

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

Issue 196 • Dec 2022

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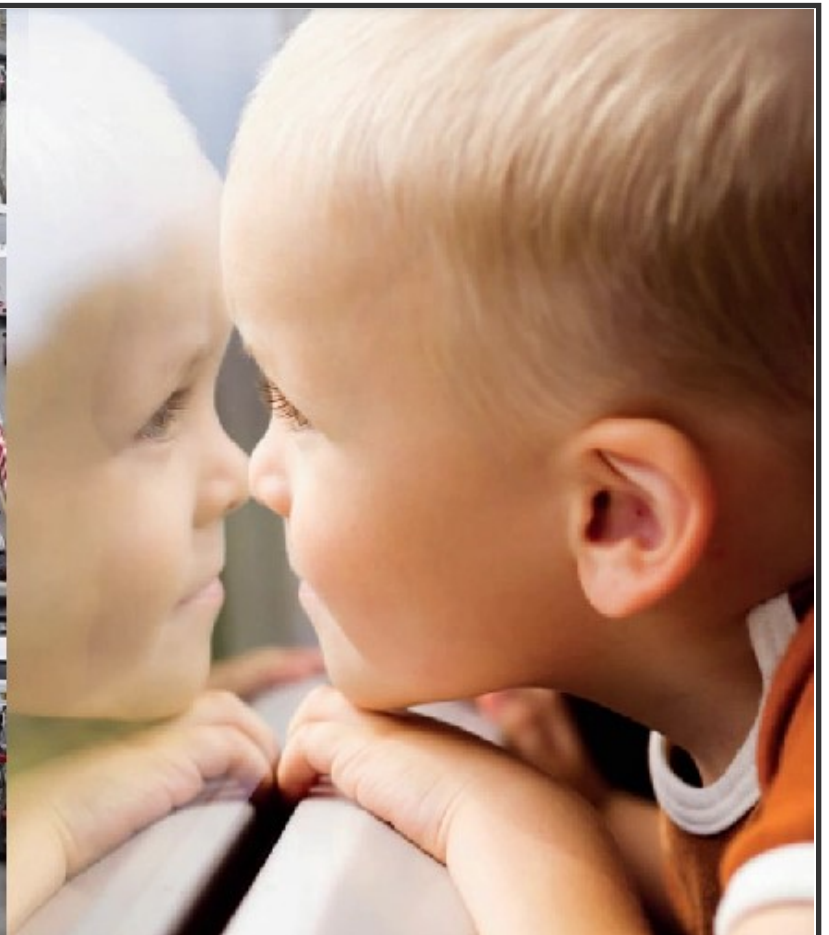
Railfuture campaigns for better services over a bigger railway (passengers + freight)

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50 Years of Railfuture East Anglia – 1972 - 2022



Rail — it CAN be the alternative to road chaos

Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- Train operator inflexibility
- Changes to car park payments
- East West Rail—it must happen
- Community Rail Partnerships
- Thurston station building
- Transport East Summit
- Helpful ticket vending machines
- New station information displays
- Rail fares versus air fares—fair?
- Are bus cuts a sign of doom?

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE OF RAIL EAST

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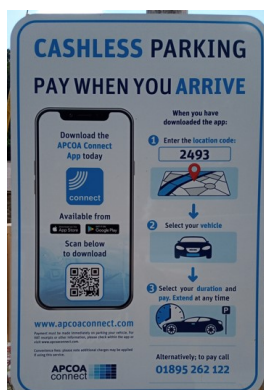
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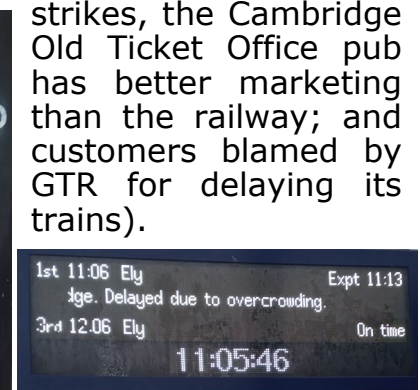
Front cover photo credits: traffic jam from metro.co.uk 23/07/2022 issue; child staring out of train window from Railfuture's 2017 membership leaflet. Below are some images relevant to articles in this issue (cashless parking from Okehampton,



*National Rail
Industrial action
– only travel
if necessary.*

Please be aware, should industrial action go ahead, there will be a very limited train service running between 0730 and 1830 from this station on Tuesday 21, Thursday 23 and Saturday 25 June, with possible disruption the following day. We're sorry for the potential disruption to your journey.

For the latest information download our app or go online at greateranglia.co.uk



CHAIR'S THOUGHTS

BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH



It's not just the hardware!

Come along to our Cambridge Meeting on 3 December 2022 to hear about Railfuture's ideas for how the railway in East Anglia can and should develop over the coming years to enable it to play a greater role in meeting the region's transport needs. A lot of time has been spent looking at the data and trying to work out what role rail can play. The study, which included work by a highly respected consultant we commissioned, has looked at the main transport corridors in the region and at the prospect of copying the Devon Metro idea of local rail services around Exeter for our main centres. It is more than a simple shopping list or a case of let's re-open all the old routes. By looking at the data the study focused on the key traffic flows and in some instances, we have not been afraid to say, "we don't think this scheme makes sense".

A successful railway network in the future does not just depend on the infrastructure. Aspects such as making life easier for passengers matter as well. So how can we make passengers happier? It is not a question that gets asked often enough. I have just started reading a book called *Transport for Humans* by Pete Dyson and Rory Sutherland who are trying to answer such elemental questions. If you are time poor, there's a very readable article by the authors summarizing the book's ideas available at <https://behavioralscientist.org/designing-transport-for-humans-not-econs/>. I wonder how many of our train operators' senior staff have read the book. The answer may be very few, based on some recent changes to the rail network. A couple of examples perhaps illustrate this.

Have you noticed how few stations now have printed timetables on display? Whilst most stations now have electronic customer information screens (CIS) — see images of LNER's impressive new CIS on page 21 — they don't tell you anything about connections or the times of the trains on your return journey and from time to time the screens don't work. It may have been understandable during the worst of COVID-19, when timetables were changing on a regular basis, but now things are more stable it is surely time for the timetables to return.

A second issue, and not just affecting the railways, is the removal of car park ticket machines from stations, particularly after the installation of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR). GTR, running most of the services in the west of our region, has just made the announcement (see image, right) and in future, unless you have registered your vehicle for automatic pay as you go charging, you will have to use the car parking app on your smart phone or ring the car park operator to pay.



The way you pay for parking is changing

Payment machines are being withdrawn shortly, download the APCOA Connect App for quick and easy payment

No smartphone? Paying via phone is easy too, just note the location code and call 01895 262122

Please visit apcoa.co.uk/great-northern for more information on alternative payment options

Great Northern APCOA PARKING

There are several problems with this approach. Firstly, not all people have smart phones, and if they do, many people will be reluctant to use them to make payments. Secondly, the information is not clear about how long people are given to pay. So, if you are making a long journey and want to pay when you arrive at your destination and you can access a phone, will that be too late? The idea of people reading out their credit card details on a crowded train is not one that

should be encouraged. The answer is simple; allow people to pay for car parking (providing their car registration if necessary) when they buy their tickets at the station using the ticket machine or at a ticket office. The response of the train operators is likely to be "but the car park operator is a different company". The passenger response will be "WE DON'T CARE, THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM!"

For those able and happy to use a smartphone, the promised app from Great British Railways (GBR) ought to allow you to pay for car parking at any station in Britain, so you have a 'one-stop shop' for everything. No-one wants so to install multiple parking apps if they use station car parks from different operators (especially when on holiday).

The above examples show that whilst we may think about long-term strategies, there are many simple problems that need to be solved that are easy and cheap to do, if only the will was there.

Meanwhile, with COP27 proceeding as I write, several articles in this issue underline the fact that achieving a green future for transport won't be straightforward. Peter Wakefield (page 11) discusses the potential impact of local lobbying on our largest proposed infrastructure project, while Martin Cooper, reporting on the Transport East policy summit (page 8), references work by the consultancy Arup suggesting that just replacing fossil fuel powered cars with EVs may simply create a different set of environmental headaches. And in writing about future plans for freight on page 18, Phil Smart highlights the ongoing challenge of decarbonising the road vehicles that will continue to be required for essential goods and materials. The message? No easy answers...

I hope to see you in Cambridge on Saturday 3 December. For those of you who attended last year, when two representatives from Network Rail were our guest speakers, it is the same venue. The Signal Box Community Centre, in Glenalmond Avenue, is a short walk south from Cambridge station, via the guided busway route, turning right into the blocks of apartments, as shown in the map below.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 3 DECEMBER **SIGNAL BOX COMMUNITY CENTRE, CAMBRIDGE CB2 8DB**

Our guest speaker will be Jonathan Roberts, pictured left, who spoke to us at the February 2022 meeting in Bury St Edmunds with his

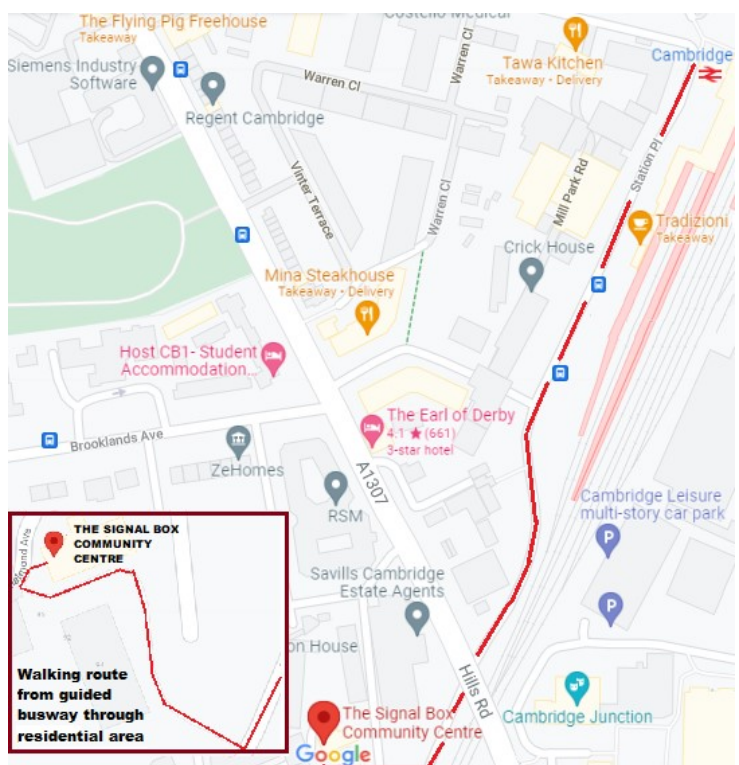


his initial findings for our East Anglia Regional Rail Strategy. Having completed his work, he now returns to present his conclusions, and then

Railfuture will take the project forward, publishing various reports.

After that, on 25 February 2023 in Bury St Edmunds, our guest speaker will be Nick Flynn of the Family Friendly Trains campaign. He lives in East Anglia so can give some relevant insights into our trains and stations. Then on 17 June in Ipswich, Anthony Dewar, Network Rail's Technical Head of Buildings and Architecture.

Our meetings always start at **14.00**.



TRAIN OPERATOR AGILITY – OR PERHAPS NOT

BY JERRY ALDERSON

RAIL EAST 195 briefly mentioned the summer's rail strikes, which are likely to continue into 2023. Most people have learned to work around strikes by planning ahead and changing their plans, but what about after strikes have been called off?

When there's a reason to cancel rail services, such as extreme weather conditions, the rail industry seem to respond very quickly. However, they don't seem to be able to reinstate service as quickly, as shown by this quoted re-tweet (right) from Sir Michael Holden, former chair of East Coast.



Michael Holden
@holdmch

I reckon this demonstrates the pressing need for more flexibility in the very short term planning and rostering business. I imagine coach and airline operators would have reacted much faster to reinstate services in such a situation

T/ Thameslink @TLRailUK · Nov 4

Following today's announcement by RMT, national rail strikes have been called off on 5, 7 & 9 November.

However, due to the short notice, our timetable and travel advice for Saturday 5 and Monday 7 November remains unchanged. Please only travel if absolutely necessary. (1/2)

Passengers often don't realise how the railway in Britain (as opposed to other countries that haven't experienced its upheaval) is operated and may assume it's easy for trains to operate as normal the next day. It is not. Simpler industries, such as the teaching profession, where teachers and lecturers (who mainly work the same hours each day between Monday and Friday at a single location) can go back to work immediately and lessons/lectures resume from where they left off. The railway has logistical issues (location of people and vehicles) that most non-transport industries don't have to worry about, and is not multi-skilled in the way that retailing is, for example.

Great Northern

On Friday 4 November late afternoon, the RMT union called off its planned strikes. GTR operated normally on Wednesday 9 but not Saturday 5 or Monday 7. RAIL EAST asked Martin Darby (pictured), Stakeholder Manager at Govia Thameslink, to explain to readers why it could only run a very limited service the next day and not a normal service until Tuesday. He writes...



"The RMT industrial action planned for was called off late on Friday, which was after the point it would have been possible for us to reinstate normal services for the following day (Saturday) and also on Monday.

"We know this was frustrating for many rail users and there has been much discussion about why operators could not reintroduce full services once strikes had been called off.

"For us, the main challenge was that the rosters for our staff are all carefully planned to fit the limited service we can run on strike days, with rosters usually agreed over a week in advance.

"While there is some flexibility, once rosters have been set, agreeing changes means contacting thousands of people, from drivers to station staff and engineers, on a one-to-one basis, with many unable to change their plans at the last minute due to essential training or personal commitments.

"Our assessment is that at least four days are required to revert a strike service to a normal one. In this case, the strike was suspended on Friday afternoon, with

staff working over the weekend to reintroduce as many services as they could by manually matching available staff to new rosters.

"These plans also then needed to be shared with other operators and Network Rail to ensure they did not clash.

"To give readers a sense of the challenge, our normal weekday timetable has around 2,800 passenger services running, with a further 400 to 500 empty train movements to make those services happen. The strike timetable only has around 680 services running. So, switching to the regular timetable is a significant challenge which would have involved transitioning trains and staff across multiple days, as the end point of a train one day will affect the service the next day, and re-rostering more than 1,500 staff and reinserting 2,100 trains at short notice.

"Additionally, once strikes are announced, Network Rail plans engineering work on some routes to avoid disrupting customers on another day where a full service would be otherwise possible.

"This then adds an additional layer of complexity, as planned engineering works cannot be changed or cancelled quickly.

"For instance, on our routes, engineering work was planned between London and Luton, disrupting services which would have normally run on a strike day, and between Eastbourne and Lewes, where services would not have run on a strike day.

"Whilst the weekend was spent manually planning and adding additional services where possible, there was a limit to what could be achieved. We were also conscious that a short notice plan is not as resilient as a normal timetable, so we only added what we were certain could be delivered.

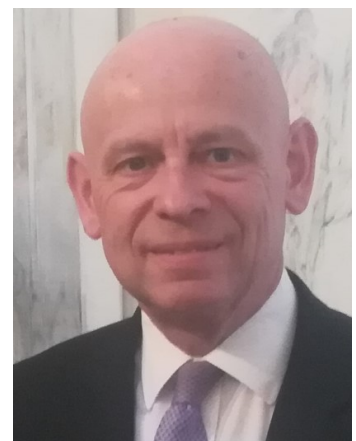
"In the end, we were able to add just under 300 additional services compared to our original strike timetable and extend our operating hours, with the last trains from London to Cambridge departing shortly before 21.00.

"We did though have enough time to get everything in place to run a normal mid-week service from around 09.00 on Tuesday and throughout the day on Wednesday."

Greater Anglia

In contrast to Great Northern, Greater Anglia (GA) seemed to have few problems on the Monday. RAIL EAST asked Alan Neville (right), its Community and Customer Engagement Manager, to explain. He said: "During that weekend our train planning, control and operational teams worked really hard to enable GA to provide a normal service for our passengers on the Monday, following the cancellation of the RMT strikes on Friday afternoon.

"Re-writing plans and making sure that everything was in place was a huge job, but the end result on Monday was greatly appreciated by our passengers and we had many positive comments on our media channels who thanked us for running the service we did."



That said, not everything went swimmingly. The Fen Line Users Association reported that the 19:07 GA train from Liverpool Street to King's Lynn was cancelled, with no GTR Fen Line trains that evening to take people home.

For Railfuture, campaigning for a bigger and better railway, encouraging people to swap car for train, our work is undermined by the continuing habit of the railway to

shoot itself in the foot (either deliberately or inadvertently), particularly by spreading the "don't travel by train" message, seemingly as the first course of action rather than the last. It's not just the reputational damage to current and potential passengers, but the economics of the railway that is affected. The Treasury-DfT will not fund capital projects and new or improved services unless sufficient revenue will be returned. As pointed out in RAIL EAST 195 (pages 9 and 10), passengers have flocked back, particularly for cheaper leisure travel, but the revenue is lagging far behind 2019 figures (which the rail industry has confirmed).

Experience of a retired career railwayman

Railfuture director Stewart Palmer, who worked in the railway industry for 38 years, ending up as Managing Director of South West Trains, offers his thoughts on the management of rail operations. He writes...

What you need to run a railway are signallers, electrical control staff, incident response staff, rolling stock, drivers and in some cases guards, depot staff, fitters, shunters, etc. All the rest are essentially "nice to have" but not mission critical.

All those people were available, and presumably being paid, so why did hardly any trains run on Saturday 5 November and even the following week many services were cancelled or disrupted?

It is simply not true to say, "that trains could not run". Yes, the information on National Rail Enquiries (NRE) would have been inaccurate. Passenger information systems would not work, and neither would signallers' Automatic Route Setting (ARS), but all of those things do not stop the railway from running. Many TOCs have well developed emergency timetables to deal with events like snow and these are fully diagrammed for both stock and crews. Are we honestly saying it is not possible to activate such plans in 12 hours? I know it is, we have done it in the past. In this world of the internet and social media it is perfectly possible to advise potential passengers of the proposed pattern of service and get that on TOC websites and NRE within hours, showing which routes are running and at what intervals and where they would stop.

I can only conclude that it was all "just too difficult". People were not prepared to work through the night to make it happen. Customer focus?

The problem is we now have a railway led by people who mostly have no real underpinning knowledge of how the railway actually works. They listen to people who tell them what can't be done, and they do not challenge this because they don't have the experience to know what good actually looks like. This is another chapter in the sad decline from a railway that was "can do" to one that now seems incapable of rising to any unexpected challenge. This dismal showing will provide more ammunition to those people who are saying the railway has become an expensive anachronism that the country cannot afford in the present economic climate.

Stewart has written a personal article on his concerns for the future of Britain's railway for the Railfuture Wessex autumn 2022 newsletter, which can be viewed at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display3161>.

Further reading

A couple of articles on the failure to get services reinstated:

<https://news.railbusinessdaily.com/operators-scramble-to-return-timetables-to-normal/>

<https://railinsider.co.uk/2022/11/05/rmt-call-off-strikes-yet-still-passengers-face-travel-chaos/>



TRANSPORT EAST SUMMIT A KEY STEP IN FORMALISING REGIONAL STRATEGY BY MARTIN COOPER



Transport East (TE), the Sub-national Transport Body for Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, held a summit on 20 September 2022 at Trinity Park in Ipswich which I attended on behalf of Railfuture. Regular readers of RAIL EAST may recall we discussed some of the key points articulated in the TE Draft Strategy earlier this year in issue 193.

The revised strategy document, together with the presentations shown at the summit, can be found at <https://www.transporeast.org.uk/accelerating-better-and-more-sustainable-transport-connections-for-the-east-is-the-focus-for-regional-transport-summit/>

At the summit TE announced that DfT ministers have signed off the draft strategy, including the key principles of planning for decarbonisation, better connectivity between main urban centres, supporting better transport links to the ports and neighbouring regions, and improved transport for our rural and coastal communities. In introducing the updated Strategy document, Andrew Summers, Strategic Director of Transport East, drew attention to areas of the strategy that had been strengthened by the consultation process – to which over 600 individuals and organisations had contributed (among them of course Railfuture). These included

- Adjusting the vision to strengthen decarbonisation of transport and inclusivity
- Strengthening of decarbonisation approach, including:
- commitment to review a transport carbon budget
- emphasising the role of existing communities
- Strengthening the link between rural and urban areas
- Stronger boundary relationships to the west and south
- More on levelling up – rural, coastal & urban

Since most of these areas for further development were identified in the Railfuture submission to the earlier consultation, it's worth underlining here the practical value of the responses Railfuture makes to consultations both local and national. And it's good to report here that our reservations about the draft strategy were noted and acted on.

The revised Strategy overall is good news for rail as TE is promoting a number of key schemes as high priorities for the region consistent with the above principles. Early delivery of East West Rail from Bedford to Cambridge, urgent upgrade of Ely North Junction, doubling the single-track section from Soham to Ely Dock Junction section and removing the single lead at Haughley Junction (just north of Stowmarket) to allow faster running across the flat junction are all clearly identified in the plan. However, getting these schemes committed to construction remains a challenge due to government spending restrictions, but lobbying by local MPs has been coordinated.

TE has engaged the consultancy Arup to assist in modelling future travel demand across the region, capturing the gross impact of many thousands of daily individual choices. An early illustration of the power of the model was demonstrated by the finding that the volume of car trips was likely to rise because people see driving an Electric Vehicle (EV) as guilt free whilst retaining flexibility and convenience.

My conclusion having attended the summit is that there is no room for complacency that decarbonisation on its own will drive the growth of rail passenger travel. Other policies will be needed to achieve modal shift and solve the congestion and air pollution problems that EVs will exacerbate if the Arup model's forecasts are accurate. We need to focus on how road and rail can collaborate, making best use of rail for fast interurban and longer journeys, trunk haulage of freight and new mass

WHERE STAGECOACH LEADS...?

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

In recent issues of RAIL EAST we have voiced concern at “chopping and changes” in railway timetables. We fully understand the need for some of the earlier changes as response to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, subsequent staff sickness and so on.

**TOWNS & CITIES
HIGHLIGHTED IN
BLACK BOXES**

Ely
Haverhill
Huntingdon
March
Peterborough
St Ives
St Neots

Great Northern (GN) / Thameslink (TL) recently dropped the entire half-hourly Cambridge-King's Cross non-stop service when geological conditions exacerbated by the summer heatwave forced speed restrictions between Littleport and Downham Market. Only after adverse comments was half the service restored. Vast numbers of people were and are inconvenienced by both operators. GN's service is back to normal. But what has been the cost in terms of reputational damage to the railway?

In Cambridgeshire, Stagecoach gave notice that it is to withdraw 20 or so services from the end of October 2022. Over the years it has steadily thinned out services, withdrawn the last bus(es) of the day, chopped and changed. The company always more important than the user.

Even though intervention by the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority rescued the bulk of these crucial services at the eleventh hour, we know that the funding available for this to happen runs out in March 2023. What then? Who will change their daily travel patterns to use public transport if the service is being constantly “chopped and changed”? Who will do so if there is no certainty that the service will be there in the foreseeable future? Who will do so if a service can be

withdrawn at virtually no notice, with no apparent pressure or obligation for transport authorities to provide a substitute?

This bus route shut down potentially left thousands of users without any alternative way of getting to school, college, work and leisure. Thousands stranded because years of chopping and changing has bled the network of thousands of former users that has in turn led to the bus network becoming unviable. A truly vicious circle! Generally speaking, the bus services that were facing withdrawal are rural, where the oft expressed excuse of traffic congestion leading to poor quality of service, cannot be used.

The railway must not get into the spiral of steady and irreversible decline. As suggested in the article on train strikes (pages 5-7), confidence is hard won and easily lost. Are some train operators heading into the spiral?

Below is a table of the current services provided by train operating companies (TOCs) Cross Country (XC) and Greater Anglia (GA) between Stansted Airport and Cambridge. Shaded columns indicate the Cross Country services that for most of the day cross Cambridge from / to Peterborough, Leicester and Birmingham. The GA services generally operate across Cambridge from Norwich. XC has gone from hourly throughout the day to two-hourly for much of the day with half its service from the west terminating at Cambridge. XC tells us that this pattern gives certainty that trains will run and where trains are now terminated at Cambridge, there is connection provided by GA. Is the now enforced nine-on 40-minute wait at Cambridge for a user trying to get between the airport and March, Peterborough, Leicester and so on reasonable?

Additionally, between them the TOCs have left two-hour gaps in the service between the airport and Cambridge as well.

Managed decline? Or casual thoughtlessness of the needs of users...and the future.

Cambridge dep	04.43	05.17	06.35	07.35	08.13	09.14	09.51	10.48	11.11	11.50	12.48	13.11
Stansted Airport arr	05.14	05.48	07.09	08.13	09.14	09.44	10.21	11.21	11.41	12.21	13.21	13.41
Cambridge dep	13.48	14.48	15.11	15.47	16.47	17.11	//	19.11	20.50	21.11	22.11	
Stansted Airport arr	14.24	15.24	15.41	16.24	17.24	17.41	//	19.41	21.24	21.41	22.41	
Stansted Airport dep	05.27	06.12	07.21	08.21	09.21	10.27	10.48	11.48	12.27	12.48	13.48	14.27
Cambridge arr	05.55	06.47	07.56	08.58	09.57	10.57	11.19	12.19	12.56	13.19	14.27	14.56
Stansted Airport dep	14.48	15.37	16.27	16.48	17.54	18.21	//	20.21	//	22.10	22.27	22.57
Cambridge arr	15.24	16.15	16.56	17.27	18.34	18.56	//	20.56	//	22.45	22.56	23.26

The way to do it?

Greater Anglia has recently been awarded the well-deserved accolade of Best Train Operator of the Year. We have our concerns with GA of course, but it does run a reliable service with a good train fleet, little chopping and changing, well presented stations with more to come, well trained, pleasant helpful staff. It has recently offered "the Hare Fare promotion", a short season of heavily discounted fares. It is not complacent. The way to do it...

XC should follow suit by restoring its full timetable (add to it, even), promote its services with fare promotions and offer us a vision for the future that shows it's working towards an early until late (two way) service seven days a week. Get the staffing issues sorted.

Great Northern could well emulate GA and become the Best Train Operator of the Year – but it must not lose focus as it did this year and complacently mess its users around. And Thameslink must address the unreliability its services suffer on a daily basis and get its staffing issues properly sorted.

RAILFUTURES – WHY CAMBRIDGE GROWTH NEEDS RAIL

BY KATIE THORNBURROW



We asked Cllr Katie Thornburrow (pictured left, outside Cambridge station), the Cambridge City Executive Councillor for Planning & Infrastructure, how she sees the railway contributing to the sustainable development of the city. Here is her reply.

It's a real privilege to represent Cambridge City Council on the East West Mainline Partnership, and an opportunity to ensure that we can make a full contribution to improving rail services in the region.

It also reflects the commitments made by Cambridge Labour, the controlling group on the City Council, to support further rail investment and improvements, acknowledging what has currently been achieved and building on it.

Our wider transport strategy is clear about the importance of rail and the City Council, via the County Council as the transport authority, made a commitment to support investment and improvements in the rail network through the 2014 Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, which supports our current 2018 Local Plan.

It's great that all the planned rail service improvements have been implemented along with many of the future service enhancement sought, but the main outstanding development is the Bedford to Cambridge connection which is essential for East West Rail. Fortunately, funding has been allocated for the feasibility, contracts and delivery of the Stage 3 Bedford to Cambridge section and, subject to ministerial approval, this could be approved in the next few weeks – but with so many changes in the government we may have to wait longer to know if this will be granted or not.

And we want to go further, with a proper assessment of routes from Norwich and Ipswich to Swindon, Bristol and Cardiff via Cambridge. We need a more extensive, integrated rail system that is not London-centric, one that reflects changing patterns of living and working. It is vital that we get this right: a modern transport system needs to work for people in their daily lives. People shape their lives around transport systems, asking whether there is a bus stop near home or work, how long it will be to cycle to a rail station or get to the shops or GP surgery.

These are fundamental considerations, and we will be judged on how effectively we can deliver. Working with the East West Mainline Partnership offers a significant contribution to achieving our shared goals.

Katie's role on the East West Partnership leads nicely into the next article.

EAST WEST RAIL PROGRESS – A PERSONAL VIEW

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The right to access every building in a city by private motorcar in an age when everyone possesses such a vehicle is actually the right to destroy the city. Lewis Mumford - The Highway and the City: Essays (ed. 1963)

Already perhaps a distant memory, summer 2022 brought days of all but unliveable temperatures of around 40°C, plus a long drought, glacial and sea ice melting at previously unthinkable rates, sea levels rising. An accelerating, unsustainable change in the global climate. We are leaving our grandchildren an unliveable planet.

As has been demonstrated many times, carbon emission from road transport is a major contributor to that change. By contrast rail has a high value as an environmentally sustainable mode of transport. We believe that encouraging growth in rail's market share — both passenger and freight — is a vital component of a net zero strategy. In some areas of high economic and associated population growth, such as ours in eastern England, new railways and light rail lines are needed to take advantage of steel wheel on steel rail's unbeatable sustainability.

Any new railway must be promoted now, planned now and construction started shortly to enable completion within 10 years for the next generation to start to change their travel habits. Whether it's regional planners advocating road charging, new bus routes or new railways / tramways, the time to act is now. This is the well-known background to EWR. All this got me thinking about how hard it is to promote new sustainable infrastructure, and of course, how frustrating. So here is a personal view of the frustrations of promoting East West Rail in view of the oncoming possibly irreversible climate disaster.

I've lived in Cambridge city for 25 years but all my long life previously I lived in villages; long enough to see them change from being self-sufficient in jobs where most laboured on the land to the present, when very few do so. The village has been gentrified and expanded, often becoming an expensive dormitory to the neighbouring town. Anybody reading the local press in the Cambridge area would think a new railway is being built from Bedford (population about 185,000) to Cambridge (population about 150,000), through St Neots (population 30,000) and Cambourne (population 12,000), to deliberately spite those 1,500 or so who live in the one or two South Cambridgeshire villages along its way. The media has gleefully focused on small groups who have decided they do not want the line near them. Yet the media forgets that the indicative route was chosen following public consultation.

The media, including the local BBC station, heads news of the project as "controversial", in spite of every local authority and the sub national transport authorities from Norwich and Ipswich in the east over to Swindon in the west supporting it. From our own campaigning in Railfuture, we know that over 10,000 people wrote to support the project via their MP.

Everybody has the right to a say in planning, no matter how ill-informed they are about the overall objectives. But some of the exaggerations, lies even, are astounding. I've noted that village folk nowadays tend to exist in fairly well-to-do enclaves that send their "labourers" off to work each day in convoys of large cars with no regard to the environmental harm they are inflicting — tyre and exhaust particulates, air pollution, noise, crashes, deaths, injuries and so on. These "labourers" inflict all this on those who live in the urban area where they earn their living, do their shopping, seek out many of their leisure activities. Or they are well-to-do retirees who want to put up a drawbridge against the world they occasionally foray out into in their SUVs with similar affects. I admit it didn't occur to me for a long time — I too was doing just that as I drove out each morning.

So, to repeat, no thought of the future world that's on a tipping point of climate disaster, of young people whose future will be moving via public transport, that the steel wheel on steel rail is the most efficient form of transport, that most problems associated with this incredible form of public transport can be effectively mitigated.

Sadly, the media cynically has not carefully explained what the project will do, what it won't do. They prefer to obsess over the ransom strip a relatively tiny group of people are trying to erect across its route. No irony in one Twitter account (of an otherwise sensible BBC reporter, seemingly a village resident) that shows a photograph of countryside to be "ruined" followed by another of activity in their lane that showed it lined with parked high-end cars, all invisible it seems. But they are real nonetheless and will each day nose out en masse to cause grief to thousands of urban dwellers, often the poorest of our nation. Yes, it is the way of the world. Nobody's fault. But do not make exaggerated claims against a new link that will be of great benefit to the majority, mitigating many of the problems you are causing.

The new East West Railway will provide a metro service between our large settlements, quietly, with no pollution compared to other modes. It will provide a way to carry more goods by rail with 76% less carbon emitted per tonne carried. It will settle back into the countryside once built and be hardly noticed with only a brief disturbance as a train passes. And - unlike the equivalent road that is a wall of continual noise, roar of tyres on tarmac, screaming engines each carting around an average one person - largely silent.

THE SAGA OF THURSTON'S STATION BUILDING

BY LIZ MCGREGOR

In Thurston, right in the middle of this doubling-in-size Suffolk village, you will find a handsome, nineteenth century, Grade 2 Listed station building (below) holding up the Ipswich-bound platform.

It is vacant, boarded-up, un-loved and an eyesore.



CHAPTER ONE: Greater Anglia would like to let it with the incoming tenant taking on the cost of refurbishing it internally. This cost would be high. No wonder that it's been empty for many years. A recent site visit showed its great potential and some work is planned for the exterior. Let's hope the rent level will generously reflect its current condition.

CHAPTER TWO: The car park was sold off about 20 years ago and a block of flats has been built at either side of the front of the building. Securing parking for station tenants will be a priority.

CHAPTER THREE: The top floor is at platform level and would be ideal for passengers to have a safe, dry area to wait, but it's also boarded up. It could be for passenger use with modest facilities and would encourage all Thurston residents to have confidence in using the station, especially the vulnerable who are the most reliant on public transport.

CHAPTER FOUR: There is a very dangerous barrow crossing to access the westbound platform. It is used every day by large numbers of young students attending Thurston Community College.

Why is it taking years for a solution to be found and acted on by Network Rail?

COMMUNITY ACTION for THURSTON STATION (CATS) is a local lobbying group that is trying to raise the profile of this station with all current and potential stakeholders. Greater Anglia is in regular touch and is undertaking limited works to the site. Lobbying of Mid Suffolk District Council to use it for the community is being looked into.

With imagination and investment it could become a proud community asset for the village. There's a lot of goodwill to help the station. **Can you help us to find potential new tenants?**

CATS continues to lobby for decisive action from the key players.

Contact for CATS – Liz McGregor ejmcbg@btinternet.com

THE RAILWAY IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE TRAINS – MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

BY PETER FEENEY

Liz McGregor's article on page 13 describes the ongoing campaign to restore the handsome station building at Thurston near Bury St Edmunds to productive use. Close at hand on the Mid-Anglia route, Elmswell has hosted a successful travel business for a number of years, and the fine building at Needham Market is home to an IT company. Both enterprises contribute to their communities and add value to the economy. Let's hope it isn't too long before RAIL EAST is able to report similarly on progress at Thurston, a rapidly expanding village with an under-exploited resource right at its heart. We also look forward to hearing positive news from Bury St Edmunds itself, where the attractively restored Stationmaster's House cries out for tenants able to exploit this landmark location.

More broadly, there are two further ways in which the passenger railway can be foregrounded in the life of the communities it serves. One focusses on individual stations and the image of the railway they present to travellers and to the communities in which the stations are located. The other builds on that station-based activity, operating at route level to create opportunities for the rail service to engage positively with business, schools and community groups. Of course, station adopters and the network of Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) operating across the eastern network.

The work of such groups generally goes "unsung" — like the bulk of voluntary activity within all communities — but from time to time celebratory events take place highlighting their efforts and recognising the difference they make. And during October 2022 several such celebrations have occurred, collectively providing a sense of the enthusiasm and commitment local groups are applying to enhance rail travel in the east.

National recognition was given to the work of a number of eastern CRPs at the Annual Rail Awards organised by the Community Rail Network (CRN) and held in Manchester on 6 October 2022. Pride of place went to the Essex and South Suffolk CRP (photo of the team, right), which was awarded joint first prize in the Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail category. The judges' citation referenced the wide range of activities undertaken by the Partnership to make rail travel as welcoming and inclusive as possible to a diverse population of potential users – from working with schools on rail safety to taking a large group of refugees and asylum seekers on a day trip from Colchester to the seaside; from running a dementia-friendly day out to working with Greater Anglia on a video highlighting things for travellers to see and do on the six routes served by the Partnership. Incidentally, the Awards Booklet produced by the CRN — download available at communityrail.org.uk/events-training/community-rail-awards — offers a vibrant and heartening picture of the work being undertaken by countless volunteers right across the rail network to promote rail travel and demonstrate its growing relevance to communities in the twenty first century.



More locally, October also saw the start of celebrations to mark the tenth anniversary of the Hereward CRP, serving the route between Ely and Peterborough.

A year long programme kicked off with a *Herewards are Go!* day on 15 October 2022, where travellers on morning services were offered commemorative gifts including packets of bespoke Hereward-branded biscuits, alongside leaflets celebrating the work of the Partnership and offering information about the communities served by the route. Anyone using the Peterborough - Ely service will be aware of the continuing efforts being made to enhance station facilities right along the route. The CRP has been a prime mover in this effort, working very effectively with councils from parishes to county and with Greater Anglia.



Hereward stall at Ely station (21 Oct)



Branded biscuits

Another recent community celebration was Greater Anglia's annual Awards Day for station adopters, held at Ipswich Town's Portman Road stadium on 12 October 2022. It's worth a reminder that the bulk of the stations managed by GA — 126 out of 135 — benefit from the efforts of local adopters, and the fruits of their labours are visible in artwork, re-wilded green spaces and of course impressive flower displays across the network. In Cambridgeshire the nectar-rich moth garden created by adopters at Shelford station received Greater Anglia's "Environment & Innovation" award, whilst in Essex the work of adopters at Ingatestone was recognised, with initiatives ranging from gardening to installing local history boards (Ingatestone was also a finalist in the station of the year competition held at the National Rail Awards in 2022). Meanwhile, stations singled out for praise in Norfolk and Suffolk included a special judges' award for the horticulture on display at Eccles Road, a "best adopter group" for the work done by volunteers at Thetford, Brandon and Lakenheath, a "Community Involvement" award for adopters at Westerfield station and various other trophies for work done at Great Yarmouth, Trimley and Beccles. Bampton and Sheringham station adopters jointly received the best "Small Station" award.

The level of commitment to nature at Thetford looks especially striking — aside from the erection of bat and swift nesting boxes, it's reasonable to assume that the station is unique in having a fernery installed in a disused customer toilet. An imaginative green re-purposing of an existing resource!

All the evidence available indicates that the Adopter Scheme alongside the innovative work facilitated by the network of CRPs is making a material difference both to stations and to the communities they serve. It is to be hoped that the two key "missing links" in the GA network — the route from Ely to Norwich and the Mid-Anglia route between Ipswich and Cambridge/Ely, both serving ever growing populations and with high passenger footfall — can be moved up the priority list for action between the train operator and the relevant councils. The significant value added will be worth the effort!



Thanks to Railfuture member Ben Walsh and to GA's Alan Neville for their assistance in providing additional information for this article.

A FEN LINE ANNIVERSARY – THIRTY YEARS UNDER THE WIRES BY MARK COLLINS (OF THE FEN LINE USERS ASSOCIATION)

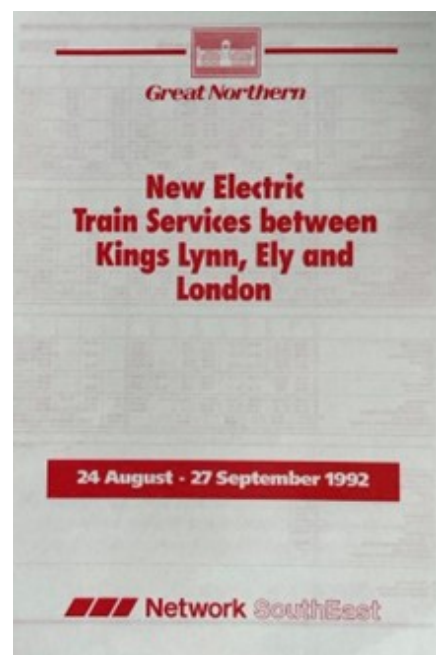
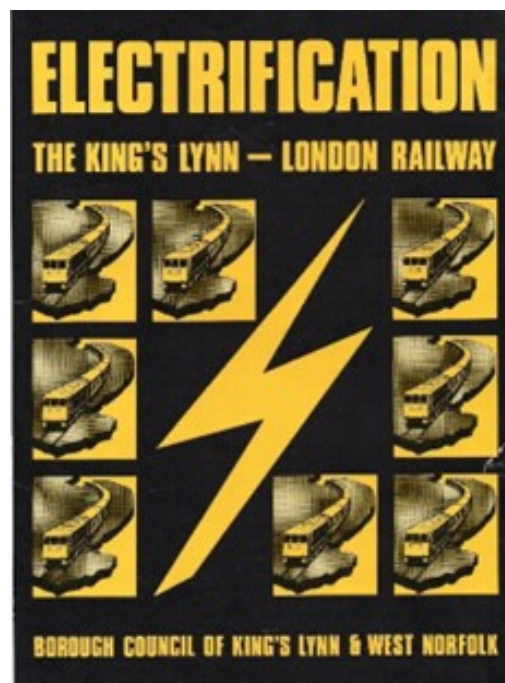
I first travelled on the Fen Line back in 1980, when a family move from Horsham to Wisbech meant the rare opportunity of a long-distance rail journey on a proper train, hauled by a locomotive! Down in West Sussex I'd grown up with electric trains and Horsham had frequent, fast services to no fewer than three London termini. East Anglia, by comparison, seemed something of a railway backwater, although the diesel trains, despite their faults, certainly had more character than the EMUs I'd been used to. Twelve years later EMUs reached King's Lynn too and this year, 2022, celebrates 30 years of electric trains on the line.

Electrification to King's Lynn, and even onwards to Hunstanton, had in fact been envisaged many years earlier in BR's Modernisation Plan of 1955, but south of Cambridge the wires ended abruptly at Royston and Bishop's Stortford, which were seen very much as the limits of "outer suburban" services. Ageing DMUs provided a shuttle service from these stations to Cambridge serving intermediate stations on the route, whilst Cambridge itself had its own "main line" services to London Liverpool Street including through services every two hours from King's Lynn.

In June 1986 the line from Cambridge to King's Lynn became part of the newly formed Network South East, the BR sector of mainly commuter routes which included Horsham and many lines south of the Thames. This brought the potential to unlock further investment in the line and the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk was quick to seize this opportunity. Later that year the wires reached Cambridge from Bishop's Stortford and from May 1987 electric services started to run from the University city to Liverpool Street. (The stretch between Royston and Shepreth Branch Junction was electrified a year later.) Through services from the Fen Line could at last arrive in London on electric power, with King's Lynn drivers being trained to operate the Class 86 electric locomotives which took over from Class 47 diesels at Cambridge. By October 1987 with support from local businesses, MPs and, of course, the Fen Line Users Association, the Borough Council campaign to be part of the electrified network was in full swing with the launch of a brochure (image above right) promoting its aspirations which stated:

"The economic vibrancy of West Norfolk is not open to doubt. Only indifferent communications apply a brake to the otherwise considerable development potential. The logical next move is the introduction of fast electric trains from King's Lynn and Downham Market direct to London." Optimistically it announced: *"Electric trains could be running to King's Lynn by 1991"* but added the blunt warning: *"The stark alternative is the downgrading of the service to a diesel railcar shuttle between King's Lynn and Cambridge."* The Council was so determined to succeed that it even offered to underwrite future ticket revenue to the tune of £750,000.

Fortunately, the scheme, which cost £40 million, did go ahead (see timetable cover, right) and one factor which



helped make the project viable was that electrification of the East Coast Main Line in the Peterborough area had just been completed, meaning there was a local depot with the equipment and skilled staff ready to go. As part of the work, Ely station had to be closed for several weeks and platforms were constructed at nearby Chettisham on the line to Peterborough bearing the name "Ely Temporary Station", with connecting bus services provided.



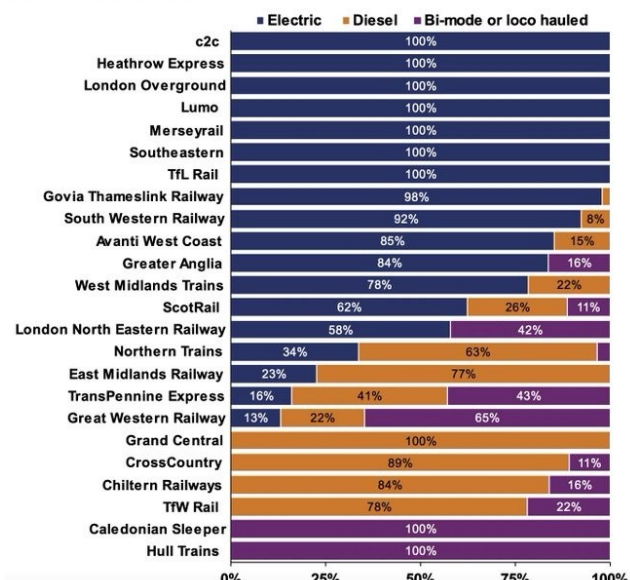
The official opening of the electrification was performed on 28 July 1992 by HM the Queen Mother who unveiled a plaque at King's Lynn station (photo, left), which can still be seen today, but it wasn't until 24 August that the first train in public service left as the 05.38 bound for King's Cross. As part of the scheme, it was decided that most Fen Line trains should be diverted to King's Cross – allowing a faster journey time to London and avoiding the heavily congested West Anglia Main Line into Liverpool Street. This certainly proved a wise move as passenger usage increased considerably.

With EMUs providing environmentally cleaner, greener services for the last 30 years, it would be interesting to calculate the reduction in CO₂ emissions that have resulted during this period.

Mark Collins is Secretary of the Fen Line Users Association. The images are courtesy of Mike Lamport.

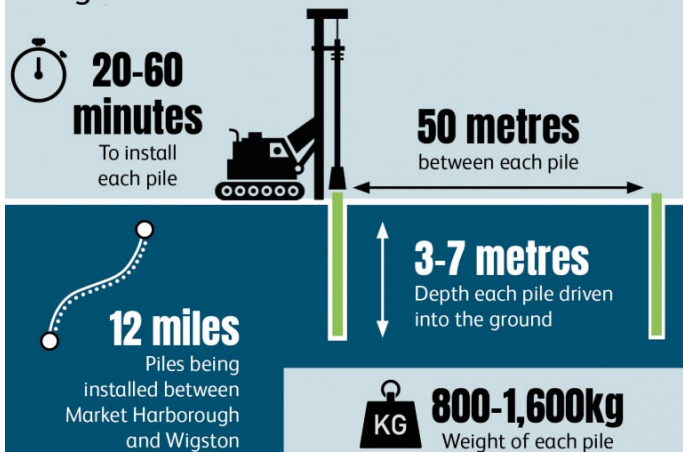
The table on the right, based on carriages, shows that on two thirds of train operators passengers will be entirely or mostly travelling using electricity. That still leaves a lot who will not be.

Proportion of rolling stock by traction type and by train operator, Great Britain, as of 31 March 2022 (Table 6314)



It is scarcely believable that 30 years after the line to King's Lynn was electrified (and saw a massive uplift in patronage thanks to frequent faster journeys with brand new trains calling at all Fen Line stations), no other route in the whole of East Anglia has had wires erected (although carriage sidings, new platforms and the Hitchin Flyover have been wired). Worse still, there are no plans on the horizon to change that situation.

Piling on the Midland Main Line in Numbers



Railfuture East Midlands branch has recently seen Bedford to Corby and Market Harborough electrified, and work has begun on a 12-mile extension (see left).

Echion Technologies of Sawston, has just received government funding to develop batteries that will charge from overhead wires so that trains can 'leapfrog' across unelectrified track. That's fine for routes where there is no business case for wiring, but not as a lazy excuse not to wire.

THE ROAD TO NET ZERO?

BY PHIL SMART

The story of human evolution has been one of invention and technological progress, not least in the transportation of materials for construction and personal consumption. The invention of the wheel made better use of human or animal muscle and every new technological breakthrough, be it in steam power or the internal combustion engine, has answered the need to transport greater quantities more efficiently and at lower cost than the technology it succeeded.

But perhaps for the first time in our history, we are now faced with a new challenge, one based not on price but on scientific advice, the need to wean ourselves off the use of fossil fuels. Coal, oil, and gas have been the principal sources of energy for transport which, on average, accounts for 27% of CO₂ emissions. This advice cannot be ignored and by law we must achieve a zero-carbon economy by 2050.

So, what are the options for transporting freight? As we have pointed out often in the past, using rail saves 76% of CO₂ compared with road, and is a useful proxy for the relative rates of energy consumption between the two modes. For rail, there is a clear pathway to zero for those parts of the network that will be electrified, with some residual uncertainty on the remaining sections. Electrification relies on known technology; electric trains have been around for more than a century. We know how to do it; we just need more of it!

But what is the future for the 44-tonne road truck? The nation's workhorse has only been around since the internal combustion engine and future options are not clear. Truck manufacturers are developing battery powered vehicles, and these are proving popular at the smaller end of the market for short haul work where overnight recharging is available at the home depot. Vehicles up to 26 tonnes are becoming available but are far from widespread.

Yet as distance and payload increase so the shortcomings of battery power become more evident. Batteries have a much lower energy density than diesel fuel and are heavy, taking up useful payload. There are also emerging issues with the capability of the recharging network, with even small depots in some areas finding they do not have the power to charge even a van fleet.

Hydrogen is considered by many as the solution but has the same drawback, as storing it on the vehicle, even in compressed form, leaves less space for carrying goods. There are also questions over supply, with some uncertainty over the scale of production and its use in other modes. Fuelling is also a challenge, with no established supply network and a fuel density which could require more frequent refuelling. Commercial operators are likely to invest on the trunk networks, but for more remote areas this could be a real challenge.



Experimental use of pantographs for road transport has been undertaken in Germany and a UK trial is planned. Even if this proved to be technically feasible, several questions remain. Firstly, the cost is likely to be significant and there are many safety and operational issues. Some in the road haulage industry believe that the best they can hope for is for limited sections of wiring on more popular routes for recharging batteries on the move. On the



railway, both passenger and freight markets share electrification benefits, but on the road, it is only lorries that could reach the current supply. So how will construction and maintenance of this supply be paid for? Will we have to fence off the road as we do the railway to prevent vandalism or cable theft? What happens when the inside lane needs resurfacing?

So, road and rail both have real challenges ahead, whichever pathway is chosen. There are common questions on power output and fuelling networks and the route to zero is at best complicated. Yet en route the two sectors, working together, have a lot to offer. Emerging thinking suggests that road and rail will be supply chain partners. Road will struggle to match the volume and distance capability of rail, and rail will rely on road for local distribution, with each leg making the most of its low carbon capabilities. Working together a low carbon freight future is achievable.

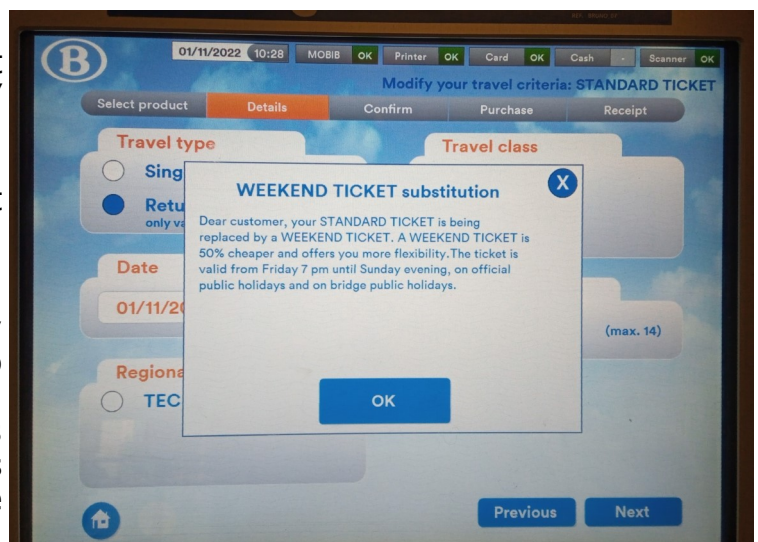
This article is a version of one that appeared in Modern Railways Freight Opinion Column on behalf of the Rail Freight Group, for whom the author is Assistant Policy Manager.

TICKET VENDING MACHINES—THEY MUST BE BETTER A FOLLOW-UP TO “THE CHAIR, THE DESK AND THE WINDOW”

BY JERRY ALDERSON

In RAIL EAST issue 194 we looked at the thorny issue of “Ticket Offices” and pointed out that it isn’t the fixed infrastructure that passengers and other station users care about, but the people who provide the service.

If the railway were to be invented from scratch today, it would look very different, in almost every way, to what we currently have. There would be no physical ticket offices, and it’s unlikely that ticket vending machines (TVMs) would exist either. But change must occur gradually.



Railfuture’s key concerns are that whatever changes are made, everyone must still be able to travel independently, understand what to do and pay the right fare.

The Railfuture stance is that any change must be correctly ‘sequenced’ — you implement the new solution before you remove the old one. If passengers awarded marks out of 10 for TVMs the results would be a typical bell-shaped curve: a few awarding 1, a few 10, and most in the middle. TVMs are generally easy to use for commonly-sold tickets where the passenger requirements are simple—that applies to most people, most of the time. The challenge is for the designers to think of all the possible scenarios and find the easiest way to present them and allow passengers to use them. Sometimes the solution is not to let the customer work out what to do, but do it for them...

Ticket machines for the national operator in Belgium, SNCB, will sometimes replace what you have asked for with a product that is both better and cheaper, as shown in the image above. The date was 1 November 2022, which was a bank holiday, so it substituted the normal ticket with a ‘weekend’ ticket, even though it wasn’t a weekend! The price was halved. No doubt, there are lots of solutions that operators across mainland Europe have used that British operators should consider adopting.

Some people think that you need to ask at a ticket office to get the best fare. That’s not necessarily true. They must offer the cheapest based on what you say are your travel requirements. Even the very best are staff are not mind readers!

COMPARING RAIL FARES WITH AIR FARES — IS IT FAIR?

BY JERRY ALDERSON

Railfuture gets lots of enquiries, and we're pleased to help, where we can. A recent request came from a student journalist at the University of East Anglia who was working on a story comparing rail fares to plane fares.

You probably know where this enquiry could be leading. Why is it supposedly cheaper to fly from the UK to the US than take a train from London to Manchester? Or perhaps fly from London to Spain and then to Manchester. RAIL EAST readers know that any such conclusion would be comparing apples with pears.

The railway provides a 'turn up and go' service. Try walking into an airport and asking to go on a flight to the US in the next hour and see what price you are quoted (that's if you can make it through security and to the gate in time). And certainly don't try paying in cash. In fact this is a bad example, as a British citizen would have to notify the authorities days in advance of intention to travel.

Providing a true public service versus one that is nearly always profitable

The railway mostly offers a regular service from early morning until late at night across a national network, with the ability to board and alight at more than 2,500 stations—that comes at a price and governments recognise the need to subsidise it. Airlines operate point-to-point (leaving passengers with the problem of getting to their destination) and only at a frequency and time when the carrier can be sure to fill at least 85% (usually higher) of seats on an aeroplane. It's an entirely yield-managed business, where every ticket sold is for a particular flight, with flights sometimes cancelled if not enough seats have been sold. They also oversell seats to profit from 'no shows'. Airlines have no real public-service remit and just pick low-hanging fruit. A good comparison would be the 1950s when road hauliers stole profitable goods traffic — British Rail was lumbered with transporting the rest.

Flights are subsidised from other income to a greater degree than rail

Low-cost (and therefore low-price) airlines are often subsidised by airports since its owner earns substantial income from parking and drop-off charges—can you name a railway station where you have to pay to drive in and straight out again? Airports have a captive market whilst people hang around for their flight, so the revenue per passenger from food/drinks and so-called 'duty free' is higher than at stations.

No infrastructure in the clouds

Even if the airline industry provided a service like the railway, it would have a major financial advantage: far less infrastructure. Airports are the equivalent of stations (but only a fraction as many), air traffic control and signallers control movements, but use of the air is free unlike high-maintenance rails, points and level crossings.

So, is rail too expensive? Is air travel too cheap?

Railfuture is pro-rail rather than anti-air. We prefer the carrot to the stick. Readers can make their own minds up about air travel, at least economically. In terms of its impact on climate, jet air travel is not 'cheap' by any stretch of the imagination.

Britain's rail industry cannot reasonably claim to be efficient or cheap to operate — though there are many opportunities to improve on that, as the current industrial disputes demonstrate — but ultimately rail fares are set by the government. It may put less value on serving communities, enabling business and the economy in general than other European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Italy.

If only travellers would consider the end-to-end time of their journey then domestic flights taken would be far fewer. Likewise, they ignore many of the associated costs of the journey, so comparing just the in-flight cost with on-train cost is quite unfair.

LNER'S NEW INFORMATION SCREENS AT PETERBOROUGH **BY JERRY ALDERSON**

At the start of this century it was a rarity to have any form of real-time visual information system at rural stations and the smartphone hadn't been invented, so passengers were often uncertain when — or even if — the train would turn up. We now take both for granted, and it's a key reason why passenger numbers shot up.

In East Anglia we have had, probably, the best station customer information system (CIS) screens in the country, after Greater Anglia replaced all of their 'ancient' (cathode ray tube and dot matrix) screens with attractive, fully-digital ones. The screens (multi-colour, with multiple typeface sizes and images) also give useful information such as real-time estimated arrival times at each station on the route. Some of the mini screens should be larger, so that you can read them from further away, and there ought to be more of them, especially from both directions, which would help when in bright sunlight. But it's a great improvement, although station staff are unhappy that they now have to phone 'HQ' to alter messages.

Unbelievably, Great Northern was still installing white-on-black dot matrix displays when Waterbeach and Littleport stations platforms were extended, but at least they now tell you where the train is currently located — very reassuring at unstaffed village stations — and they even tell you the number of carriages.

There's a lot to be said for having a single type of CIS installed at all stations. That's what generally happens on the state-owned railways elsewhere in Europe. But uniformity can stifle innovation and therefore improvement. Now, at least when the Treasury-DfT allows expenditure, we have train operators in a race with smartphone app developers on the best way to present the wealth of real-time train running 'open' data.

As you enter Peterborough station, which is managed by LNER, you'll be faced with an array of screens (below) presenting the maximum amount of immediately-understood useful information, hopefully without overloading your brain.



Look at the bottom of the display and you'll see not just the number of carriages, but number (or letter) and where to stand on the platform for each of them (quite important on inter-city trains where you have a reservation). This has been common on the European mainland for a decade or more. But LNER's screens go further by attempting to show the loading on the carriages (green, yellow and red). Of course, this type of information may only be known for long-distance trains, where most seats are booked, hence the reason they are at LNER stations. A nice feature is the clock face display as well as the 24-hour time. It even has the weather and temperature in the corner.



NEWS SNIPPETS

STOP PRESS — NEWS FROM CHANCELLOR'S AUTUMN STATEMENT

This issue of RAIL EAST was completed on Thursday 17 November 2022, just hours after this year's latest Chancellor of the Exchequer announced his tax and spending plans. This tweet from Edward Leigh, whom readers will remember from his two recent articles, has some apparent good news about East West Rail.

 Railfuture EAnglia Retweeted



Edward Leigh
@EdwardALeigh

Chancellor [@Jeremy_Hunt](#) has just confirmed funding to deliver [@eastwestrail](#). Preferred route between Bedford and Cambridge should be announced shortly. [@ewmlpartnership](#) [@SmarterCam](#) [@RailfutureEA](#)

12:14 · 17 Nov 2022 · Twitter Web App

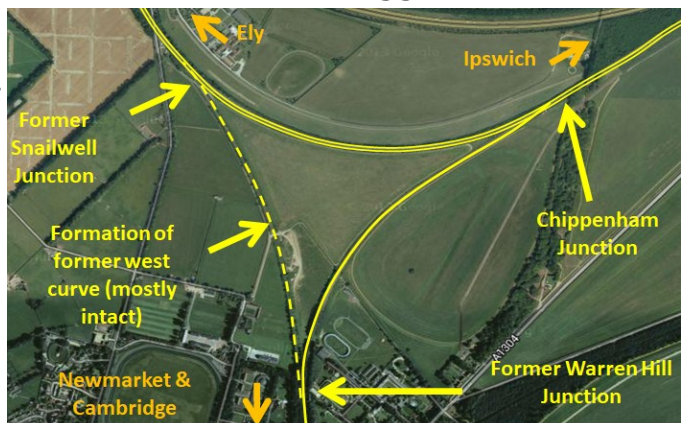
Although transport cuts had been feared, the Department for Transport's budget to 2024/25 remains unchanged from the Spending Review in 2021.

EAST SUFFOLK LINE SET FOR TRACK IMPROVEMENTS

Network Rail is due to replace track and improve level crossings at the southern end of the East Suffolk Line. The route will be closed for eight weekends in December, January and February between Ipswich and Saxmundham to allow the work to take place. It will be replacing remaining jointed track, some of which is a century old according to its press release, with continuous welded rail. That will make journeys more comfortable, but no mention is made of higher line speeds to reduce journey times (where passing opportunities on single track sections allow). However, the surfaces at seven level crossings will be improved. Embankments will also be strengthened—something that is becoming increasingly important to counter the effects of climate change.

COMBINED AUTHORITY SHOWS SUPPORT FOR RAIL PROJECTS

The Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority debated two rail schemes at its transport meeting on 16 November 2022. The meeting received an update on the Wisbech Line re-opening and agreed to carry on the work looking at different rail options. There was support among members for a heavy rail scheme, but their document pack also included a report from Network Rail that suggested tram-train was a sensible option for the route. At the start of the meeting Railfuture had posed a question highlighting the benefits of tram-train and its possible use on the Haverhill route. The second item concerned a new curve east of Newmarket that would enable direct trains from Soham to Cambridge (image is from Railfuture's presentation to stakeholders in 2019). Members supported continuing work on developing this scheme.



If both schemes are to develop their full potential, they are dependent on carrying out work at Ely to enhance capacity. Officers reported on a meeting at the House of Commons of interested MPs and Local Authorities. It is not just East Anglian MPs that support the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) but MPs from the Midlands and the North who see the importance of improving rail links across the country for both passengers and freight.

PICTURES THAT PAINT A THOUSAND WORDS

WHAT'S BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR?



There's not a piano and they're not playing it hot, but passengers may well be thinking "wish they'd let me in so I could find out what's behind the green door."

Well, it's a large waiting room, toilets and a ticket office window, although the staff may not be kept very busy as there's nothing on the platform to tell you. It's not even obvious that the door is unlocked, and the same goes for the door at the front of the station. A bit of an own goal following the expensive upgrade at March station, which opened early in 2022 (see issue 194 page 4).

You'll rarely see anyone sitting in the new waiting room at Ely station either — presumably because people don't realise what it is (there's no sign) and it's not obvious that it's open unless you try the electronic door button. But at least it has a glass window, so you don't think you're intruding into to a private room.



This is not a photo competition, since you can make out most of the letters of the station's name. But it's not good for visitors searching for the station and it doesn't create a good impression of the railway.

Photos of other stations needing some vegetation clearance or other simple repair are welcome for inclusion in a future RAIL EAST issue.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

You may have noticed that Jerry Alderson has three consecutive articles towards the back of this issue — it's not fair on the author or the poor readers! We didn't get many contributions this issue. Would you like to contribute to the next one?

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

All submissions by **20 January 2023**, 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.

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. Your co-operation will be appreciated.

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

JOIN RAILFUTURE — FOR A BIGGER, BETTER RAILWAY

Unlike certain politically-motivated lobby groups, Railfuture is transparent about its funding — it's 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).

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.

For members wishing to renew, we're now offering annual payment by direct debit. Please enquire using the 'renewals' email address above.

railfuture East Anglia

MEDIA CONTACTS

Chair: Nick Dibben

24 Bure Close, St Ives PE27 3FE

Tel: 01480 495101

nick.dibben@railfuture.org.uk

Vice-Chair: Chris Burton

Tel: 01223 352327 / 07780 856212

chris.burton@railfuture.org.uk

Vice-Chair: Peter Wakefield

Tel: 01223 352364 / 07738 085307

peter.wakefield@railfuture.org.uk

OTHER CONTACTS

Secretary: Paul Hollinghurst

110 Catharine Street, Cambridge CB1 3AR

paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk

Contributions for RAIL EAST: Peter Feeney

raileast@railfuture.org.uk

East Anglia Membership Secretary: Peter Bayless

3 Queens St, Spooner Row, Wymondham NR18 9JU

petlinbay@btinternet.com

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

MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 3 DEC 2022

Signal Box Comm. Centre
Glenalmond Avenue

CAMBRIDGE

CB2 8DB

SATURDAY 25 FEB 2023

Friends Meeting House
St John's Street

BURY ST EDMUNDS

IP33 1SJ

SATURDAY 17 JUNE 2023

St Mary's at Stoke
Stoke Street

IPSWICH

IP2 8BX

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.

Follow Railfuture East Anglia on Twitter <https://twitter.com/RailfutureEA>

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All other (non-branch) correspondence to 14 Ghent Field Circle, Thurston, Suffolk IP31 3UP