know how to get to the Norwich platform, as signage from the road is poor! The demolition of the old building provides a great opportunity to use the space to provide better facilities for passengers. Hopefully we can report some good news in a future issue of RAIL EAST. And on that more positive note, we report in this issue on the news concerning funding to restore at long last the redundant stationmaster's house at Bury St Edmunds (see page 7).

### **Station Car Park Changes**

Railfuture is aware that GA substantially increased some charges in January 2019 – at Cambridge the Saturday/Sunday price increased from £5 to £12.50 (still competitive with other car parks in the city) – although we have not formally complained.

Train operators are also changing the way they operate their station car parks, with some of them now employing automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology to ensure that passengers pay to use the facilities. Drivers are warned that this system is in place (sign, right, at Diss station, photographed by Nick Dibben). However, there is one group of people that has suffered from the new system – those simply picking up passengers at the station. At stations, the rules linked to ANPR may not be obvious, so people waiting for some time (i.e. not exiting within 10-15 minutes of arriving) may face a penalty charge for not having bought a parking ticket. This is especially true if trains are delayed and passengers face a double annoyance of a late train and an expensive parking charge! Not the best way to encourage people to travel by train.

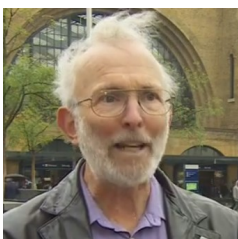
Clear signage is needed, fixed so drivers can see it on arrival at the station, and displaying the time allowed for waiting without paying a fee. Huntingdon station (photo right) allows 20 minutes free parking, but as there is no national standard (other than the statutory right for a driver to read the terms and conditions and decide not to accept them and leave), drivers must check at every station they visit.

Train operators also need to work with their car park providers to allow additional time if the train service is disrupted.

Please let us know if you have been affected by this or see reports in local media and we will take this up with the train operators.



## **RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 15 JUNE AT 14:00** **St Mary's at Stoke Church Hall, Stoke Street, IPSWICH IP2 8DA**



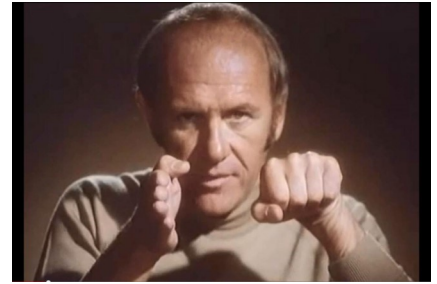
I hope you will be able to attend our Ipswich meeting, at which my colleague, Roger Blake (left), from Railfuture's London and South East branch, will talk about how housing demand in Essex and growth at Stansted Airport will require improved rail services.

The guest speaker at our Norwich meeting on 28 September 2019 will be Network Rail's 'Mr Signalling' for 'greater south east England', Programme Director Huw Edwards BEng CEng MICE RPP.

# RAILFUTURE ASKS NETWORK RAIL TO 'THINK PASSENGER'

BY JERRY ALDERSON

In the 1970s public service announcements asked car drivers to 'think once, think twice, think bike'. Railfuture is asking Network Rail to 'think passenger' and it seems that the message is being heard. We hope it will be acted upon as well.



1970s public information film – do passengers face an uncompromising immovable Network Rail?

On 19 March 2019 Railfuture was one of the organisations invited to speak at the large Accelerate Rail 2019 event in London. In the afternoon I was on a panel, chaired by Transport Focus Chief Executive Anthony Smith, about the 'Passenger Experience' with Greater Anglia, LNER and West Midlands Trains. It was a great opportunity to consider how the railway needs to evolve so that more people can and will travel by rail more often. Fares and ticketing along with accessibility will be key factors in achieving this. A critical point, which no other speaker made all day, was the need to plan changes properly and do thorough testing before going live. Train drivers needing to trick the train's computer into performing an 'emergency evacuation' – passengers waiting 30 seconds to alight – because the train was not aware that it was at a brand-new station, must not be repeated.

The conference was opened by Network Rail's Chief Executive, Andrew Haines, who took over in autumn 2018. He had talked about putting passengers first – specifically saying that if passengers were in the room when decisions were being made then different decisions would be made. In my question to him I suggested that the railway industry currently put passengers last, citing how recently opened and re-built stations were designed around everything but the passenger.

Rail operations came first as they surely had to for safety reasons. He accepted that the money often ran out and passenger facilities were cut to the bone. A good East Anglian example is how almost all the £50m cost of Cambridge North was spent on track, points, signals, wires and platforms, leaving virtually nothing specifically for passengers (e.g. ridiculously short canopies).

Minimising operating costs seemed to come next. For example, Northampton's new £20m station building forces passengers at ground level to climb up stairs (or use a lift) to pass through a single set of (sometimes staffed) barriers and then go down the stairs (or lift) solely to minimise staffing costs. In the old station building half of the platforms were accessible at ground level.

Staff welfare was also a legal obligation. At Tweedbank, the terminus of the reopened Borders Railway, a staff depot was built with toilets but nothing for passengers, although these have since been added, after much criticism.

Somewhat cheekily, since the next speaker was Keith Williams, who is the independent chair of the government's Railway Review and Deputy Chairman of a well-known long-established and respected department store, I commented that customers entering John Lewis would never feel that they are the least important people, but that situation was very obvious to many passengers at stations.

Mr Haines felt that most passengers would not feel 'least important', but recent surveys show that the railway has lost the trust of passengers, so plenty needs to change. He has a railway operations background — the first Network Rail Chief Executive to do so. Widely respected in the rail industry, he is saying the right things and making necessary changes but, crucially, can he take the many thousands of colleagues on the journey with him?



# CHILDREN LEARN HOW STATION LEVEL CROSSINGS WORK

BY PETER FEENEY

## COVER STORY

The photo on the cover shows safety-conscious primary school children wrapped in Hi-Vis jackets on a visit to Foxton station. The children, who are Junior Travel Ambassadors for their school in Meldreth, travelled with their two teachers and Sarah Grove, the Project Officer of the Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton Community Rail Partnership (MSFCRP) standing behind the children in the photo. Sarah had organised the trip with train operator Great Northern, who provided the free rail journey to and from Meldreth, and Network Rail, whose signalling staff showed them how the signals and crossing barriers work together to keep everybody safe when a train passes.

Inside the signal box, the crossing operator showed the visitors how the barriers are operated at Foxton and, using CCTV, Shepreth. The children were fascinated by the technology, especially the screens that show where the trains are on the local network. Under supervision, the children were allowed to operate the barriers for the passing trains. These included local stopping trains, fast trains to Cambridge and London, a Thameslink train all the way from Brighton, and a quarry train that reversed into the branch line towards the Barrington Quarry. The photo on the right is on the Barrington branch, though operated by the train crew rather than the crossing operator in the signal box.



After asking many questions, and each receiving a Network Rail goody bag, the visitors caught a train back to Meldreth, just in time for school dinner.

This is one of a mind-boggling number of activities and initiatives undertaken through the MSFCRP, about which Susan van de Ven writes later in this issue. Sarah Grove comments that "Rail safety is particularly important in our local area. The line runs very close to all of our local primary schools, and is busy with fast trains to and from London and Brighton, as well as our local stopping trains. I feel our sessions at the signal box make a big impression on the children. I was able to attend the assembly given by the Junior Travel Ambassadors to the whole of Meldreth Primary School after the visit and was impressed by how much information they had gathered and understood about how dangerous the railway can be, but also how the level crossing can keep pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and train travellers safe."

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## OUR STATION ACCESSIBILITY... A POOR STATE OF AFFAIRS

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

### Excluded

As regular readers will know, Railfuture has conducted a survey of all our stations to find out exactly how accessible and user friendly they are. I have visited a few on that mission, examining facilities at six stations, all on busy double tracked main lines. The experience was eye-opening, bringing home to me just how difficult 'access for all' to parts of many stations has become. Access for **every one of us** is now well-nigh impossible – whether it be a mother or dad with a child or children and buggy, a person with luggage or with a cycle, any traveller with a minor mobility problem of any kind and of course especially if we have a severe mobility problem. Huge numbers of us are excluded from using the railway.

### Back in the day...eyes everywhere

When I was young none of the above groups faced a particular problem. Each train had a guard. Each station was staffed with a stationmaster, clerks, porters, a signal box with "signalmen", who (in this area) generally controlled a level crossing guarded by massive gates. These were swung across the road when a

train approached and were interlocked with the signals. The pedestrians crossed the railway under the supervision of the signaller or crossing keeper through wicket gates that were locked as the train approached. If you wanted to cross between platforms you did so by the gates on a barrow crossing...eyes everywhere from beginning of service to end. I even remember the puff of smoke and steam in the distance giving fair warning of an approaching train. Help was everywhere. Even the position of the gates was a pretty good indication of whether a train was approaching or not. Access generally proved straightforward and trouble-free.

### **Retrenchment and the user the last thought**

Gradually over the years, all this has changed. Stations have been unstaffed or staffed for just the early shift with only a booking clerk available for part of the day. Trains are often driver-only or if a conductor is on board, his/her presence on the station is fleeting. Barrow crossings have gone. Signal boxes have gone. Signalling is run by computers. All safe, very efficient. Result? No eyes. The industry has always been in a position of financial pressure to de-staff, which it has done successfully but without being able to stand back and think about the real stakeholder, the user. The user always the last thought.

### **Tough...you are excluded**

Whatever age you are, if you can walk and you are unencumbered, all is fine. But if you are not, tough. You have been thought out of the plan. The only positive action that has been taken is to close access down where it is dangerous. It is dangerous to cross the barrow crossing unsupervised on the unprecedentedly busy railway. But what has been provided instead? Look at this photo of Great Chesterford, right.

Think how awkward this is. It is completely unstaffed, with only one access point for its community, just beyond the "help point". Access to the opposite platform is only by the footbridge. A huge percentage of the population is excluded...but the train operator (TOC) is excluded from the revenue too! So many of our stations are similar. Even where the platforms are staggered each side of a level crossing, the frequency of trains will mean the barriers protecting the level crossing are across the road so often that planning to catch a train from the opposite platform is a lottery. Another form of exclusion.



Photo by Peter Wakefield

### **Stowmarket, Biggleswade**

It is so disappointing that progress in providing access for all is so slow...in the recent round of Access for All funding provided nationally by the Department for Transport (DfT) to install lifts at deserving stations, Railfuture East Anglia gave support to the TOCs in their applications for six stations in the eastern region: Marks Tey, Stowmarket, Diss, Whittlesford Parkway, Meldreth and Biggleswade. Only Biggleswade and Stowmarket were successful, which of course is brilliant – but those four other stations on the list are still urgently in need of lifts. And we know, of course, there are other stations, such as Needham Market and Wymondham, that are very much in the difficult to fix area too but absolutely do need fixing, probably by various organisations being more pragmatic than they are currently.

### **Lifts essential for connectivity and social inclusion**

Busy stations such as Arlesey, Newport, Ashwell & Morden and Great Chesterford too will have to have lifts to make them accessible to all. Indeed Great Chesterford station will be close to the proposed new town that Uttlesford District Council has promoted in its local plan. Maybe the early redevelopment of the station to enable it to work for everyone should be a part of the plan to help make the settlement sustainable. Doubtful.



# UNFINISHED BUSINESS – FUNDING ASSURES FURTHER RESTORATION AT BURY ST EDMUNDS STATION

BY PETER FEENEY

With the disappointing news, mentioned by Nick Dibben on page 2, that Brandon's station building is almost certain to be demolished, it is good to report the opposite situation at one of East Anglia's magnificent stations, Bury St Edmunds.

Agreement between Greater Anglia and the Railway Heritage Trust now guarantees funding of around £600,000 for restoration of the stationmaster's house, which is joined to the main station building and is 'part of the gateway to the town'. It has been in a state of disrepair and dilapidation for a number of years. The work will fix the roof, repair fractured brickwork and replace all windows and doors. It is then hoped that a new tenant will be found to give a new lease of life to the Grade II listed building, which was previously The Great Eastern bar between 1993 and 1995 and has been empty since then. Whilst other aspects of the station benefited from a major face lift in 2016 costing around £1 million, the house was not included in that scheme.



Photo taken from Greater Anglia website.  
It has been used in several articles (e.g.  
the Bury Free Press on 8 May 2019)

Railfuture's view is that the refurbishment is both welcome and overdue. The station is a significant element in the town's rich architectural heritage, dating from 1847 to a design by the architect Sancton Wood, also associated with work at Cambridge and Ipswich. It would be even better if developments could achieve two further ambitions on behalf of current and future railway users – first, taking the opportunity of this work to explore the potential for a waiting room on the Cambridge platform (is it right for a station with an annual footfall of over 650,000 users to have a single waiting room, requiring Cambridge and Peterborough bound travellers to get to and from the Ipswich platform facility?); and second, looking again at the wholly inadequate signposting in place – and lack of any pedestrian crossings – to get people from the station to the town centre.

# COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

BY SUSAN VAN DE VEN

With three small stations in close proximity, where families and friendships form a natural community, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton CRP territory is ideally configured for community development around themes of public transport, active travel and sustainability. Within easy reach of work and schools in Cambridge, and with good connections to London and points south, rail offers both localised transport and travel to work options. And as road congestion and environmental concerns increase, the question has to be, why are you not trying the train? Here lie many challenges of detail around accessing trains and stations in the first place, and a CRP can help to bring solutions. The CRP's job is to bring about culture change.

The arrival of a paid Project Officer post, funded by the community and the TOC and hosted by South Cambridgeshire District Council, has brought the CRP to a higher standard. Communication platforms have had a make-over and a programme of engagement with primary schools has taken off. Independence, confidence and good public transport citizenship is the goal; visits to signal boxes with a bird's eye view of intricate engineering webs foster a sense of awe for what rail is all about. Coupled with the fun of getting there by train, including energising lungfuls of fresh air on foot to the station, rail transport becomes something altogether more interesting than a boring, confined car journey (and one usually stuck in the back seat). Added to the 16-18 year-old 50% student discount that the rail user group negotiated nearly ten years ago, which has seen a modal shift for sixth-formers that it has tracked with First Capital Connect and GTR, a transport culture change can be seen.

Partnering a CRP with local authorities brings many opportunities for collaboration. The Junior Travel Ambassador (JTA) scheme that many local authorities host is one example. In Cambridgeshire, JTA funding comes from the Public Health budget, and the CRP has provided a natural outlet for JTAs to venture beyond walk/cycle/scooter to school initiatives – bringing valuable insights back to the council, as well.

More than once, the primary school JTAs and their older peers at secondary school have been adventurous enough to attend Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board meetings, sitting in formal grown-up settings and asking challenging and effective three-minute questions about travel other than by car.

The CRP grew out of an active rail user group that had ventured into community development. Having discovered that grant funding could be obtained – but needing better governance for managing money – a new community interest company has been established to govern its modest finances. The first grant funding helped set up a primary school gardening project to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It paid for a family support worker, while the horticultural expertise was provided voluntarily by our rail user group secretary. Four years later, the RUG secretary continues to run a thriving gardening club at the same school.



*The author, left back row, with Meldreth Primary School Junior Travel Ambassadors attending Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board meeting, where the JTAs argued for a cycle link connecting Meldreth/Melbourn and Royston – something GTR is supporting via a DfT Cycle Rail bid. The link would enable Meldreth station users to cycle to Royston to access fast services to London.*



Meanwhile, our rail user group's focus on daily train services means tending the nuts and bolts. Anticipation of the Thameslink franchise forced ambitious forward thinking, and the new TOC agreed to introduce a half-hourly off-peak service – not a DfT requirement. Rolling out in May 2018, this new standard was a bright light in an otherwise difficult time for rail users. Confidence is building back after the last year's timetable meltdown and the new half-hourlies can now come into their own.

There is constant overlap between RUG and CRP: our business community has become a strong player on both fronts, attending RUG meetings and challenging the TOC when employees can't get to work on time, but offering much constructive support as well – from match-funding station accessibility improvement projects (as Melbourn Science Park has done), to hosting all manner of CRP meetings and get-togethers – sometimes in the shade of a tiger's den at Shepreth Wildlife Park, or with tea and cake, or cider and chips to follow, depending on which venue has once welcomed us. This summer, the Shepreth Plough pub will partner with the CRP on a Sustainability Fortnight – including a "Get to the pub by train, bike or on foot – just don't bring your car!" Melbourn Science Park employees will undoubtedly take up the challenge.

The directly measurable benefits of the CRP umbrella are plain: half-hourly trains and 50% student discounts make a material difference to the daily lives of regular train travellers. Culture change is happening in myriad ways and can best be measured by collaboration on many fronts and with many partners, and always characterised by a sense of moving forward.

*With thanks to all volunteers and CRP partners.*

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## RAILFUTURE'S "EASY STATIONS" PROJECT

Many Railfuture members and its affiliated groups visited stations in East Anglia between February and April 2019 as part of Railfuture East Anglia's evaluation of the state of the 110 stations in its area. A total of 105 completed forms were received.

People commented on the user-friendly aspects (such as step-free access and real-time information), but also on more challenging features such as the lack of covered seating or waiting rooms locked out of use. It was not a primary aim to judge station gardens or history boards, but where these make the station a more welcoming place to wait for a train, then they also have relevance.

The checklist responses have been analysed by a small panel of members and the three winning stations will be announced at our summer meeting in Ipswich on 15 June. It is then intended to place a plaque on each winning station (funded from the Clara Zilahi legacy) and publish a report in September 2019, funded by Railfuture.

A good response (summarised below) was received from Ian Couzens about **Cromer station**, which is relevant to the article on the next page.

### Getting to the station

Step free access, signage from town/village centre, car parking within reasonable distance (though small with other parking nearby). Bus stops are a few minutes' walk away. There are cycle racks/stands and good local onward journey information.

### Station and platform

Platform depth to allow two persons of reduced mobility to pass, has an even surface, passenger information screen(s), which were functioning on the day of the visit, help point(s), CCTV, ticket vending machine with legible screen (e.g. with sunshade), good clear signage and seating on each platform with some under cover. It also has community notice board or rail users' group board and floral displays. However, it lacks all-weather access to trains from entrance and tactile paving. It currently lacks free Wi-Fi, but Greater Anglia will be addressing that. As an unstaffed station it lacks toilets and refreshments but it is right next to a supermarket.



## SHERINGHAM STATION

### REBUILT FOR MODERN TRAINS

BY JERRY ALDERSON

We're getting new trains. Have you heard? Apparently it's a new law that every Greater Anglia (GA) press release must mention them, whatever the story.

GA's new trains on its rural routes will be longer, a mix of three- and four-car units, carrying more passengers, and reducing (eliminating on some routes) overcrowding. That's welcome news, indeed. But can the stations cope?

In December 2016 GA's MD, Jamie Burles, told Railfuture East Anglia's meeting in Cambridge that platforms at up to 20 stations would need to be lengthened. By June 2019, with the new Class 755 bi-mode trains about to enter service, there's been little evidence of platform lengthening.

Selective Door Operation (SDO) prevents doors being opened beyond the platform end but it means passengers can only use some of the doors on the train – and the new trains will have only one set per carriage, not two, causing congestion. Those alighting will have to make their way down the train. Dwell times increase as people boarding have to wait. Moreover, the platform can become quite crowded, and potentially dangerous. Fortunately, legislation can come to the rescue, so "let them wait" (not quite as insensitive as "let them eat cake") doesn't always rule the day.

At Sheringham station, the minimalist platform built by BR in 1967 (when the line's future was not looking good) was narrow and didn't meet today's safety standards. There was insufficient space for people to pass a wheelchair user, for example, especially when partially blocked by seating. The answer has been a total rebuild (doubling its length from 40 to 80 metres) with tactile paving and improved lighting. There is a shallow two-stage ramp to the platform, which will improve accessibility. As the line is on an embankment, quite a bit of piling work was done in order to support the newly installed plinths. The total cost was £1m, and GA, which is managing and funding the work, is quite proud that the project will have taken just three months from design to completion (even allowing for a two-week overrun), telling





Railfuture that it “is a really good example of speed in decision making and collaboration between all rail partners”. These before (left) and after (right) photos (from Jerry Alderson and Andy Couzens respectively) show what a much improved passenger experience it will bring, although not all of the work is complete, with additional shelters, seating, fencing and handrails outstanding.

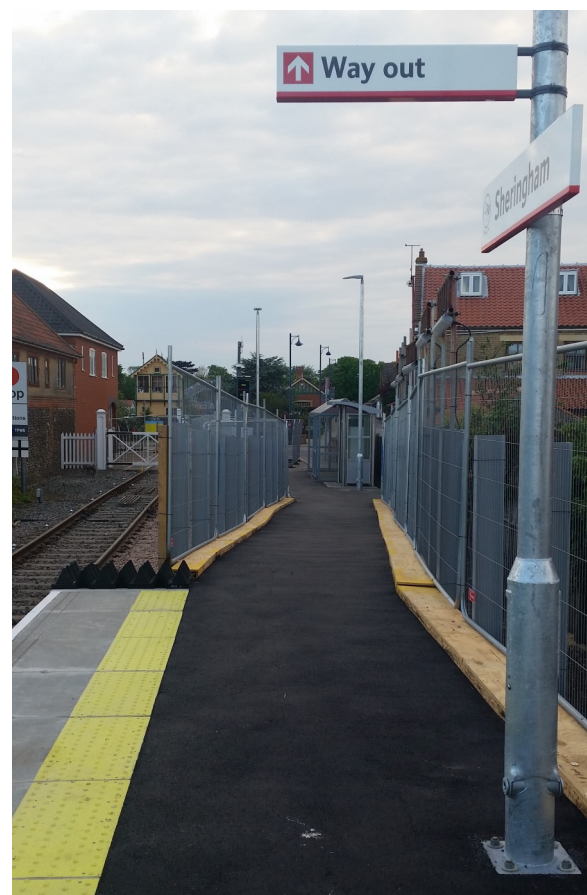
The platform rebuild led to Sheringham station being completely closed from Sunday 31 March to Tuesday 21 May inclusive – sadly erecting a temporary platform, something not uncommon in BR days, was not considered – and it was decided to totally suspend the train service between Cromer and Sheringham, meaning that West Runton station closed as well. Railfuture is often critical of the railway for deciding to ‘bustitute’ over unnecessarily long distances, rather than operate trains as far as possible. The line from Cromer is, in effect, a long siding and turning the train round at West Runton would have been achievable.

On this occasion, full-length bustitution made sense. The number of passengers starting/ending at West Runton is small: 25,000 a year, averaging fewer than 80 a day, maybe five per train. The roads in April are not congested and there would have been no time saving for passengers going to Sheringham.

Even so, Railfuture asked train drivers and conductors on the service why the service would not be operating beyond Cromer. They hadn’t been briefed on what to tell passengers (a lesson to be learned, we suggest) so we asked GA management. They said “the local teams, together with Abellio Rail replacement spent many hours evaluating all the options available and the agreed approach using Cromer was by far the best option, minimising the impact for customers. West Runton was wholly unsuitable for interchange. It is a rural station. Facilities are very minimal and the requisite area for bus turning not available with no off-road waiting areas. There is no ease of transfer or availability of shelter at that location.”



When completed, the station will be a better gateway to the seaside resort. However, some things do not change, so the full benefits of the 100mph trains will not be realised (see page 12).



# MORE SEATS, BUT AN UNCHANGED INFRASTRUCTURE?

## BY ROD LOCK

*With Greater Anglia's new bi-mode trains entering passenger service in 2019, East Suffolk Travellers' Association (ESTA) member Rod Lock has provided these personal thoughts, as a stimulus to further debate about how our campaigning for a better railway should go. Comments from RAIL EAST readers will be welcome.*

Of the ten secondary routes in East Anglia, only one does not contain single track. Greater Anglia's new bi-mode trains will provide a 25% increase in seating, but single track limitations will prevent any increase in frequency on most routes. Let's look at each in turn.

**LOWESTOFT - NORWICH:** Semaphore signalling could have accommodated a half-hourly service, as will the ongoing resignalling scheme, at £1 million per track mile and counting.

**GREAT YARMOUTH - NORWICH VIA ACLE:** Unless the running time between Brundall and Yarmouth can be reduced by at least five minutes, the existing infrastructure could not accommodate a half-hourly service. Extension of the almost 200-metre-long Acle passing loop would otherwise have to be undertaken, probably requiring land-take.



Lowestoft station buffer stops — photo from presentation by Martin Halliday to Railfuture

**GREAT YARMOUTH - NORWICH VIA REEDHAM:** This provides the ability to run an hourly service to/from Norwich, giving an overall half-hourly service between Norwich and Yarmouth. However, the Acle route is most in need of relief, facing strong bus competition from the parallel A47 – a town centre to city centre service. This would result in three trains per hour westwards from Reedham.

**NORWICH - SHERINGHAM:** North Walsham to Sheringham (1967-2019 platform pictured right, from Martin Halliday's talk at the 2019 AGM) is 69% single track. Cromer's two platforms, at the extremity of the single line, cannot accommodate a half-hourly service. Resignalling in 2000, mainly for North Walsham's condensate trains, provided a turn-back signal at North Walsham for passenger trains, enabling a half-hourly service there to/from Norwich. This would result in seven trains per hour between Whitlingham Junction (where the line branches off) and Norwich, extending multi-platform occupancy at Norwich, using the existing calling-on signalling.



**NORWICH - STANSTED AIRPORT:** The 2012 modular resignalling scheme between Norwich and Ely, basically replacing semaphore signals by colour light signalling, and outstanding level crossings previously controlled by signallers, can accommodate a Stansted Airport service. A platform occupancy study may be needed later, when East West Rail services are introduced. Wisbech and Ipswich services could use the north-facing bay platforms at Cambridge. Network Rail has announced that replacement of Trowse swing bridge (close to Norwich) is no longer a priority. The limiting factor on future expansion will be the mile-long tunnel leading to Stansted Airport station.

**IPSWICH - CAMBRIDGE:** At present there is a 16-mile long single line between



Chippenham Junction (where the Newmarket and Ely lines meet) and Coldham's Lane Junction (north of Cambridge station), with a mile-long dynamic loop in the middle at Dullingham station. Significant extension of the loop towards Cambridge, possibly embracing the reopening of Fulbourn, would be necessary to permit a half-hourly service. (There is further discussion of this route and its challenges in articles by Peter Wakefield – below – and Peter Feeney – page 15 – in this issue.)

**IPSWICH - PETERBOROUGH:** Doubling of the line between Soham and Ely Dock Junction (just south of the station) has not yet been authorised (the bi-directional passing loop on that section at Barway Siding was abolished in August 1967). Freight traffic predominates now (and more so in the future), with any expansion of intermodal traffic diverted to this route. Any quadrupling north of Ely station is likely to be resisted on environmental grounds and, in any case, would not be practicable.

**SUDBURY - MARKS TEY:** The introduction of a half-hourly service would require the reinstatement of the passing loop at Bures. Extension of the service to Colchester Town (for the town centre) may be prevented by the line occupation between Marks Tey and Colchester (seven trains per hour).

**LOWESTOFT - IPSWICH:** Waiting for EDF (Sizewell nuclear power station's owner) to finance re-doubling for construction traffic associated with Sizewell C creates additional uncertainties. ESTA's preference is for a jointly-funded EDF/Network Rail Saxmundham - Woodbridge doubling to join up with the existing double-track section to Ipswich.

A final thought about line speeds and signalling on these routes. Only GA's Turbostar trains were capable of 100mph running, but its entire new Stadler Class 755 bi-mode fleet (photo right from Wikipedia of a train on test) will be. How compatible is their braking capability with braking and sighting distances?



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## NETWORK RAIL: CAMBRIDGESHIRE CORRIDOR STUDY RAILWAY INVESTMENT CHOICES

### PETER WAKEFIELD IS NOT IMPRESSED

Network Rail (NR) says that the Cambridgeshire Corridor Study forms part of (its) 'Continuous Modular Strategic Planning' (!) (CMSP). Using 2020 as the baseline (following significant timetable changes and proposed infrastructure changes in and around Cambridge), the study assesses a number of strategic questions, the answers/outputs to which will help determine the required infrastructure at Cambridge station, the line between Cambridge and Chippenham Junction (via Newmarket) for the next 15 and 25 years, and stabling requirements to support these. It says the need for this Corridor Study follows on from the publication of the Anglia Route Study in March 2016, with a workshop taking place with train and freight operators and the Department for Transport in July 2017.

The following factors were identified as to why this study was a priority for CMSP:

- the amount of developing projects and commitments
- increased rail usage
- housing and employment growth in and around Cambridgeshire.

Besides those organisations mentioned above, Railfuture East Anglia had two productive meetings with the original team but sadly, as so often happens with NR, the original people involved moved on and no more contact was made. **A link to the report is here.** <https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Cambridgeshire-Corridor-Study-2019.pdf>. The report was quietly published in

February 2019 so only “discovered” more recently. As a participant, Railfuture East Anglia was originally told it would have sight of it before publication. It is funded by the Department for Transport (DfT), Cambridgeshire County Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership. We have to say at this point, these organisations might want to question the value of the money they have spent on this muddled report, its evidence and its conclusions.

One example of the muddle starts with the report correctly stating “East West Rail is a major project, connecting East Anglia, the South Midlands, and South West England with the Western Section Opening in 2024” with the Central Section to Cambridge “sometime in the mid-2020s”. (Work, it says, on the Eastern Section from Cambridge to Norwich and Ipswich is yet to be commissioned – even though we know that the East West Rail Consortium has started work on the Eastern Section.) Having stated these dates, the authors say “the study has identified additional infrastructure to support the Government endorsed growth. These options include two additional platforms (and associated switches, crossings and additional track) at Cambridge by 2033, and from 2043 doubling of the Newmarket single line for approximately 3.5 miles from Coldhams Lane Junction towards Newmarket. Enhancements may be required earlier should growth be higher than forecast.”

### **Timeline**

Let us run this through again...reminding ourselves that the current year is 2019; East West Rail Bedford—Cambridge opens “sometime in the mid-2020s”; two additional platforms, etc. are needed by 2033 and an infinitesimal amount of enhancement on the Newmarket Branch by 2043. Why is NR writing in these ridiculous time scales? 25 years from now, for heaven’s sake! And on page 20 it tells us that “timetable analysis has shown there to be no capacity for any additional through services at Cambridge station after 2020.” Elsewhere we are told that a freight path each hour as well as six passenger paths an hour will be required onto and off East West Rail with up to four each way continuing on to Newmarket and Ipswich and one train an hour on to Norwich via Ely.

### **Inaccuracies**

There are inaccuracies, too. One crucial mistake is about the number of 12-car platforms at Cambridge. The report says there are four (all through platforms) but in fact only platforms 1, 7 and 8 can accommodate 12 cars (Network Rail has investigated extending platform 4). Of these, one is blocked for 40 minutes in every hour by Brighton services turning round. No comment is made about the deficiencies in the planning of the sub-optimal track layout of the recently opened Cambridge North station, which surely must be urgently altered to take more terminating trains coming to Cambridge from the south off both the Royston and Audley End lines.

### **What is needed is needed now – not in 25 years’ time**

The railway towards Newmarket and Chippenham Junction had perceived redundancy stripped out when singled in the 1980s with only a mile-long passing loop at Dullingham. Any future timetable just will not work without a full restoration of double track all the way to Newmarket (not just a short section). However, what is needed NOW is a service level that begins to match that at Ely. Planning must start to run several services an hour via Newmarket. A timetable expert has told us “that there has been no attempt to assess current demand; assess current supply; assess whether the current supply is sufficient to meet current demand; if not, what short term measures can be taken so it does (and there has been no attempt to) develop options that will enable a suitable train service to meet future demand.”

### **Railway Plans Lack Ambition**

A recent column in the Cambridge Independent newspaper by local transport



expert, Edward Leigh, is headlined "Railway Plans Lack Ambition". He writes that "what's missing is simply any grasp of the scale of change needed to radically reduce the environmental damage of road transport. Rail is one of the least carbon-intensive and least polluting forms of transport, so we should be aiming for a huge and rapid shift to rail. Assertions in the report like this beggar belief – 'No additional services are required for the high peak-hour between Cambridge and Ipswich to meet 2033 demand'. Newmarket has a similar population to Ely but only 16% of passenger numbers through its railway station. A faster, more frequent service from Bury St Edmunds, ideally through to Cambridge South, would see demand rocket." The column concludes with "where's the vision, where's the ambition?"

### **The purpose of the railway**

Good questions for NR to ask of itself. Just what does NR think the railway is for? Is it to serve the economy of Cambridge and its region? Is it to mitigate the effects of rapid growth in a sustainable way or is it a cosy relationship between Network Rail and those it considers to be its "Stakeholders"? There appears to be no understanding at all of the purpose of the railway.

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## **PROSPECTS FOR THE MID-ANGLIA SERVICE SOME POINTS FROM THE MARPA AGM, 13 APRIL 2019**

**BY PETER FEENEY**

A well-attended meeting of the Mid-Anglia Rail Passengers Association (MARPA) in Bury St Edmunds was due to hear briefings about Greater Anglia (GA) and Network Rail (NR) plans as they directly affect passengers using the Ipswich – Cambridge service. Unfortunately the scheduled double act did not materialise, so it was left to Alan Neville from GA (pictured, right) to present some key features about plans emerging from both organisations, a task he performed creditably, not least given the competition from a live band performing in the vicinity of the Friends' Meeting House.



Looking first at infrastructure, the meeting heard how the bulk of the funding available to NR in this region for its 2019-2024 control period will be committed to major track and signalling schemes at the three C's – Cambridge, Clacton and Colchester. The work at all three locations is urgent in terms of enhancing infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing market, perhaps above all at Cambridge, where annual footfall numbers for the two stations now exceed 12 million – making Cambridge the busiest eastern rail hub outside Liverpool Street station. However, the audience at the meeting expressed a frustration directly echoed in Peter Wakefield's article on page 13 of this issue – how long will travellers have to wait for a more frequent service towards Ipswich? As things stand, at least as outlined in NR's Cambridge Corridor Study, several decades are likely to intervene before the largely single-track section between Coldhams Lane and Chippenham Junction is improved.

On a more positive note, Alan Neville was able to update the meeting on progress with the new bi-mode rolling stock, underlining the point that with the fleet fully operational from late 2020 passengers would be using trains fully air conditioned, single class, with Wi-Fi throughout, much improved accessibility (tested through liaison with relevant groups) and with a guaranteed minimum of three cars, thus easing capacity concerns. Although recognising the improved acceleration and braking of the new stock, he was guarded about how much travellers might expect from future timetable changes in terms of both frequency and journey times, the

clear message being that nothing would alter significantly prior to the December 2020 timetable re-write. On the issue of the franchise commitment to an hourly Ipswich – Peterborough service, there was a suggestion that movement in that direction might begin with revisions to service patterns at weekends.

Looking at service performance statistics, he argued that reliability and punctuality overall were improving, with increased rolling stock reliability and better liaison with NR, whilst accepting that work remained to be done on routes such as mid-Anglia. So although overall punctuality was now better than for two decades, at 87% punctuality on mid-Anglia was lagging behind performance elsewhere on the GA network.



He highlighted the introduction of the carnet-style GA Flexipass from April 2019 as an example of the proactive way in which GA was responding to changing patterns of commuter travel – it would enable passengers from most East Anglian stations travelling to London – providing that both origin and destination were GA stations – to purchase up to 50 peak or off-peak tickets at discounted prices without committing to specific days for travel. The recent move by the train operator to introduce compensation for delays of 15 minutes (having finally reached a financial agreement with the Department for Transport) was also mentioned as evidence of GA's readiness to listen to its customers.

Greater Anglia's website explains it saying "Simply buy online at your convenience, up to a month before travel, and then hold your Smart Card on a ticket gate, ticket machine or ticket validator to load your set of FlexiPass tickets to your Smart Card. If you're an Android user wait a few minutes, then simply hold your Smart Card to the back of your phone and load your FlexiPass there and then."

A "FlexiPass 5" is valid for two weeks from the start date, a "FlexiPass 10 bundle" for one month, "30" for three months and "50" for six months. Like other season tickets, photo id is required.

Responding to audience questions, he acknowledged that the development of a Community Rail Partnership for the mid-Anglia line, an initiative strongly supported both by MARPA and by Railfuture East Anglia, remained work in progress. He accepted that the mid-Anglia route is now in a select group of lines on the GA network not to benefit from the work of a dedicated CRP. Negotiations with relevant local authorities were ongoing but budget pressures were posing problems for a number of them. On a more positive note, he highlighted the impact of station adopters in helping to enhance the environment of stations and the facilities on offer. Each adopter had an annual budget of £200 to spend per station. New adopters had recently started work at Stowmarket and Newmarket. Already 95 stations on the network had an adopter in place.



The Mid-Anglia line doesn't have a Community Rail Partnership. However, there is one for the East Suffolk line and it won an award for its work (in conjunction with its partners) for staging multiple station-to-station events along its line.

Points put regarding any timetable changes included a plea for later last trains in both directions between Cambridge and Ipswich (e.g. currently having to leave a football match before it finishes) – and additional services to address increased demand associated with specific sporting or cultural events. The Guineas meeting at Newmarket race course was cited. Alan Neville mentioned the existing precedent, increased services from Cambridge to Duxford (for the air museum) and recognised the scope for such additionality – the meeting heard that ongoing discussions with the racing industry were taking place.



# TIMETABLE NEWS FROM OUR TRAIN OPERATORS

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The Summer Timetable started on Sunday 19 May 2019. Great Northern Thameslink emerged as the operator with most alterations from its previous timetable.

## Greater Anglia

The usual summer expansion of the weekend timetable from Norwich to Yarmouth and Lowestoft has taken place but the big change is the operation of two additional and faster services Monday – Friday from Norwich – Ipswich to Liverpool Street, the so-called "Norwich in 90" initiative.

The accelerated services leave Norwich at 09:00 and 17:00 (calling at Ipswich 32 minutes later) and return from Liverpool Street at 11:00 and 19:00 (calling at Ipswich just 55 mins later) and yes, they are timed Norwich to/from London Liverpool Street in just 1hr 30mins with that stop at Ipswich. Best wishes to all involved in this exciting enterprise! See our News in Brief item on page 22.

The service from Cromer to Sheringham's new £1m platform was restored (later than planned) on Wednesday 22 May. However, the service between Reedham and Yarmouth is still suspended, with 20 October 2019 being one date given for the restoration of service by Network Rail...this is owing to over running resignalling work.

The train operator is gearing up to the introduction of an entirely new fleet of trains and a new timetable in 2020. No details are yet known of the latter. Nor are details known of when the Norwich – Ipswich – Colchester – Liverpool Street line will finally be opened all year round at weekends.

## Great Northern Thameslink

The main change is the restoration of the Saturday service on the King's Lynn – Ely – Cambridge – King's Cross route. Two fast trains an hour are again running between Cambridge and King's Cross, with one starting at King's Lynn, the other from Ely as on Monday – Friday. The winter 2018/19 timetable's semi-fast service that started at Ely now operates from Cambridge to Royston – Baldock – Letchworth – Hitchin – Stevenage – Finsbury Park and is diverted to St Pancras, Gatwick Airport and Brighton. This rearrangement mirrors the Monday – Friday timetable and compared to the winter's muddled Saturday timetable will relieve some of the chronic overcrowding north of Cambridge.

Oddly, the management of GTR (which operates both Great Northern and Thameslink brands) chose to publicise this extension to Brighton rather than the additional/restored Ely – King's Cross fast service, apparently unaware of the massive annoyance it has created in the Cambridge area by the imposition of the poor Saturday service to/from London it chose to operate after its timetable meltdown...but of course it does not operate Cambridge station and perhaps doesn't care.

Note that on Saturday/Sunday the Peterborough – Huntingdon – St Neots – Sandy – Biggleswade – Arlesey – Hitchin – Stevenage Thameslink service continues to terminate at King's Cross but from **the December 2019 Winter Timetable change, on Saturdays** this service is to be diverted via St Pancras and through the core twice per hour (subject to agreement and final confirmation by Network Rail).

**Back to May 2019, on Sundays** the hourly semi-fast service Cambridge to King's Cross is diverted to St Pancras and extended to Gatwick Airport. The overall Sunday

service continues to be a mediocre offering given the overcrowding and poor service intervals. The Saturday/Sunday stopping train service from Cambridge all stations to Hatfield continues as hourly and only from Cambridge. (The Monday – Friday service is half hourly with one service starting from Cambridge North.)

On Monday – Friday there is an additional semi-fast service starting at Cambridge from/to Brighton every hour, though crucially a northbound service arriving 08:24 at Royston terminates there, presumably because of congestion at Cambridge.

## **Cross Country**

No changes are apparent.

## **East Midland Trains**

The DfT has awarded Abellio the new franchise to operate this group of services, the incumbent operator, Stagecoach, losing it. Little detail is known other than the Norwich – Ely – Peterborough – Grantham – Nottingham – Sheffield – Manchester – Liverpool service is being diverted from Nottingham to terminate at Derby. A change of train at Nottingham will be needed to continue to stations such as Sheffield and Liverpool, something Railfuture has argued against.

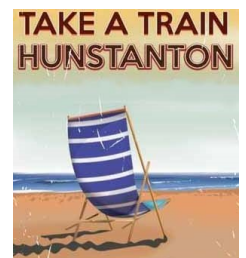
## **LNER**

This group of services is gearing up for the introduction of a new fleet of trains and a new timetable in 2020. There are no significant changes to the winter timetable.

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## **KING'S LYNN TO HUNSTANTON REOPENING CAMPAIGN** **BY RICK MORRISH**

The King's Lynn – Hunstanton Railway Campaign (KLHRC) is seeking to bring back the railway that for more than a century provided a well-liked and well-used connection to the North Norfolk seaside. The railway was closed in 1969 – not as a result of the Beeching Report, but mainly because of a litany of British Rail cutbacks that took no account of the social needs of isolated coastal resorts.



The railway was first opened in 1862 – almost entirely due to the efforts of one man – Henry Le Strange. Le Strange was responsible for planning and promoting Hunstanton as a seaside resort and he was sure he needed a railway connection to make it work. Even though the town only had a population of 500 at the time, the railway was soon a success. It gained additional kudos when the Royal Family purchased nearby Sandringham. A smart new station was constructed at Wolferton to service the royal visits. There were also stations at North Wootton, Dersingham, Snettisham and Heacham.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century seaside excursions became popular and, by 1937, Hunstanton station had four platforms that were all lengthened to assist passenger handling. In the years after the Second World War, peak holiday periods required the operation of a one-way system on the line – with incoming trains generally in the morning and outgoing trains in the afternoon and evenings. Heacham also grew as a holiday destination. However, when direct trains from London were stopped in 1959, 80% of revenue was immediately lost. Further cost savings with Paytrains saw the service reduced to unsustainable levels, running only for a further ten years – and 3 May 2019 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last train (see photo of it at the top of the next page). A sizeable percentage of townspeople turned out for it, and most of those still alive would love to see the railway reinstated.

In recent decades a number of people have tried to gain support for reopening the line. But the new campaign group feels real momentum is now building to bring



back the trains. An online petition now has well over 4,000 signatures and the local MP, Henry Bellingham, is being supportive. The group is lobbying the Borough and County Councils to write the reopening into their Transport Strategy.

Campaign spokesperson Howard Johnston says "Linking North Norfolk with fast, reliable access to Cambridge and the south is essential. At the moment we are losing our young people to other areas and the average age here is well over 50. Many services have recruitment problems. A railway would also have access benefits to education, hospitals, services and entertainment.



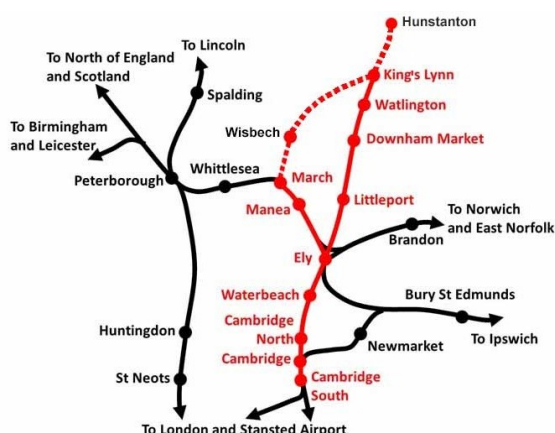
The last train at Hunstanton's extensively rationalised station

"There is a lot of work to be done to convince short-sighted local politicians of every persuasion to get their backs into supporting a campaign to ease the acute congestion on the A149. In May 2019's elections, it was disappointing to see better transport so low in their priorities when they know we all talk about little else. Norfolk County Council, the main policymaker, seems to have little interest in anything much beyond Norwich. We are over 50 miles away from there, so we need to shout much louder to be heard."

North Norfolk continues to be a very important holiday destination – but with few transport alternatives, road congestion and traffic accidents have been increasing. "That will only get worse" says campaign chairman, Andrew Murray. "Major growth is proposed at Wisbech, Ely and several settlements around north Cambridge. Even in West Norfolk the Borough council is currently delivering 16,000 new homes. When the sun shines the nearest beaches for all those people are in North Norfolk."

Much of the track bed still exists from King's Lynn to Hunstanton, but the broadly flat landscape does not prevent the alignment being moved slightly so as to reach important locations such as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, one of the area's largest employers. Connections to the national network are feasible in two locations.

The line from Cambridge to King's Lynn is awaiting investment – with junction improvements at Ely proposed that will allow two trains an hour from London, it is not outlandish to envisage Hunstanton being accessible from London in a little over two hours.



Other plans are afoot. RAIL EAST readers will know that James Palmer, elected mayor for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, is pushing ahead with plans to re-open the March to Wisbech railway. He sees the opportunity to connect Peterborough to King's Lynn (map, left, modified from Railfuture original) and has written it into his vision for the area.

"There is a real opportunity here to create a transport network that is low carbon, low energy and sustainable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond" says Andrew Murray. "And when much of our local landscape is at or below sea level these issues are important!"

To read more about the campaign or support the reopening of the Hunstanton line by signing the online petition, search <http://www.hunstantonrail.org.uk>

Rick Morrish is secretary of the KLHRC (email contact [hunstantonrail@outlook.com](mailto:hunstantonrail@outlook.com)) All photos in this article provided by him.

# BATTERY POWER / THE PROPOSED CAMBRIDGE METRO

## A PERSONAL VIEW BY JOHN HENDERSON

In February 2019, the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority published proposals for a Cambridge Metro system based on articulated (bendy) buses powered by batteries. I would challenge the idea that the metro could be built soon if £4 billion was available. There doesn't seem to be anywhere in the world that runs an intensive and high passenger capacity system reliant solely on battery-powered buses. Whilst buses powered only by batteries have been around for about 10 years and the technology has advanced, they are mostly used on routes with modest passenger loadings and their performance in very cold or hot weather isn't yet fully proven. The Combined Authority report made assumptions about how far each bus would get on a charge, what the recharge time would be, and how fast they could go with a full load of passengers in cold weather. If they're wrong, the true cost may be higher than £4 billion. No one knows the answers because there is very little long-term data to go on. There are locations that use the double-articulated vehicles (3 cars), and routes with a high-frequency service, and routes where the batteries are charged only in depots and the ends of route (that is, no overhead lines). But nowhere combines all those features which are proposed for Cambridge. The more complex battery operations are trial routes within much larger bus operations. It will be interesting to see what lessons will be learnt from those. The technology behind Cambridge Metro may be economically feasible in 10 years, but it may not. We should remember what happened to Brunel's wonderful 'atmospheric railway'.



*John Henderson is a member of Railfuture living in East Anglia. His views here do not necessarily reflect the position of Railfuture.*

Note by Jerry Alderson: Vienna has had a fleet of battery-only inner-city buses since 2012. However, it also has one of the world's largest tram networks. Buses terminate where there are also tram routes and (when parked) use a pantograph to perform a fast re-charge from the overhead tram wires. This takes no more than 15 minutes (coinciding with the driver's rest break) and is sufficient to power the bus for more than an hour. Buses do not have to return to the depot during the day. The batteries are fully charged (slowly) overnight. It was an innovative scheme as inverters were fitted in the buses to convert the dc from the overhead wires into ac in order to recharge the batteries. Of course, Cambridge has no trams so the entirely bus-based Metro system being proposed, which John Henderson is not alone in criticising, would not be able to recharge this way.

Railfuture East Anglia has an active Twitter account (follow us at **RailfutureEA**), and we were pleased to re-tweet this from Jim Chisholm advocating a tram system, rather than yet more buses, for Cambridge.

Railfuture EAnglia Retweeted

[Jim Chisholm](#) @Chisholm4Trail · 1h

This 'tram', complete with the improved cycle routes would be easier, & far more cost effective to do in much of Cambridge than a battery powered underground rubber tyred 'bus'. This with a short city centre tram tunnel would vastly reduce the need for any motor vehicles in city



**Modacity** @modacitylife

"Effective low-tech is smarter than high-tech, and so the smartest city of all is a bicycle city. Amsterdam is already one of the smartest cities in the world, with so many smart qualities that it is easy to overlook them." - Fred...



## RAILFUTURE PUBLIC EVENTS

We hope that everyone present enjoyed attending the Railfuture meeting in Bury St Edmunds on 23 February 2019 at which Martin Halliday, Community Rail Officer for Norfolk and Suffolk, gave a photo presentation about the renovation work done at Lowestoft station (below, left), and was presented with a copy of Railfuture's book *Britain's Growing Railway* (photo right). Thanks to YouTube, below is a photo of the station (in the days when the station area still had a roof) from the Tales of the Unexpected episode "Stranger in Town" from 1982, starring Derek Jacobi.



On **15 June 2019** at our Ipswich public meeting (the usual St Mary's Church Hall venue), the presentation by Roger Blake, a Railfuture director, will not quite be entitled "The only *railway* is Essex", but to whet your appetite he says:

"The whole country, and especially the economically more productive regions – the South East and East Anglia – face sustained pressure for more homes for an increasing population, as more people live longer while they and others form a larger proportion of smaller new households. In Essex one manifestation is the proposals for new 'garden communities' along what might be characterised as the broadly Colchester—Braintree—Bishop's Stortford corridor, with a four-council consortium planning up to 43,000 new homes and a similar number of jobs over the next half-century. What does this mean for Railfuture? Ipswich — not far north of that corridor — is as good a place as any to consider our response."

Railfuture has two all-day conferences in 2019. In Darlington on Saturday 22 June we will look at the 'Rebirth of the Railway' in the North East of England, with speakers from train manufacturers, regional transport operators and promoters, rail freight and politicians. There will be much to learn that is useful in other parts of the country. It is a bargain at just £15, which includes refreshments on arrival and a buffet lunch. It's also a chance to sample LNER's new Azuma trains!

On Saturday 21 September our "Every Passenger Matters" conference in Bristol will have presentations from Mark Hopwood, Managing Director, **Great Western Railway**; Lorna Brown-Owens, Access and Inclusion Manager, **Network Rail**; Richard Gibson, Communications Manager, **Cross Country Trains**; Mark Cleland of the **British Transport Police**; and Jon Harris, Integrated Transport and Accessibility Manager, **West Midlands Trains**. The 'early bird' price for members (ending 31 July 2019) is £20, also including refreshments and a buffet lunch.

Book both online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>.

## NEWS IN BRIEF—NORWICH IN 90

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The inaugural journey of the “Norwich In 90” timetable successfully took place on Monday 20 May 2019. The train, headed by locomotive 90001, left Norwich at 09:00 and arrived at Liverpool Street station 88 minutes later. Railfuture East Anglia members Phil Smart and Peter Wakefield were invited to join this very special event.

It was very evident how much detailed planning had been made to make sure this service ran to time throughout on the extraordinarily busy Great Eastern Main Line. We congratulate all the many people at Great Anglia and Network Rail who have laid the foundation for the eventual timetable of 12 trains a day each way operating to these timings, bringing huge economic benefits to East Anglia.

The picture, right, features a small part of the Greater Anglia team that worked so hard to get the train into London successfully.



## JOIN RAILFUTURE — BEFORE THE RATES GO UP!

Even Railfuture is not immune from the effects of inflation. It is funded entirely by the public, who use the railway. This means that it can stand up for their interests and hopefully RAIL EAST proves this, with its justifiable criticism of the rail industry (among the much-deserved praise as well—Railfuture *promotes* rail travel, after all).

Railfuture works *constructively* with the rail industry, government (national and local), businesses and stakeholders to improve and expand the railway. Its “bigger and better railway” strapline has been copied by Network Rail and no doubt the “better services over a bigger railway” slogan will be plagiarised as well.

A large membership base — across the generations — is needed, so please make an effort to join or persuade someone else to become a Railfuture member. East Anglia branch committee member Ian Couzens promises to twist the arm of his brother, Andy, who provided the photos of the new Sheringham station platform.

From 1 July 2019 there will be a single annual membership fee of **£20** (or £22 for joint membership), whether you are working age, retired, unwaged and so on. Rail user groups rise to £25. It’s still a bargain, not just for the four editions of Railwatch magazine and (for those in East Anglia) RAIL EAST, but for what Railfuture achieves (often with its affiliated rail user groups) directly and indirectly for rail users. Young members are needed so the £14 concession remains for those aged under 26 years.

Join online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> using a credit/debit card or PayPal.

Up to 30 June 2019 you can join at the old rate of £18 and £14 for concessions. These rates had not risen since 2007— if only train fares hadn’t risen in 12 years!

Existing members will be able to renew at the old rate providing that they pay for a second year at the same time. This must be done by 30 June 2020.

Subscription rate increases have to be approved by members. There was overwhelming support to do so at the Railfuture Ltd AGM in Cardiff in May 2019.



# NEWS FROM AFFILIATED RAIL USER GROUPS

## ONTRACK RAIL USERS' ASSOCIATION — REPORT BY TONY BAXTER

The AGM of Ontrack Rail User Association held on 18 May saw the launch of a new report, *Colchester to Clacton/Walton: A Very Underachieving Railway*, prepared under the auspices of the Tendring Rail Group organised by County Councillor Mark Platt, and ONTRACK, the local Rail User Association. In launching the report, Clacton MP Giles Watling, who has been lobbying the Secretary of State for Transport for improvements to Tendring rail services, recommended attendees to read it and intends to lay the report before the Secretary of State.



Clacton MP, Giles Watling, with left Alan Neville, Greater Anglia, and right Matt Brennan, Network Rail, at the Ontrack 2019 AGM on 18 May 2019.

It documents how, over a period of 30 years, rail services have been down-graded, fares increased well above inflation and journey times increased, substantially in some cases. This has resulted in loss of commuter traffic to London while local journeys are too slow to tempt motorists out of their cars, leading to serious traffic problems. The report concludes by listing projects to attract the travelling public to use the railway by increasing frequency and reducing key journey times, but avoiding any infrastructure work.

This report is on the Ontrack website at <https://www.ontrackrailusers.org.uk/>.

Following this, Councillor Mark Platt raised the green agenda aspects of improving transport, highlighting the need for chargers at railway stations. Alan Neville (Greater Anglia) reported on the first test run of the new intercity trains over the previous night into Liverpool Street, the use of smart cards, and improving train reliability and performance. Matt Brennan (Network Rail) spoke about signalling infrastructure upgrades affecting the Clacton—Thorpe Le Soken line and extra loops on the Great Eastern Mainline to run more trains more freely.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

Please send articles for possible inclusion in RAIL EAST to Peter Feeney, who collates all submissions and prepares them for the newsletter. Good quality photos are appreciated, and really are essential in order to make RAIL EAST visually attractive.

All submissions by **18 August 2019**, please, but articles covering late news will be considered just before sending to the printer two weeks later.

RAIL EAST is formatted by Jerry Alderson.

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## RECEIVING RAIL EAST BY POST OR ELECTRONICALLY?

Thank you to Railfuture members who responded to the request in RAIL EAST 181 to receive the newsletter by email. This helps to keep Railfuture's costs down and so spend funds on rail campaigning.

You can be emailed a copy of RAIL EAST on the same day that it goes to the printer, so you will receive it more than a week before other people. To switch to receiving it by email, please contact Lloyd Butler, who manages our database, at [renewals@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:renewals@railfuture.org.uk). Your co-operation will be appreciated.

The latest RAIL EAST is always at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/rail-east/>.

# KING'S UNCROSSED – MODERNISATION AND CAPACITY

## BY JERRY ALDERSON AND PETER WAKEFIELD

*Two extra pages containing important late news after RAIL EAST went to the printer.*

In mid-June Railfuture and other stakeholders, including rail user groups, were invited to a meeting in London jointly presented by Network Rail and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) to hear how important works to increase the number of long-distance trains serving King's Cross station (two additional per hour) will affect passengers during the construction phases. The track layout will be re-modelled, and the third tunnel, disused since the 1970s, will be reopened by the end of 2020, providing six rather than four tracks into the station. The tracks will be untangled reducing the time that trains (and therefore passengers) wait to access a platform.



As part of this £1.2bn East Coast Mainline (ECML) upgrade project, the railway signalling on the East Coast Mainline will be centralised at the new Rail Operating Centre (ROC) in York (with the closure of the signal box at King's Cross) so the route will be closed as far north as Doncaster on **August Bank Holiday Weekend ... Saturday 24 August and Sunday 25 August 2019** (but most open on Monday).

The good news is that Network Rail will use the closure productively to upgrade the power supply, renew and upgrade track and signalling, some of which was installed more than 40 years ago. It will also deep clean the Northern City Line tunnels.

Construction is continuing at Stevenage for the new platform 5, where the trains arriving from Moorgate will turn back without blocking the north-bound slow line. This requires 2km of new track, which passes under two bridges (Six Hills, south of the station, and Broadhall Way Bridge, where the Hertford loop joins the line). It should open in summer 2020, when Great Northern expects to resume a weekday train service (it is currently a bus service, except at weekends).

The full work programme to separate freight from passenger trains at Werrington junction (north of Peterborough), as previously reported in RAIL EAST, will get underway and should open in 2021. However, the six miles of fourth track between Huntingdon and Woodwalton (known as HW4T) is no longer mentioned on the Network Rail website for the ECML project.



An aerial view of King's Cross, showing the complex 'throat' that limits the number of trains entering and leaving each hour.



## **Bus Replacement — Passengers strongly advised: “DO NOT TRAVEL”**

On the Saturday and Sunday there will be no trains to London King’s Cross/St Pancras from **Peterborough via Huntingdon** nor from **Cambridge via Royston** nor from any intermediate station. Work at Newark will continue on Bank Holiday Monday (26 August). LNER, Hull Trains and Grand Central are affected: they will not run south of Peterborough but will run a reduced service to there via Lincoln.

Buses will operate from each GTR station affected but owing to the huge numbers of buses required to replace the trains, services and capacity will be severely limited. The advice from all affected railway companies and Network Rail is not to travel unless you really have to, which is a situation that Railfuture considers far from ideal and is not something that railways in other European countries normally say.

North-south buses will operate on the Peterborough—Hitchin, Cambridge—Hitchin, Hitchin—Potters Bar and Stevenage—Enfield Chase routes. Why not to London?

Railfuture disapproves of putting rail passengers on very long bus journeys and has made its views known. Fortunately, some sensible practice will occur. As well as north-south buses, there will also be east-west buses taking passengers to main stations on other radial routes, primarily the Midland Mainline (Peterborough and St Neots to Bedford Midland, Hitchin and Stevenage to Luton Airport Parkway plus Hatfield to St Albans City) and the West Anglia mainline (Royston to Bishops Stortford) but also to the London Underground (Potters Bar to Cockfosters).

Other train services will run as normal over the weekend from:

- ♦ King’s Lynn to Ely and Cambridge
- ♦ Cambridge to Tottenham Hale and London Liverpool Street
- ♦ Stansted Airport to Cambridge, March, Peterborough, Leicester and Birmingham
- ♦ Norwich to Ely, Peterborough, Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool.

The Great Eastern Mainline is not affected. As reported in the RAIL EAST February 2019 issue, it is being kept open for the Ed Sheeran concerts in Ipswich.

### **Check nearer the time for details of bus replacement services and trains.**

There will be several more closures of all or part of the lines leading into King’s Cross over the next two years as all the tracks in that station area are renewed to increase capacity and improve reliability. During the weekend of the 13/14 July 2019 work will begin to remove old signalling equipment from the disused railway tunnel in preparation for the laying new track in the tunnel later this year.

<https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/travel-information/plan-your-journey/kings-cross-remodelling>

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### **OPPORTUNITY LOST — says Jerry Alderson**

During the King’s Uncrossed presentation Network Rail confirmed that it still intends to abolish one of the three tracks (and platform) in the suburban trainshed at King’s Cross station. It’s unclear what benefit this brings, other than saving money on track work, in the belief that fewer eight-car commuter trains will terminate there as more will go through London via St Pancras station. Painful experience has shown that having spare capacity to stable trains at times of disruption make sense.

It is disappointing that Network Rail does not intend to use the space recovered from removing a track to improve the passenger experience. Punctuality and passenger circulation might be improved at a modest cost.

The additional space could be used to put *single-purpose* platforms on both sides of the two remaining tracks so that passengers alighting and boarding could use opposite sides of the train. The outer platforms would then be used to board, with a segregated exit-only island platform, devoid of any furniture (i.e. seats), allowing a quick departure from the station. Not adopting a similar model in the Thameslink platforms at St Pancras was a lost opportunity. Modern trains would give drivers the ability to open doors on one side a few seconds before those on the other side, but once everyone has alighted the doors facing the island platform could be locked so that the driver and/or dispatcher need check only one set of doors before departure.

# ***railfuture*** East Anglia

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A flyer for our meetings is always at: [www.railfuture.org.uk/east/meetings](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/meetings).  
This includes a map of the venue and directions from the station.

## **MEETING DATES AND VENUES**

**SATURDAY 15 JUN 2019**

St Mary's at Stoke  
Church Hall, Stoke Street  
**IPSWICH**  
IP2 8DA

**SATURDAY 28 SEP 2019**

Friends Meeting House,  
Upper Goat Lane  
**NORWICH**  
NR2 1EW

**SATURDAY 7 DEC 2019**

Venue to be confirmed  
but it will be in  
**CAMBRIDGE**

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