

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

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50 Years of Railfuture East Anglia – 1972 - 2022



Revolutionary modular railway footbridge to be pioneered in East Anglia



Main image is for a prototype to be installed in Nottinghamshire, with the insert image showing how it could look at Stowmarket station

Photos first published in New Civil Engineer magazine.

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It always pays to look at the information displayed on the screens

JOIN RAILFUTURE — FOR A BIGGER, BETTER RAILWAY

Railfuture is funded entirely by the public, who use the railway. This means that it can stand up for their interests; hopefully RAIL EAST proves this, with its justifiable criticism (plus much-deserved praise — 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.

Annual membership fee is **£20** (£22 for joint membership); under 26 years can join for just £14. Join online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> using a credit/debit card or PayPal.

CHAIR'S THOUGHTS – STATIONS ARE IMPORTANT

BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

The new Elizabeth Line stations in central London opened on 24 May 2022 (Bond Street station will open in autumn 2022) and you may even have had the opportunity to ride on the new service linking Paddington to Abbey Wood in south-east London. As someone who has worked on the design of some of these new stations for 10 years or more, it is certainly good for me to see them open at long last. Like the Thameslink expansion, which was completed in 2018, it will change journey patterns across the south east of the country, with many more through rail journeys possible or with a single change of train.



The new Elizabeth Line stations are already getting a lot of publicity regarding their design and new features such as the inclined lifts at Liverpool Street and Farringdon stations, which allow mobility restricted people to take a similar route to those who can use the escalators. Whilst these stations grab the headlines, there is a lot of good work going on at many of the stations in our area – much more modest, but all helping to make the stations more user friendly and encouraging people back onto the railway. Aside from major work at Huntingdon and March stations (plus replacement footbridges at other stations), which you can read about in this issue, there are plenty of smaller schemes; a new bike rack here and an improved station garden there. It all helps and allows us to revisit the stations for Railfuture's Easy Stations awards from 2019.



Descending the new escalators towards the Elizabeth Line platforms at Liverpool Street station (photo by Jerry Alderson, on the first Saturday after it opened.)

It was also good to finally get over to Wickham Market station on the East Suffolk Line to meet Bob & Ros Webb who run the café at the station and present them with their Easy Station Award after two years of COVID-19 restrictions, and to see what lessons can be learned to help restore the disused station building at Brandon. This is newly listed but is in a poor state of repair; however, it has potential to become a valuable community asset and help attract more people back onto the train. More on page 21.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETINGS

It was pleasing to see a packed room at our Bury St Edmunds meeting in February 2022, at which Jonathan Roberts, whom Railfuture had commissioned, gave a presentation on his initial findings for our East Anglia Rail Study. We had looked forward to meeting members and the public again at our planned meeting in Ipswich on 25 June 2022. However, a series of rail strikes has recently been announced, and one of them is on that day. Although Greater Anglia hopes to run a good service on the Great Eastern Mainline, many of those who attend our Ipswich meeting would use the branch lines and the Mid-Anglia route to Cambridge and Ely. It is unclear how good those services would be on a strike day. We know that people like certainty for their travel plans, so **we have reluctantly decided to cancel the Ipswich meeting**. Our next meeting will be in Norwich, on Saturday 24 September, at our usual venue (Friends' Meeting House), so I look forward to seeing many of you then. All RAIL EAST readers, whether Railfuture members or not, are welcome to attend our events.

MORE THAN A "LICK OF PAINT": MARCH STATION RENEWED BY CHRIS BURTON

Thankfully, the many attending the formal unveiling of the revamped facilities at March station remained un-phased by it being Friday the 13th!

What we discovered was one bright new airy space where once stood redundant walled space. At one end of the impressive open plan ticketing hall was direct access to new toilet facilities (which we hope will be seldom closed). The other end offered two exits: one to the platforms and the other a general exit via the enlarged and modernised car park. Some seats (but arguably too few) have already been installed in this waiting area along with plenty of wall space for general information and displays.



March station's new waiting room in the main station building (photo courtesy of Greater Anglia)

If I have one caveat, it is that retaining any level of warmth in this attractive new area will probably demand some sort of screen to insulate those sheltering from wintry fenland weather blasting through these doorways.

Space has also been created for retail facilities in this £1m project, which effectively gutted the original buildings on the south side of the station in order to make them receptive to 21st century passenger requirements.

Fenland District Council commissioned a very informative video illustrating the scope of the works involved - watch at <https://vimeo.com/708744803/c36a6dfe5a>.

The two year scheme was funded from the £9.5m Cambridge and Peterborough Fenland Stations Regeneration Project, which is also being used to pay for significant improvements at Manea and Whittlesea stations. As the Cambridge and Peterborough Mayor Dr. Nik Johnson said in his address at the opening ceremony: "It's an honour to open this new chapter, where this station will be part of a greener revolution, helping people to use petrol and diesel cars less and trains, buses and bikes more."



Railfuture applauds this and future moves to improve the Fenland rail users' experience.

From the left, Alan Neville (GA), Col Mark Knight (deputy Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire), Dr Nik Johnson and Anita Stuart (GA). Photo by Ben Walsh.

On page 11 Peter Wakefield mentions the very light rail (VLR) innovations. In fact, a series of innovative ideas is being introduced across the railway, partly through Department for Transport funding to support research and development.

Stowmarket will be one of the first stations in Britain to have a modular Ava footbridge installed (as shown on the front cover). It will replace the old concrete pedestrian footbridge (see photo, right), thanks to an award from the DfT's 'Access for All' scheme, which was announced in 2019. It will be constructed in September or October 2023, over a single weekend, meaning minimal disruption for passengers. It comes with a 'plug and play' lift, so called because it is separate to the stability system of the main bridge.



The current way of providing a new station footbridge can be quite inefficient, with it being produced in one place, transported elsewhere to be painted then transported to the site as a full-size bridge, with the road transportation being difficult to manage. Instead, the Ava bridge is designed to be assembled in 1.2m-long modules using structural elements cut from flat sheets of stainless steel and bolted together. It costs less than a traditional footbridge and requires less maintenance. This means that more stations could have accessible footbridges and sooner than would have been the case, which can only be a good thing.

With a modular bridge, less land is needed to store the components at the station, where it will be fitted out with cladding, canopy, lighting and other mechanical and electrical services before being erected as close to finished as possible.

The image on the front cover shows the footbridge fully protected from the elements, but it is disappointing that there is no cover beyond the bottom step. Railfuture has been concerned about the implications, with stations such as St Neots potentially posing a safety risk in bad weather. Passengers may be tempted to stand on the steps and the make a 'mad dash for it' as the train arrives.

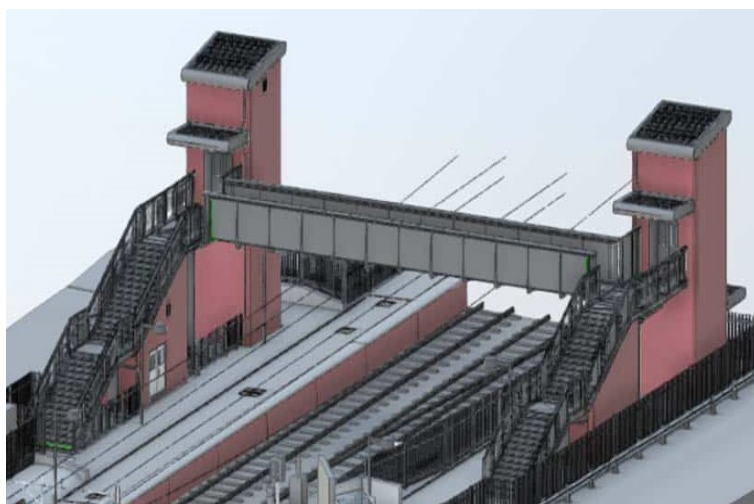


Footbridges at various stations in East Anglia are in the process of being replaced or upgraded. The one at Royston has been closed since early 2020 (see notice displayed on the platform, left), and will be replaced by a new one at a cost of £3.5 million. Because of the need to make space for lifts, it will be further from the station building (ticket hall, shop and toilet) but closer to the car park.

The image of the footbridge is very different to the one for Stowmarket. It is from Rail Business

Daily and may not necessarily reflect what will be installed.

At the Railfuture East Anglia meeting in Cambridge on Saturday 3 December 2022, we expect to have a presentation from Network Rail's Head of Buildings and Architecture, who has responsibility for innovative station design.



ALL CHANGE AT HUNTINGDON

BY NICK DIBBEN

The area around Huntingdon station has changed a great deal over the last few years. The old A14 viaduct that ran over the north end of the station has been removed following the completion of the new A14 route to the south of the town. The original road east of the viaduct is being diverted to new junctions onto Brampton Road adjacent to the station. This has reduced the size of the station car park, so a new deck is being added to part of the car park on the west side of the station (photo by Nick Dibben) whilst the east side car park is being re-built with new access points. The path linking Brampton Road to the station has been rebuilt and the gradient has been reduced making it accessible to all passengers. The works and new road junction should be complete and open for use during June 2022.



A1307 link road in April 2022.
Photo by Nick Dibben

Railfuture's correspondence with train operator GTR has confirmed that five new electric vehicle charging points will be provided and plans for landscaping will include areas that are more natural to make them wildlife friendly and help keep maintenance costs down.

The new station forecourt will have a relocated bus stop, although it is not clear if bus operator Stagecoach will use it or if passengers will have to catch the bus from stops on Brampton Road close by. Another area of concern is the future of the car park ticket machines. Car park operator Apcoa has plans to remove the machines (currently only one out of three is working in the east side car park), and instead require users to pay using their phone app. Railfuture has reminded GTR that not all passengers have smart phones and even those that do, may not be comfortable using them to pay for things. It is essential that passengers should be able to pay for tickets at the station, either from car park machines, the normal ticket machines or at the ticket office where available.

GREATER ANGLIA IMPLEMENTS RAILFUTURE CAR PARK IDEA

BY JERRY ALDERSON

In the September 2021 issue of RAIL EAST ([issue 191 on page 9](#)) we said that Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) offers the chance to introduce short-term parking, such as by the hour. We gave the example of parking at Cambridge North to take the train into Cambridge. Clearly the people in charge read RAIL EAST as it was introduced in April at 31 of its stations, raising eyebrows at Ely where the building works have taken spaces out of use.

Stakeholder News
Issue 49 May 2022

// Cheaper deal at
station car parks

We have introduced a new pay by hour tariff for 31 of our station car parks, so people have a cheaper option if they're not planning to park all day.

Charging by the hour opens up a whole can of worms. What if there is a train delay? If you successfully claim Delay Repay shouldn't you get a refund on your car parking charge as well, since the railway caused your extra cost?

With 'intelligent' smartphone-based car parking, might it be fairer to have reduced charges if you have a railcard? Mobility as a Service (MaaS) could see it introduced.

MAY 2022 TIMETABLE RESTORATION – STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT? BY PETER WAKEFIELD

Railfuture is pleased to note that all sectors of our railway passenger market have seen user numbers come back very strongly. As a result, nearly all the pre-pandemic timetable in East Anglia was restored from 15 May 2022.

However, one of our most important links is that provided by Cross Country. It runs vital services between Cambridge, Ely, March and Peterborough and beyond. Additionally, there are large numbers of people on every train who change trains at one of these stations onto many other services to/from all East Anglia, the north of England and Scotland. The service is only hourly, so the gap in the timetable at 11.16 east from Peterborough and at 14.00 west from Cambridge – two-hour gaps – won't save the DfT any money, as many users will be put off from using the railway over a very wide area of the country. Waiting for up to 1 hour 59 minutes for the next service at, say, Peterborough, is not an encouragement to travel by train on many other train services operated by a number of other TOCs.

Services between Stansted Airport and London Liverpool Street pre-pandemic ran every 15 minutes. Currently they are being operated at 30-minute intervals using the new 12-coach Stadler units. This level of service actually provides more seats per hour than the previous 15-minute interval service and a recent visit to the airport station revealed the London services well loaded with some seats available. But an oddity of the situation was that the rather ramshackle station had no escalators working and every passenger's ticket was manually inspected as they sought to leave the platform, causing long delays in getting off the station up to the airline terminals. As Liverpool Street, Tottenham Hale, Harlow Town and Bishops Stortford all have ticket gates, this seemed a rather unnecessary imposition, adding up to 15 minutes to the journey time... and all in an un-socially distanced mêlée.

With fewer trains to / from London and fewer Cross Country trains (only every two hours now) there is more capacity at Stansted for all the Norwich-Cambridge services to be extended to Stansted Airport throughout the day. The numbers travelling "through" Cambridge on this service have grown substantially.

Peterborough station gets a mention above. Recently, an hour's wait there emphasised what a dismal place it can be, despite all the money spent on it over the last few years. Wind and rain swept platforms, short canopies to keep the rain, wind and sun off those waiting, narrow overcrowded stairways, tiny and overcrowded waiting rooms, no catering outlets on platforms 6/7, poor customer information screens – none on the overbridges to indicate which stairs to use to get the train required. (Recently we missed the Cambridge service as it went from a platform other than the usual). Announcements are locally produced, concentrating on LNER services... all well and good, but more help regarding advice on how to keep travelling east via a change at Ely would be very useful for non-regulars. The help desks are often unstaffed, leaving the train dispatchers to deal with problems when they are loath to be distracted for obvious reasons. Some valiantly show a smile in every circumstance but for others it is all too much. Definite scope for improvement here.



This new island platform at Peterborough station opened in December 2013. Railfuture criticised the total lack of regard for passengers, without cover from the weather (rain, wind and the cold) along much of the platform's length. Photo in 2015 by Jerry Alderson.

RESTORING THE RAILWAY FROM HAVERHILL TO CAMBRIDGE – WHAT NEXT?

BY PAUL HOLLINGHURST

In February 2020 the Department for Transport (DfT) announced it was inviting MPs, local councils and community groups across England and Wales to propose how they could use funding to reinstate axed local services and restore closed stations. Successful bids to its Restoring Your Railway (RYR) fund would receive a grant of 75% of costs, up to £50,000, to help fund transport and economic studies and create a business case.

[Topics](#)
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Guidance

Restoring Your Railway Fund

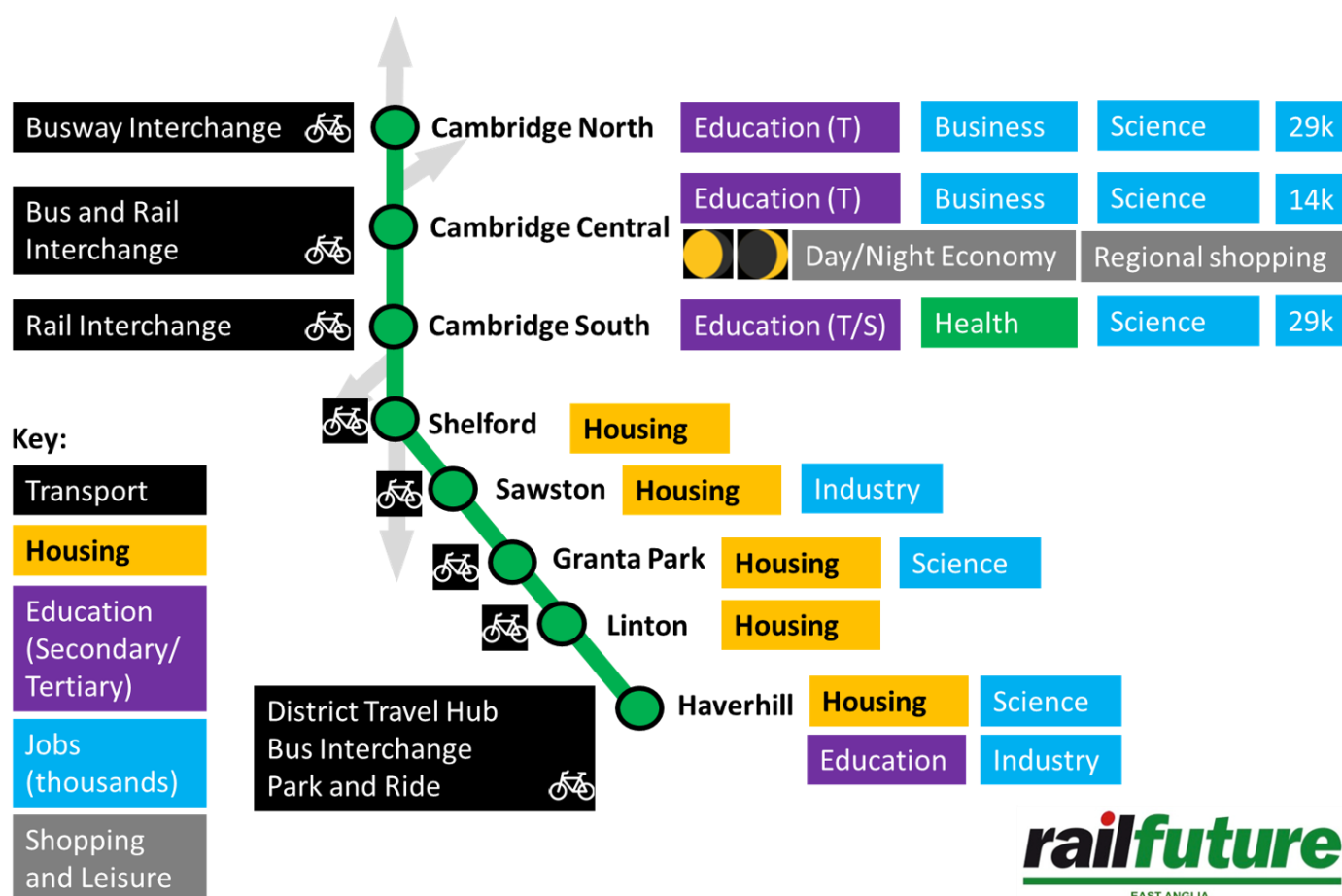
Supporting the reopening of rail lines and stations.

From: [Department for Transport](#)

Published 28 January 2020

Last updated 27 October 2021 — [See all updates](#)

Railfuture East Anglia saw this as an ideal opportunity to progress the idea of reopening the line between Haverhill and Shelford with frequent through services to Cambridge South, Central and North stations, so we worked on a bid, which was submitted to the DfT in spring 2021, envisaging a reopened line with stations at Sawston, Linton, Granta Park and Haverhill. We also pointed out that the line could be reopened as light rail as proposed by Cambridge Connect, and could also continue into Essex to provide a cross country link. The line had closed in 1967 and was particularly unfortunate in Haverhill's case, as around that time it was chosen for considerable expansion as one of the 'London Overspill' towns and the following decade saw a considerable increase in population, a trend that continues today.



The Railfuture East Anglia bid built on the 2015 Cambridge to Haverhill Corridor Study produced by WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff for Cambridgeshire County Council, which looked at the work needed to reopen the line and accommodate areas where the original alignment was blocked, estimating the cost and giving a high-level economic proposal.

The Railfuture bid included a financial overview, strategic overview, socio-economic benefits, deliverability and maps, and was sponsored by Matt Hancock, MP for West Suffolk. Unfortunately the various local authorities at County and District level were unwilling to come on board as it would have undermined their own pet rubber-tyred schemes such as the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's (CPCA) Cambridge Autonomous Metro (CAM), and the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) proposal to build a busway through the green belt terminating at a new Park and Ride site where many people would continue their journeys by car – a very last century idea going against a desire to reduce car use and dependency, and scarring the landscape.

However, since the bid was judged the transport landscape has changed, with the Cambridge Autonomous Metro no longer being planned, following the election of a new Mayor in May 2021. In the last few months we have seen an increasing interest in the idea of reopening the railway, unfortunately too late to influence the RYR bid. A number of organisations did however give their support, including Haverhill Town Council, Stapleford Parish Council and Greater Anglia.

The result was announced in the Autumn 2021 Budget Statement. The Haverhill proposal was found to be "suitable for Restoring Your Railway funding in principle" and "a good case for future development" but disappointingly was turned down for funding because of the number of other applications and the limited funding available, although we were told that the scheme could merit other sources of national funding and the DfT team had been asked to "keep the scheme under review for a future point". However, it is clear from how other studies are being funded locally that there is no shortage of money for studies – it is just a question of whether there is a desire to take on a transformational project like this.

Railfuture was given a summary of how our bid had been evaluated by Atkins and the DfT with many positive comments, saying that the:

- applicant presents a strong proposal, compelling narrative and clearly outlines significant wider benefits.
- proposal presents a strong case for change with clearly described wider socio-economic benefits. There are clear links to the newly approved development area in North-East Cambridge, centred around Cambridge North railway station, which has provision for 20,000 new jobs plus 8,000 new dwellings. The proposal also highlights that the transport links will provide improved access to the sixth forms.
- proposal has clearly identified the links to local policies and strategy document.

However, it was observed that "some stakeholders support the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM).... Haverhill is one of the terminating stops in CAM."

Although the Restoring Your Railway bid was unsuccessful, it has put the idea onto a much stronger footing. Railfuture is working with local MPs and authorities and continues to drive forward this scheme which will transform Haverhill with fast high-quality public transport links to jobs, healthcare and leisure in Cambridge alongside significant new housing planned for the town.

The scheme has the strong support of the people of Haverhill and district with 5,000 signatures on Rail Haverhill's petition calling for the railway to be restored. And we are encouraged by the ongoing commitment of both Matt Hancock and his colleague Anthony Browne MP to support this restoration. *Watch this space!*



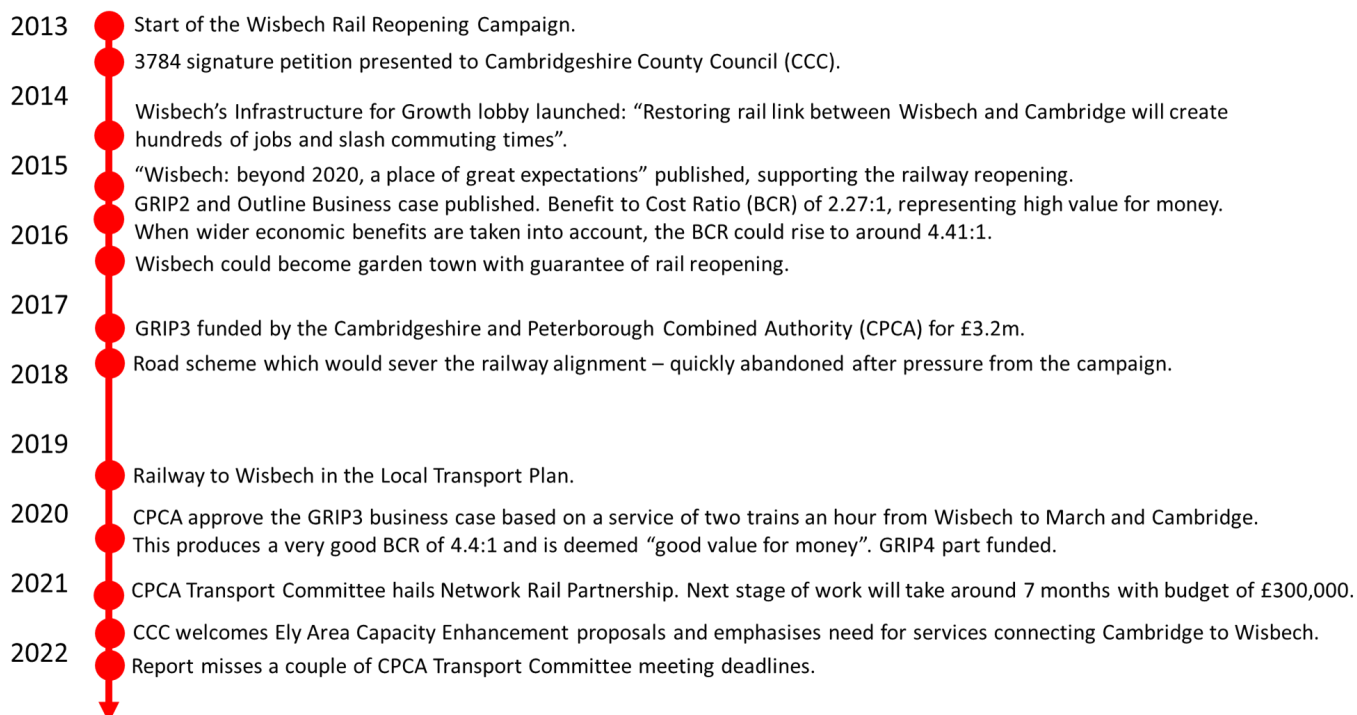
The Wikipedia page for Haverhill says: "Whilst most of its historical buildings were lost to the great fire on 14 June 1667, one notable Tudor-era house remains (reportedly given to Anne of Cleves as part of her divorce from Henry VIII and thus titled Anne of Cleves House)." Photo on Wikipedia by Robert Edwards.

BACKTRACKING ON THE WISBECH RAIL RESTORATION?

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

Wisbech has suffered from 50 years of transport injustice. How hard is it to restore a mothballed railway line to full operating order in England in 2022?

Looking at the timeline below, it is about eight years since Cambridgeshire County Council and latterly the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) started seriously to study how to get the mothballed railway between March and Wisbech reopened for passengers. It is about eighteen months since Railfuture summarised the final outline business case (OBC) for the project produced for the Combined Authority by Mott McDonald. As was reported in RAIL EAST issue 187 (September 2020), it found that the OBC had a good Benefit Cost Ratio and was value for money.



The costs were split equally between a) enhancing March station, b) constructing a new station at Wisbech, c) rebuilding the actual railway and d) local road improvement costs plus moving utilities. It is the latter two items Railfuture felt were unnecessarily high as road-over-rail bridges were stipulated at all public level crossings. At most, only two crossings are busy enough to justify bridging. The farm, "occupation", crossings could be dealt with by mainly suppressing them. This expenditure can surely be deferred until it is seen to be absolutely necessary in the future. Value for money maybe, but not if you can't afford it.

Railfuture acknowledged that the overall aim of direct services between Wisbech-March-Cambridge would initially be difficult to achieve until the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements had been completed. These are pencilled in for completion in the late 2020s. We've always been of the opinion that an interim shuttle service between Wisbech and March should be introduced in the meantime to show the faith. But the railway must be restored from day 1 as a "heavy rail" operation to enable through running and, if necessary, freight to operate.

But we didn't reckon with the ability of the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail (NR) to slow things down. They insisted in gain-saying the expertise of Mott McDonald and demanding the writing of another report. All adding to the cost? We note that in a similar context, a rail restoration in the south of England, a frustrated campaigner wrote: "I'm aware of cheaper solutions for Fawley line reopening but Network Rail insist on leading and adding cost - 'Project Speed' seems to have been derailed which is frustrating to say the least and now we are suffering yet another DfT requirement for an OBC!"

It seems Wisbech's stymied development because of its 50+ year transport deficit has no bearing on the DfT and Network Rail when it comes to 'Project Speed'!

'Project Speed' was the slogan Network Rail gave to its efforts to get projects shovel ready faster than its crippling GRIP process it lumbered every project with... no regrets? Some hope!

Enough of the moan! We haven't yet seen the finished report. We expected that it would be published at the last CPCA transport committee meeting in March 2022. Sadly not, as NR had not finished it, meaning the discussions and maybe a decision expected were postponed until the next meeting... which of course was further delayed through April/May until the 8 June meeting because of the local elections.

A shuttle service would be disappointing as previous studies have shown a through service to Cambridge having the greatest benefits, but reopening the line using heavy rail technology with trains from the Greater Anglia fleet would allow through services as soon as capacity is available, and would allow interim options such as a through service to Cambridge at specific times of the day to match the main travel to work demand, or a through service to Peterborough avoiding the Ely bottleneck.

However, we read the minutes of the November 2021 CPCA board where mayor Dr Nik Johnson stated that he "wanted to improve connectivity for Fenland". There had been much discussion about improving connectivity between March and Wisbech and he was still open to the idea of a heavy rail option, but that at present he was focused on "Very Light Vehicles (VLR) as it was more deliverable at this stage."

The numerous studies to date have not suggested any issue with the deliverability of the scheme apart from the issue of train paths through Ely, so we think the stated focus on VLR (which risks building a line that does not support heavy rail) is misunderstanding the potential of the reopening: it would be a huge mistake, potentially leaving Wisbech with a second- or third-rate service into the future. The town deserves the transformational prospects from a heavy rail reopening.

We must congratulate the CPCA in carrying on with the Cambridgeshire County Council's initial work but we remain critical at the lack of publicity for its plans and aspirations. There is a lot of support for its work but frustration because it keeps it all under wraps, not least the apparently secretive interest in VLR. It surely should be creating excitement for its aspiration – the excitement which would come from a heavy rail reopening.

Railway plans always cost more than we think they should, always seem to take longer than they should but always the planned outcomes are better than predicted! But Wisbech has indeed suffered from a severe Transport Injustice affecting all aspects of its community but above all, the young. No more delay, no excuses, no second class solutions. Only the best is good enough now, with planning firmly fixed on frequent through trains to Cambridge and eventually Peterborough.

Jerry Alderson writes: different flavours of Very Light Rail are currently being proposed in Britain, from a small vehicle (see left photo), which is similar to the Parry People Mover used on the very short Stourbridge Town line in the West Midlands, to a vehicle with a conventional driver's cab that resembles a normal train and can be run as a pair. A delegation from Railfuture East Midlands visited the Ironbridge test site in March to see the latter (right), which is designed for reopened lines to get a service up and running quickly, and is supported by a Railfuture affiliated group.



KENNETT STATION – WHAT FACEBOOK REVEALS ABOUT USER VIEWS ON SERVICE ADEQUACY

BY JOHN FORD

Kennett Station is located between Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds. It is on the Mid-Anglia line between Cambridge and Ipswich and also the line between Peterborough and Ipswich. Kennett is a double-track station with platforms either side but offset rather than parallel. It is located half a mile East of Chippenham Junction where the single track to Newmarket branches off, with the main line continuing to Ely.



The station serves the immediate catchment of Kennett, Kentford, Red Lodge, Moulton, Gazeley and Barrow (population 7,500), plus some destinations for residents of Fordham and Mildenhall (16,100). Both Red Lodge and Mildenhall are expanding centres with significant housing developments. A new Garden Village has also been approved (500 homes) for Kennett, within walking distance of the station. All of the local housing schemes refer to the presence of the station as a reason for supporting development but make no reference to the poor level of service.

Kennett is in Cambridgeshire, and within the commuter catchment of Cambridge, but is often forgotten by transport planners based in Cambridge. Its location beyond Newmarket has led to it being omitted from GCP plans on occasion. It is a commuter station with an expanding population and deserves to have the same priority as all of the other stations within the Cambridge catchment. In addition to serving local residents, it is in an ideal position to act as a 'Parkway'.



Despite the infrequent service, limited parking and poor bus connections, passenger usage has been increasing. Between 2012 and 2017 passenger journeys increased by 83% from 20,238 to 37,150 (Office of Rail and Road footfall estimates). In 2020, the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, ORR data indicates well over 40,000 journeys starting or ending at Kennett. Most journeys are into Cambridge – significant numbers of 6th form students as well as commuters. The employment opportunities in Cambridge are huge, especially in health and life sciences with terrific career opportunities for young people, but they are let down by the transport network.

The limited timetable at Kennett is a major barrier. There is an hourly service to all stations on the line between Newmarket and Ipswich *except* Kennett. Apart from the morning and evening rush hour, every other train does not stop at Kennett. Even morning commuters have no train after 07.40 to Cambridge until the 10.10 service.

Greater Anglia (GA) has claimed that the timing of trains on the single-line section means that they have to limit the service to two-hourly during the main part of the day and evening. This is despite Kennett being on a double track section. In reply to a letter from the local MP two years ago, GA said that they would investigate the possibility once the new Stadler trains were introduced. They were introduced in 2019. GA also said that they would discuss line speed improvements with Network Rail. None of this appears to have happened. It is not a priority for GA.

I wanted to repeat this approach, but I know that politicians take issues more seriously if there is evidence of strong local support. I produced a summary of the issue for a posting on local Facebook community pages in order to gauge the level of

support. I wanted to understand the views of those who had used the service and potential passengers. It was difficult to judge the right level of detail, including sufficient detail to understand the issue, but not so much as to "put people off".

I trialled the post on my own village first where I was able to get some direct feedback from friends. This included advice about the importance of photographs to attract attention to the piece. I asked readers for an indication of support. Facebook has the "Like" facility with which people are familiar. I used three local Community Facebook Pages covering Kennett, Kentford, Red Lodge and Moulton. The result of the posting was emphatic. There were over 300 "likes". I also asked for detailed comments. Again, this is a medium with which people feel comfortable, and are used to airing their views. I received 62 detailed comments. The themes were: waste of resources, unfairness, inconvenience, harm to the environment, lack of accountability. These put into words the frustration of the current arrangements far better than any narrative summary. Here is an anonymised sample:

An hourly train would make such a difference to get any local student to a place they study at (Cambridge or Bury St Edmunds).

The irony being most of the large planning permissions submitted have always cited the train station as an alternative to car travel and the Council has approved them knowing that actually the train station isn't adequate for commuters.

Always found this to be a right pain and have even ended up being dropped off by car in Newmarket... Thereby leaving the village I live in, which HAS a train station, to go to the next town, get on the train and pass through the village I was in, in the first place!

My daughter struggles to get the train to college in Cambridge because of the lack of trains stopping at Kennett! And then like you said if she misses it has to wait 2 hours. The bus service to the station is not much better either!

After commuting from Kennett for many years, I stopped using the service and bought a car, the lack of flexibility and the cost meant it was far easier to drive to South Woodford and tube in, and cheaper. Your points are all 100% spot on - never understood why, as they could easily put a stop order on the service anyway.

Completely support this initiative, it would make a huge difference to both me and my teenage children.

I work in Cambridge and because of the times can't use the train. If there were more services I might be able to get out of my car!

The poor schedule keeps me from using the train to get to Cambridge. When I worked in Cambridge - in a building immediately next to Cambridge station - I still drove in and paid to rent a parking spot because the train schedule was totally insufficient and more expensive than driving. Terrible for the environment but I couldn't afford to wait around two hours if a train was cancelled, or I missed it.

I used to get the train to Cambridge for work but stopped due to the long waits after work to get back the Kennett! If it's going through Kennett why would it not stop!? Doesn't make sense!'

I travel to London for work and either drive to Cambridge North or drive all the way to London. I live in walking distance of the station

The results provide a clear basis for an approach to GA by our local MP, local politicians and Railfuture. They can also be used for a piece in the local press as they contain quotes that bring the issue to life. I recommend local Facebook pages as a medium for anyone wanting to gather feedback on a local rail issue. I had originally envisaged standing on a rainswept platform with a clipboard! And whilst it is obviously restricted to Facebook users and so is not a truly representative sample, it did draw out different user groups and those who had given up being rail users!

Kennett, like most small stations, is not a priority for rail companies, nor for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. The latter's Plan focuses on important strategic developments such as the new station at Soham, which opened in December 2021, and the major infrastructure works at Ely. This leaves a gap in accountability for local operational issues such as those at Kennett. Now that rail companies are directly funded by the taxpayer it does raise the wider issue of their accountability at a local level. Part of the frustration for rail users at Kennett, highlighted in the feedback, is this lack of direct contact with GA, and a sense that 'nobody is listening' to important local service issues such as those shown up in this survey.

The author is a Railfuture member and regular user of services on the Mid-Anglia line



WHY RAIL NEEDS TO TAKE MORE INTEREST IN ACTIVE TRAVEL – PART ONE

BY EDWARD LEIGH

Train operators are under enormous pressure to draw in new customers. Many people who commuted daily pre-COVID will now travel only a few times a week. That's creating a huge revenue gap that needs filling to ensure recent and planned investment in rail infrastructure and rolling stock pays off.

The need is not just economic. To decarbonise transport in the UK, we need many, particularly longer, trips that are made in solo occupancy car to be made by train in future.

The rail industry is ramping up the marketing and promotions (such as the [Great British Rail Sale](#)) to get people back onto trains. GTR has run an interesting pilot with a [Rail+ Club](#) rewards app. But we need much more. We need the industry to look closely at the barriers that stop people taking the train.

Home > Transport > Rail > Rail passenger experience

Over one million half price rail tickets in first ever Great British Rail Sale

Tickets go on sale from 19 April with discounted tickets available on journeys from 25 April to 27 May.

Rail is a viable and attractive mode of travel only if you can get safely and conveniently to and from railway stations at each end of the journey. This is the first/last-mile challenge of all public transport. Because railway stations are sparsely distributed around the country, the first and last legs of a rail journey are typically much longer than for a journey by bus. The options available are: to drive and park at the station; get a lift with someone; take a taxi; catch a bus; cycle or walk.

The rail industry has traditionally focused mainly on catering to the first three options, partly because the catchment area is larger if you focus on car travel. But building car parks is an expensive way to build passenger numbers. It also generates unwanted side-effects, especially where the railway station is in a town centre, including more congestion, air pollution, noise and carbon emissions.

Active travel – walking, cycling, mobility scootering and, in some people's book, e-scootering – is how most of us begin and end most of our trips, even when the greater part of the journey is by car, bus or train. Making active travel viable as the first/last leg of a train journey for many more people should be a top priority for the rail industry.

That is why government policy and guidance, from Gear Change onwards, is strongly supportive of active travel. It gets a mention in the Great British Railways white paper: "[Passenger Service Contracts] will also require the operator to support the integration objectives for bus travel and cycling set out in the government's recent bus and cycling strategies."

But, delivery of good quality active travel routes is left to a muddle of local authorities, developers and landowners, including Network Rail. The rail industry needs to become not just a co-operative partner, but a leading advocate of good



provision for active travel.

Three questions every station management team should be asking are:

1. How safe and convenient is the route to/from the station?
2. How secure and safe is the cycle parking at the station?
3. How accessible is the station when taking a bike onto a train?

Routes to stations

Sustrans – the charity creating a national cycle network – stated, “In order to create an integrated sustainable transport system, public transport hubs should be easily accessible by foot and by cycle.” That was in a campaign to promote [Safe Routes to Stations](#) – in 2003, nearly twenty years ago! Frankly, we have made nowhere near enough progress towards achieving the goals set out then. Nor do we yet have the transformational plans needed to reduce transport carbon emissions rapidly in line with the scientific evidence and the government’s national targets (the first of which entails reducing the UK’s emissions by 2030 by 43% of 2019 levels).

The attitude of the rail industry has traditionally been that it’s somebody else’s responsibility to create safe and convenient routes to railway stations. This tweet (right) by the Cambridgeshire newspapers editor John Elsworth expresses well the problem.

Better integrated bus links are certainly needed. This was a passion of [Simon Norton](#), an avid and eccentric local campaigner for better transport, who was inspired by the transport and urban planning academic Paul Mees, who in turn was inspired by the tight integration of rail and bus in Switzerland.



<https://twitter.com/johnelworthy/status/1523223376135073793>

Making progress on this requires two things: local government leadership and funding to support enhanced bus services (beyond the level where they can be funded entirely from fares). Hertfordshire County Council leads the way locally, in creating the [Intalink](#) Enhanced Partnership Agreement. Funding is, politically, much more challenging. Assuming government will not provide long-term funding from general taxation, local authorities will need to introduce Workplace Parking Levies and/or some form of [road pricing](#) (ideally introduced nationally, with a locally set element going to local authorities).

By contrast, improving active travel links to railway stations should be much simpler. There is no need for annually recurring funding; nor to conduct multiway negotiations with private-sector bus operators; nor to navigate a tortuous pathway through competition law.

Building and enhancing active travel links (see Dutch Cycling Embassy tweet, right) still needs local leadership though.



Government now requires highway authorities to produce Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans. Cambridgeshire County Council [consulted on theirs](#) last year. But another factor comes into play: co-operation of landowners.

Network Rail has a critical role to play. It controls much land that is needed for active travel routes. But most proposals to create new routes on, under or over Network Rail land meet metaphorical but effective roadblocks: prohibitive costs, inflexible operating procedures and safety protocols, franchise obligations, and HM Treasury rules are all marshalled as reasons for why it is not possible. Even just arranging access to survey Network Rail land is fraught with difficulties and costs. This makes it almost impossible for local authorities to plan, design, budget, schedule and co-ordinate schemes that involve land controlled by Network Rail. So, for the most part, they don't bother.

In South Cambridgeshire, matters are made even more complicated by having four transport bodies with overlapping powers and responsibilities: Cambridgeshire County Council, the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the Combined Authority of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and England's Economic Heartland.

This was painfully evident during the recent public inquiry into Cambridge South station. There is unquestionably a need for a new station to serve the Biomedical Campus and the growing residential population of south Cambridge. But not one local authority attempted to engage with Network Rail to create an ambitious vision of an integrated transport hub, fit for a zero-carbon future. Smarter Cambridge Transport was a lone voice in arguing for a design that would have put the bus stops immediately outside the station entrance, with a segregated cycle route to a large, easily extended, cycle park at the back of the station.

Three things need to change. The rail industry needs to recognise the potential demand for rail travel that can be released if more people can safely and conveniently cycle to and from all railway stations. Secondly, the Duty to Cooperate that applies to local government in the Localism Act needs to be extended to Network Rail (and National Highways). And, finally, the culture within the rail industry needs to change from one that defaults to responding to proposals with "Why this won't work," to "How can we help you make this work?"

Then we might see the rail industry become an active and effective advocate for new and improved cycle routes to station. We should also see more schemes progressing that put new cycleways alongside railways, as is commonly seen in Germany; or new gently ramped underpasses to reduce the severance effect of railway lines, as is commonly seen in the Netherlands.

In RAIL EAST issue 195, I will look at the vexed issues of cycle parking, and access into and through stations, and onto trains. In the meantime, do take part in Network Rail's consultation on the design of small and medium sized railway stations.

Just google 'ExploreStation' or visit <https://explorestation.commonplace.is/>.

A yellow banner with the text "ExploreStation" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below it, in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font, is "Share your ideas for a #GreatBritishStation". At the bottom, in a smaller, regular, sans-serif font, is "ExploreStation is your chance to have your say on Network Rail's HUB Station proposals - a new model for Great Britain's small and medium sized railway stations." To the right of the text are three stylized speech bubble icons of varying sizes.

ExploreStation
Share your ideas for a #GreatBritishStation
ExploreStation is your chance to have your say on Network Rail's HUB Station proposals - a new model for Great Britain's small and medium sized railway stations.



The author is a transport policy officer working in local government. Previous to that, he founded and led Smarter Cambridge Transport to advance sustainable, integrated and equitable transport in the Cambridge region. He holds a masters in Transport Economics from the Leeds Institute for Transport Studies. Edward Leigh also campaigns for a National Road User Charge to fund public transport, and has provided written and oral evidence on the subject to the House of Commons Transport Committee.

REDUCING THE HOME-TO-TRAIN TRAVEL TIME

BY JERRY ALDERSON

Active travel to and from railway stations is something that we should all encourage. However, the first hurdle is to persuade people to use the train, when door-to-door travel by car (depending on where one is travelling) sounds ideal.

Rail has to offer a competitive end-to-end travel time, which starts when you walk out of your front door and make your way to the station and finally onto the train.

Too many rail decision-makers seem to care only about what their customers do on rail premises, which is what they are responsible for, not how easy it is to get to the station or how much time people must allow to navigate the station.

Train operators have helpfully mapped their stations so that travellers can visualise the station layout before they arrive. But how often are they funnelled through a ticket gate (to help railway operations) and then have to back track on themselves, wasting valuable time? When ticket gates are installed at Ely station in summer 2022, with two other entrances onto the platform being closed, journey times for many people will increase, though by only a minute or two. The obsession, particularly by the DfT, that there is no greater crime than evading your rail fare, is the justification for making all travellers suffer.

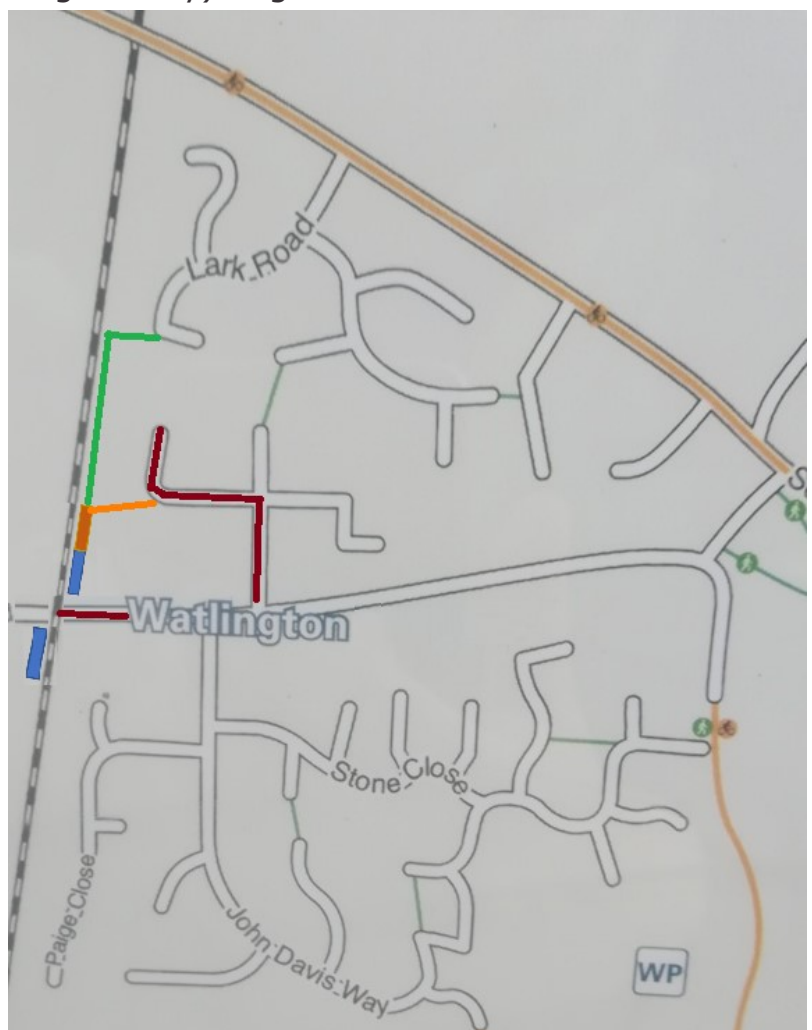
When Cambridge station's cycle park was being planned, Railfuture asked whether there could be a first-floor exit onto an extended footbridge, so that cyclists had a quick route onto the platform. That didn't happen. We've been calling for an eastern entrance to the station, which has gained political support but not moved forward yet. There are calls for a western entrance at Peterborough station, which would also dramatically reduce walking time to and from the station. A saving of 10 minutes (really useful when it is raining heavily) might be all that is needed to shift people from car to train.

The railway cannot be expected to pay for new routes to stations, but it could offer some land to make it possible. Local authorities would need to fund those routes.

Let's take the example of **Watlington** station, on the Fen Line. For people in the south of the village the walking route is quite efficient. However, on the northern side there are houses that back on to the line, or are quite close to it, where rail users have to walk away and do a U-turn.

The map shows in orange how a short-cut could be constructed directly onto an extended platform, with the green line showing a walking route beside the track to houses in the north.

There are countless examples in East Anglia where walking routes could be built. Someone needs to take the lead and design them.



EAST WEST RAIL—STRATEGIC ADVICE BACKS RAILFUTURE'S VISION

BY PHIL SMART

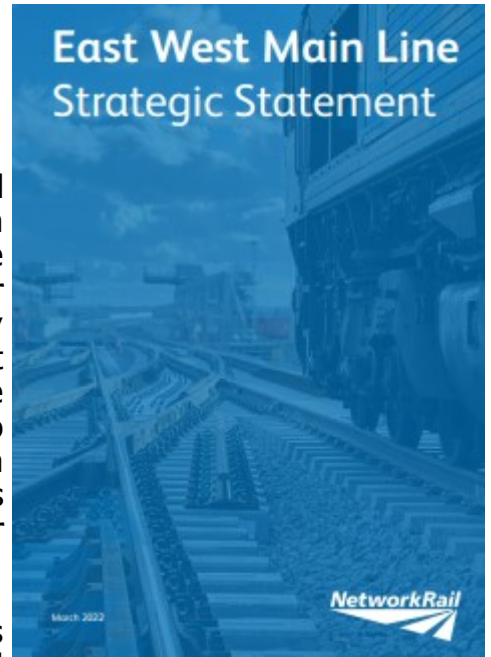
The East West Railway Company's 2021 informal consultation on the proposed central section from Bedford to Cambridge generated a predictable volume of comment, much of it opposed to some aspect or other of the project or even suggesting an entirely different route. Public engagement (see latest dates at bottom) is part of the process, and Railfuture is sure that various modifications will be made to accommodate many people's concerns, but it is a process which only consults with the new railway's neighbours – its potential users have to sit and wait for the final outcome.

Ever since the East West Rail Company was formed, its remit was to build a commuter railway between Oxford and Cambridge with little regard for its potential for longer distance travel or for freight. The fortunes of the railway have therefore been tied, in the minds of some, to those of the *Cambridge-Oxford Arc*, a term that suggested a 'top down' approach by government to planning and housing allocation. Besides the railway, a new expressway was to have been built, but this was withdrawn in the face of local opposition. Now that enthusiasm for the *Arc* appears to have waned, opponents of the railway have seized on this as evidence for its abandonment. This is nonsense.

While it may no longer be a strategic tool for planning housing development, the fact that local authorities along the route all have local plan housing targets to meet has led housing developers to apply for, and be granted, permission to build. Communities such as Cambourne, with a Cambridgeshire postcode, have been doomed to visitation by developers who are creating huge pressure on local transport infrastructure which the road network, particularly in Cambridge itself, simply cannot accommodate. This is also true elsewhere along the route.

Whatever the remit given to the EWR Company, we need to remind ourselves of the context in which it was created, one that was very much 'bottom up' rather than 'top down'. Railfuture has long campaigned for the restoration of the route once dubbed the *varsity line*, and our arguments found favour among local authorities. It was Ipswich Borough Council, keen to establish a rail route out of East Anglia that avoided travel via London or Lincolnshire, who found a resonant voice in Milton Keynes. The *East West Main Line Partnership* was formed in the mid-1990s, and in spite of initial scepticism has continued to grow. Just about every authority from Avonmouth to Yarmouth, either directly or via their respective Sub-National Transport Bodies (STB), is now represented on the Partnership. Around six million people have local councils who are signed up members, with a further 5 million covered by non-member authorities within their respective STBs, a democratic base that compares favourably with the Scottish or Welsh parliaments or the London Assembly! Far from being a local project, East West Rail is nationally important.

This shared vision has found more recent support in the publication by Network Rail of its *East West Main Line Strategic Statement* with some very clear recommendations. It supports the development of longer distance services, besides more local ones between Cambridge and Oxford which would otherwise afford little benefit to travellers from Norwich, Swindon or Ipswich. By offering journeys that avoid changing trains, journeys can be shorter and cheaper than going via London, and more convenient for those with luggage or reduced mobility.



The advice also supports the strategic case for freight where, with electrification, the railway offers a clear pathway to zero carbon logistics that remains unclear for road transport. There is no plausible future for the long-distance movement of goods that does not include a substantial increase in its use of rail. Estimates suggest that ten trains per day from the port of Felixstowe would use East West Rail to access inland terminals at Daventry and Northampton, adding £1bn to the UK economy every year. It would also offer diversionary capacity if the main route to the north via Ely was blocked, as happened for a few days in 2021. Freight consignees require service resilience as well as value for money. A vessel carrying ninety-one miles (if laid end-to-end) of shipping containers is not going to wait around at sea for a week while the line is repaired, it will simply unload elsewhere in Europe, and the cargo eventually trans-shipped back to the UK. Good business for the ports in Holland or Germany, not good for Britain.

For these reasons, the *Strategic Advice* calls for an east-to-north link to be constructed at Bletchley and supports the electrification of the route and confirms that the route must enter Cambridge from the south. Not only is this needed to avoid reversal of freight trains, but to ensure *change free* access to Cambridge South station from Ipswich and Norwich as well as other towns to the east and west of the city. Any route requiring reversal at Cambridge will simply lose time and attract fewer journeys from our roads.

The *Strategic Advice* has been published at a useful time as we look forward to the statutory consultation later in the summer of 2022.

As part of its public engagement, the East West Rail Company held two drop-in style events in Bedfordshire in May 2022 and will hold a further eight in June and July. In the East Anglia branch area, these include Wednesday 29 June at the Clayton Hotel, Station Road, Cambridge CB1 2FB and Wednesday 20 July at The Cambridge Belfry, Back Lane, Cambourne CB23 6BW. All events are 14:00-20:00.

EAST WEST RAIL PROGRESS ON THE WESTERN SECTION PHOTOS: NICK DIBBEN

These photos taken on 16 April 2022 show the high-level platforms at Bletchley (top), Verney Junction bridge (left) and the new Winslow station platforms and track (right).



THE CHAIR, THE DESK AND THE WINDOW

BY JERRY ALDERSON

The Chair, The Desk and The Window is perhaps not interesting enough for a four-part ITV drama or a classic children's book, but it has stirred up a lot of interest amongst rail campaigners.

The railway has received a huge bailout from the government since the pandemic struck but this will not continue. The question is how it can be reduced. People with business acumen would aim to grow the business and make it more profitable, but Treasury civil servants often seek to slash costs regardless of consequences. Ticket offices are a key target for saving money, but customers want the face-to-face service to be retained. However, rail campaigners need to be careful of a knee-jerk reaction by opposing 'ticket office closures'. As rail users, what we want is the *service* that is currently provided with the aid of a chair, desk and window; the latter is *infrastructure*. Campaigners should specify the *business requirements* but leave the rail industry to identify the best *solution* to meet those requirements.

Some operators have looked at freeing staff from the confines of a room, giving them mobility to go to where the customers need them. Chiltern Railways introduced 'customer hosts' when they opened Bicester Village (pictured, right) and Oxford Parkway stations. Less successfully, Greater Anglia introduced hosts at Cambridge North, but does not allow them to sell tickets; hosts do little more than help people use a TVM.

Railfuture has considered the pros and cons of 'chaining' staff to a chair at a desk behind a window. Below are just some of the thoughts.

You know where to find someone (assuming their location is clearly signed and the staff are present).

You have to go to where the infrastructure is (which may not be close to where you are, especially if there are multiple entrances to a station and you are on the far side) – the staff do not go to where you (or the majority of people) are.

There will be a formal queuing system - everyone will be treated equally (first come, first served), rather than the person who shouts loudest or is most visible getting attention.

A person who is chained to a chair cannot quickly assist someone nearby who clearly needs some quick and simple help (e.g. struggling at a TVM or has a mobility issue) as their priority is the next person who appears at their window, regardless of urgency or level of help needed.

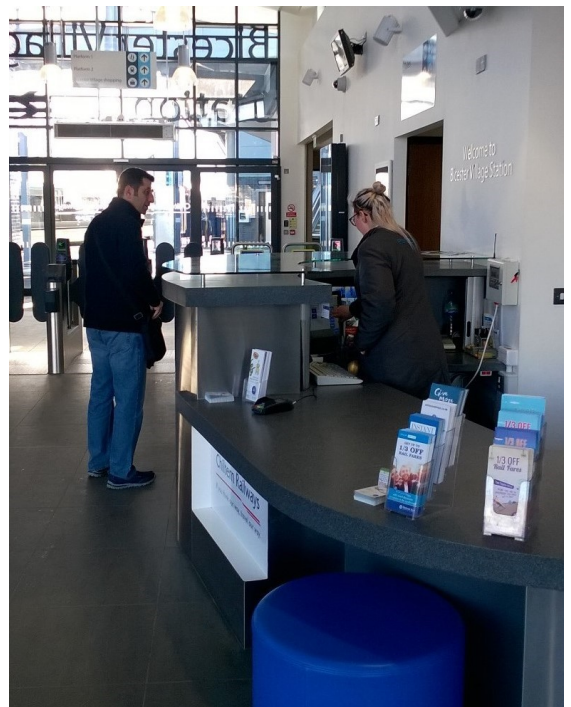
Staff have ability to focus on dealing with the one customer, without being distracted.

Staff are tied up for the entire end-to-end transaction, even though they may only be needed for part of the time (e.g. they are not achieving anything while the customer is inserting bank card into reader, entering PIN, removing card; while waiting for tickets to print). By comparison, a host who helps customers use TVMs can attend to several people at the same time.

Staff have everything to hand (including all of the stationery required for rail cards and photo cards, plus the wallets, glue etc.) - the static ticket machine may offer a full range whereas a hand-held one might not; they will also have access to all of the paper manuals (although much of this could be in a host's lockable podium and the manuals on a hand-held device)

People don't learn if it is done for them; but mobile staff can teach them to confidently use a TVM

Rail industry view: staff at a seat can be highly productive when there are a steady stream of customers but less so when there are few customers; multi-discipline staff are cost-effective and affordable.



STATION BUILDINGS... AGAIN

BY NICK DIBBEN & PETER WAKEFIELD

Over the years RAIL EAST has mentioned the great work being carried out under the aegis of the Community Rail Partnerships, local authorities and the train operating companies (in our neck of the woods, Greater Anglia (GA) and Thameslink/Great Northern) to refurbish, to repurpose station buildings. There are great examples at King's Lynn, Downham Market, Cambridge, Lowestoft, Ipswich, Wickham Market. To be added to the list are March – see the item on [page 4](#) – and, very soon, Ely. We last considered this topic in RAIL EAST issue 192 (page 8) at the end of 2021.

Alongside progress, however, there have been some disastrous losses too. British Rail demolished the main part of the lovely Newmarket station buildings and other parts were sold on. Brandon station's main buildings on the downside survive but were imminently in danger of being demolished by GA in order to provide a better user environment (as was the building at Salhouse). Local people cherish their historical (and often historic) buildings however dilapidated they have become so at the last minute a group of them got the building listed. Obviously, the train operator is annoyed, frustrated. But something has to be done to revive the building for future generations of the local community. Railfuture is encouraging all parties to forget past arguments and work together to obtain the necessary funding from as many places as possible.

We have plenty of good examples of quality repurposing to get inspiration from – so any ideas for the repurposing of Brandon station building will be gratefully received. Is anybody out there with ideas of where funding may come from? And bearing in mind that any refurbished building would have to generate funding for future upkeep, suggestions include being a heritage centre for Breckland, a café, meeting rooms for local groups, cycle hire, offices for local companies.

The work at Wickham Market station shows what can be achieved. The building now known as Station House (right photo) contains a café at platform level with space for local groups to meet. There are additional rooms upstairs that can be used as offices, training or for counselling. The station is also used by the innovative Katch electric bus service – launched in May 2021 and covered in RAIL EAST Issue 190 (page 11) – that allows passengers arriving by train to travel in an environmentally friendly way to the surrounding area. The station was rightly given an award in our 'Easy Stations' scheme and it was a pleasure to present it to Ros Webb (left photo)



An article about Easy Stations can be read on the Railfuture website. See <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1852-Easy-stations>

THE TRAVAILS OF A TRAIN TRAVELLER

BY JERRY ALDERSON

We know that the rail fares are an over-complicated nightmare, but surely we all agree that if you can buy a ticket from A-to-B then you should also be able to buy one from B-to-A (even at Pilning station in Gloucestershire where only eastbound trains call). Well, the ticket machines at Cambridge North disagree.

Taking the train to the Accelerate Rail conference in London to be part of a panel on the Digital Railway, it was not possible to buy an Anytime single to London Bridge at the TVM even though it is a valid fare as shown on brfares.com (top section, right). So, a £27.50 ticket, was bought and Oyster at a cost of £2.50, making a total of £30 rather than £28.50. On the return, the TVM at London Bridge sold the off-peak fare to Cambridge North.

SINGLE FARES ⓘ			
ANYTIME DAY S SDS	Route NOT UNDERGROUND	Validity ON DATE SHOWN	Adult £28.50
Ticket issued to: LONDON THAMESLINK <small>Fare Setten: THAMESLINK AND GT NORTHERN TL</small>			
ANYTIME DAY S SDS	Route ANY PERMITTED	Validity ON DATE SHOWN	Adult £27.50
Ticket issued to: LONDON TERMINALS <small>Fare Setten: THAMESLINK AND GT NORTHERN TL</small>			
Date / Time	Journey / Action		Charge
08:10-08:29	St Pancras International [National Rail] to London Bridge [National Rail]		£2.50

It was a mad waste of time to get a £1.50 refund, but it was done as a 'mystery shopper' exercise, particularly to see if Greater Anglia (the ticket retailer) would pass the buck to Great Northern (the train service) or even Transport for London.

Emailing GA resulted in a request for proof of purchase (image of struck-through tangerine ticket and a screenshot of the Oyster journey history was sufficient) and payment was made. No fuss, so well done GA customer services, but a black mark for whoever setup the fares from Cambridge North, which opened in 2017.

It can be annoying when a ticket gate swallows your ticket, even if your journey is over, as you may need it for expenses or to claim a Delay Repay. For those with a smartphone it's always a good idea to take a photo in advance. But how are ticket gates programmed to know which ones to retain? When travelling to London for a Eurostar train it pays to buy a Euro High-Saver ticket since it is a CIV ticket, which guarantees that Eurostar will put you on a later train free of charge if your train is delayed. On a recent trip the ticket gate at King's Cross retained it. Fortunately the train was on time, and still having the return ticket was enough proof anyway.

The government claims that the Great British Rail Sale was a huge success. Needing to go to London and back on a weekday in April, was a good reason to buy one. The Great Northern website had none, but Greater Anglia's website willingly sold one for GN's services. The sooner Great British Railways takes over retailing the better.

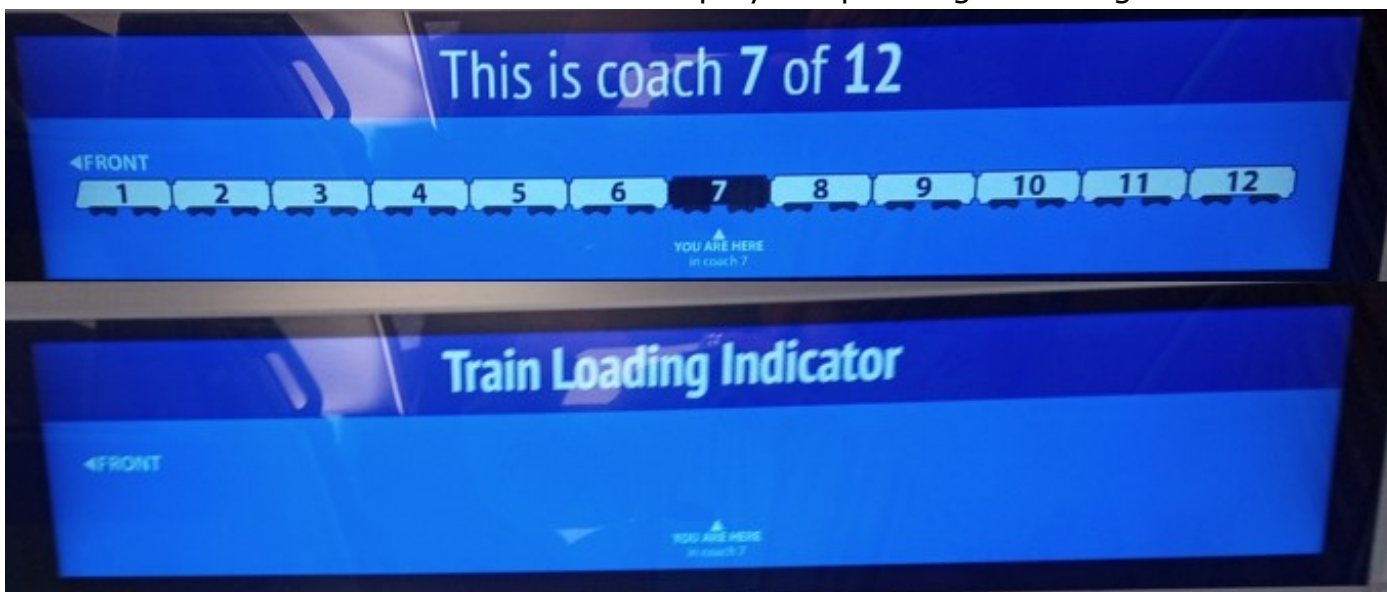
But the rail sale nearly became a rail rip-off thanks to not reading the terms and conditions properly. The GA website offered the chance to get reward points (via a company called Complete Savings). Ticking the box enrolled you in this, but a month later a £15 charge appeared on the credit card statement, and it would be that much for each month going forward. An email to their customer services resulted in immediate cancellation and a promise to refund the fee, so well done to them, but the whole thing felt like a con. It begs the question why Greater Anglia has a link to this company — presumably it gets commission. Train operators now pass all ticket revenue to the government and that would include car parking charges as well, but any independent revenue they earn is theirs to keep. So, beware, there may be other schemes on the horizon to catch out the unwary.

EAST ANGLIAN RAIL OBSERVATIONS

Phil Smart spotted passenger information displays in German and French whilst on-board a Greater Anglia class 745 intercity train:



Meanwhile, Jerry Alderson was on a Thameslink Class 700 train that knew it was 12 carriages long (as shown on the first passenger information screen image) but these had all vanished when it tried to display the passenger loadings:



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 really are essential in order to make RAIL EAST visually attractive.

All submissions by **19 August 2022**, 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.

RECEIVING RAIL EAST BY POST OR ELECTRONICALLY?

Thank you to Railfuture members who have agreed to receive RAIL EAST by email. This helps to keep Railfuture's costs down and so spend funds on rail campaigning. To switch to receiving it by email, please contact Lloyd Butler, who manages our database, at renewals@railfuture.org.uk. Your co-operation will be appreciated.

The latest RAIL EAST is at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/rail-east/> and a list of recent issues is at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/rail-east/covers/>.

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We use GoCardless to collect payment so our behalf. Read more on the Railfuture website <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/renewal/> page.

railfuture East Anglia

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Also see <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Contacts>

MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 25 JUNE 2022

St Mary's at Stoke Newington
Stoke Newington
NORWICH
IP2 8BX

CANCELLED

SATURDAY 24 SEPT 2022

Friends' Meeting House
5 Upper Goat Lane
NORWICH
NR2 1EW

SATURDAY 3 DEC 2022

The Signal Box Centre
Glenalmond Avenue
CAMBRIDGE
CB2 8DB

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

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