

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

Issue 198 • June 2023

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It's summer time — let's go by train
Railway promoting tourism in East Anglia

Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- How signalling holds the key to unlocking vital capacity in region
- Peterborough station as a hub
- Half-hourly services in the east
- Timetable changes reviewed
- Improving e-ticketing in region
- Attractive station environments
- Bi-modes exploiting the wires
- Case for Long Stratton station
- Peter Lawrence RIP

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A long time coming, but the southern route into Cambridge is now confirmed

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A mixed picture when it comes to getting better facilities delivered

Leisure travel on Britain's railway has recovered from the pandemic much more than commuter and business travel, and in the summertime it is considerably higher than five years ago, partly thanks to staycations. The **front cover** shows a series of images that adorn the older footbridge at Ipswich station (photos by Phil Smart) as part of the Ipswich Station Footbridge Art Project. This was a collaboration between Greater Anglia, Suffolk New College and The East Suffolk Community Rail Partnership. Each panel was the work of a different college student. The unveiling, by Alan Neville of Greater Anglia, was on 17 March 2023.

Meanwhile at Manningtree, The North Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership has a display called 'the doors of Manningtree' which can be found in their waiting rooms along with a poem promoting travel by rail. And there is more station-related original community artwork discussed in the article about the Meldreth "Wonderpass" on [p.12](#) in this issue.

CHAIR'S THOUGHTS

BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH



Making decisions

The rail network appears to be in a state of limbo. Reports are published with recommendations and then nothing much happens. A classic case is the work needed to improve capacity through Ely. Everyone, including local authorities, MPs and the rail industry itself, agree that something needs to be done, but when funding might be agreed and work actually starts nobody knows. Likewise, there have been many meetings and reports on increasing capacity of the line through Newmarket, but when will this happen? In both cases local business is getting frustrated.

The rail industry doesn't help itself in more ways than one — Jerry Alderson mentions how Network Rail has antagonised the public on [p.6](#). Often it can't decide what it wants and then at each stage the cost increases significantly, resulting in going back to the drawing board to find an affordable option. Whilst doing work on 150-year-old infrastructure will often produce surprises, it's not a good way to build confidence with the government, especially the Treasury.

It's not just the major projects, it happens on smaller schemes as well. It has been four years since funding was announced for step-free access at Biggleswade station but there is still no agreed plan (see [p.22](#)). Projects already begun also appear to take a long time to finish – for example, no work has been done on the new taxi rank and multi-deck car park at Huntingdon station for nearly a year, whilst the new 100-space car park at Manea appeared to be complete in late 2022 but it is still locked out of use – why can't these schemes be handed over?

In all these cases, it appears no-one wants to make a decision and say – this is what we are doing, or yes this is finished, so let's get it open to help passengers.

A threat to rail?

There have been several articles in the media recently from coach companies noting increasing passenger numbers and that they are adding new routes to their schedules. They claim dissatisfaction with the railways as reasons for their success. However, a quick look at the National Express website shows that the new Nottingham to Cambridge service is two buses a day in each direction with one early in the morning, the other mid-evening. Whilst not a great threat to the railway, such moves should act as a wake-up call to ensure that existing services are efficiently and well run.

Trains going spare

Due to changing travel patterns, Greater Anglia says it will have a number of the new Class 720 Aventra trains spare. They are generally nice trains that ride well. It's a shame about the 2+3 seating. Any suggestions?

And finally...

As this issue was preparing for publication we heard sad news of the death of Peter Lawrence (right), who was a past East Anglia Branch and National Chair of Railfuture. Peter worked tirelessly over many decades to improve rail services in our region. His funeral was held on Friday 26 May in Norwich. Peter Wakefield, Jerry Alderson and Ray King attended to represent Railfuture. You can read more about Peter's life and campaigning activities on [p.16](#).



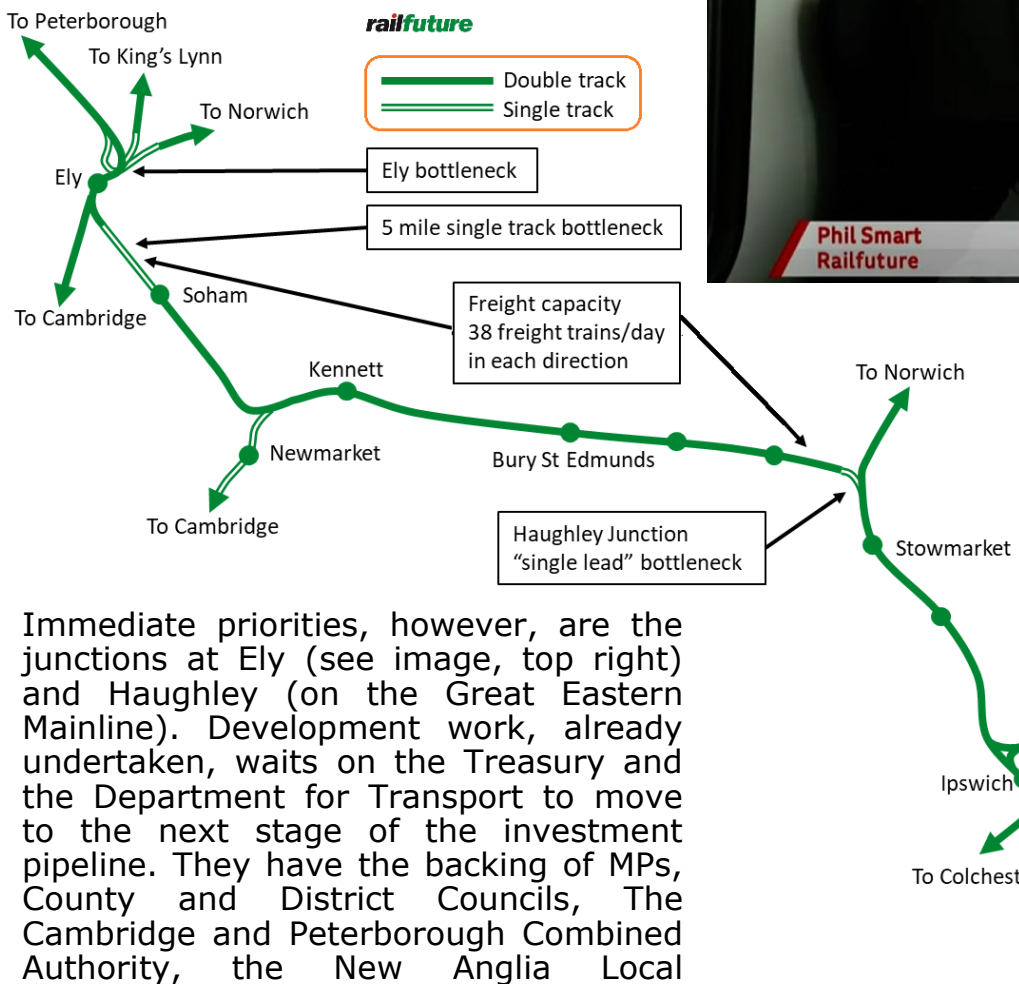
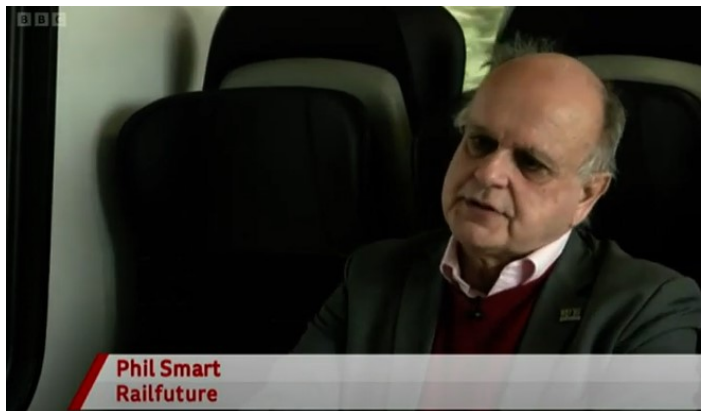
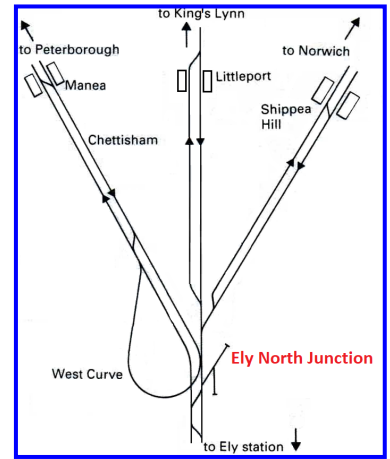
I hope to see lot of RAIL EAST readers (not just Railfuture members) at our Ipswich public meeting on Saturday 17 June, with a guest speaker from Network Rail – more information is on [p.10](#).

ELY – AN ONGOING LOGISTICAL CHALLENGE BY PHIL SMART

As the diagram below shows, freight from Felixstowe approaches Ely from the south-east and must cross the paths of other services to continue north-westward. On its journey from Felixstowe, it must also negotiate another *single-lead* junction at Haughley, north of Stowmarket on the Great Eastern Main line. This too requires replacement. The line out of Felixstowe itself, following recent improvements at both Ipswich and Felixstowe, could carry 48 trains in each direction per day. But of these, only 38 can run until capacity is provided at Ely and Haughley – the rest go by road!

The five miles of single track to Ely from Soham is another constraint that must be tackled. Proposals to double this line have been around since 1947, ten years before the invention of the shipping container! Work was almost about to start on this until it was shelved under the 2015 *Hendy Review*.

Enterprise Partnership, chambers of commerce and other business groups, and four Sub National Transport Bodies in England as well as Transport Scotland. They were the main focal point of Transport East's *State of Rail in the East* report, launched in the Houses of Parliament on 28 February 2023 and, more recently, *Keeping Trade on Track*, jointly published by *England's Economic Heartland* and *Transport East* STBs. They were also featured on the BBC *Politics East* on Sunday 5 March 2023 where Railfuture spokesperson Phil Smart (screenshot below) was interviewed as the expert witness.



This article has been adapted from one featured on the website of the Rail Freight Group for whom the author is Assistant Policy Manager

Immediate priorities, however, are the junctions at Ely (see image, top right) and Haughley (on the Great Eastern Mainline). Development work, already undertaken, waits on the Treasury and the Department for Transport to move to the next stage of the investment pipeline. They have the backing of MPs, County and District Councils, The Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, the New Anglia Local

SENDING OUT THE WRONG SIGNALS?

BY PHIL SMART

There is growing concern that the legislation to set up Great British Railways may struggle to find parliamentary time before the next general election (see the Tweet from 18 May, right). Whether this happens in time, or waits for the election of a new administration, the one thing we were promised was the creation of a *guiding mind* to ensure the interests of train operators are aligned with those of the infrastructure provider and that the interests of passengers and freight are balanced to meet the overall economic (and environmental) needs of the nation.



The Times and The Sunday Times 🟡 @thetimes · 18 May 2023
Ministers have quietly scrapped plans for the biggest shake-up of the railways since privatisation, The Times has learnt



One frustration we experience is the Treasury rules that separate *renewals* from *enhancements*. The former are governed by five-yearly periodic reviews, the next running from 2024-29. These include replacements of assets such as track and signals that are deemed to be beyond their economic life. *Enhancements* on the other hand are projects, like new lines, laying double track, creating passing loops etc. that change the capacity or capability of the railway. We might think of them as *upgrades* which are controlled through the annual revision of the Rail Network Enhancements Programme (RNEP). The last review (front cover image, right) was in October 2019 (yes, I did say *annual* but this is Great Britain, a nation that leads the world in procrastination!)



Yet we find many instances where the strict separation between them comes into conflict and both opportunity and public money are wasted. The 'dead hand' of accountancy stifles the 'guiding mind' every time!

The Cambridge Area Re-signalling project (known as C3R, for re-signalling, re-lock and re-control), covering as part of its wider scope the Mid-Anglia line between Cambridge and Elmswell, is a case in point. For many years, capacity on this line has been limited by the distance between one pair of signals in particular, resulting in trains having to be timed at least eight minutes apart. Earlier in 2023, stakeholders were informed that re-signalling the line would include an extra block section to reduce the *headway* between trains from eight minutes to four. However, it has since emerged that the proposal to include this additional signal section has been dropped from the specification, because this is classed as an enhancement!

Although an eight-minute headway may sound generous enough, the eventual plan is for up to four freight trains (three via Ely and one via the new East West railway), an Ipswich-Cambridge stopping passenger service, an Ipswich-Peterborough and, eventually an Ipswich-Oxford via the new East West line. Although these depend on interventions elsewhere, hopefully they will happen during the lifetime of the signal asset.

Even with today's traffic levels there are advantages in reducing the headway on the Mid-Anglia route, as described on the next page.

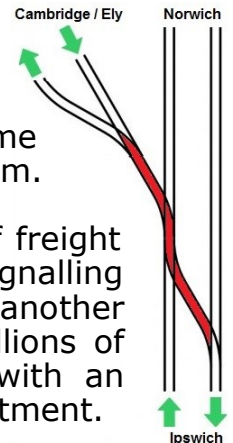
Westbound trains all must leave Ipswich and be woven in with the trains to Norwich (2ph off peak). All trains have different operating characteristics as follows:

1. Ipswich-Norwich non-stop 12-car class 745
2. Ipswich-Norwich class 745 12-car stopping at Stowmarket
3. Ipswich-Peterborough bi-mode class 755 stopping at Stowmarket and switching to diesel mode
4. Ipswich-Cambridge bi-mode class 755 stopping at Needham Market and Stowmarket and switching as above.
5. Felixstowe-Ely freight class 66 (departs from Europa Jn)

Freight leaving Europa Junction must do so when both down and up lines are free. If trains 3, 4 & 5 (above) are evenly spaced apart (and around 1 & 2) they will not all present at Haughley Junction with the same separation (image, below, shows the layout that needs changing).

Eastbound, train 4 must leave Cambridge in a slot that allows it to access the Mid-Anglia line from the bay Platforms 5 or 6 and not meet the inbound working on the single line. Not easy! Trains 3 and 5 come from Ely and are restricted by the junction and line capacity up to Soham.

Timetabling this route, particularly if we are to increase the volume of freight once Ely is sorted out, as it eventually must be, will require as much signalling flexibility as possible and leaving the eight-minute headway will be another constraint that limits future growth. We run the risk of spending millions of pounds on upgrading Ely and Haughley Junction, only to be left with an avoidable legacy of a signalling system unable to fully exploit this investment.



NETWORK RAIL — ITS OWN WORST ENEMY?

BY JERRY ALDERSON

In his article above, Phil Smart mentions the Cambridge Area Re-signalling project, which is limited (presumably at the behest of the Department for Transport) to just replacing life-expired assets, with no thought for improving service reliability (merely signalling asset reliability) or increasing network capacity to run more services. It is as if Great British Railways, which would subsume Network Rail (NR) bringing track and train back together, had never been devised. However, when it comes to improving safety no expense is spared — with NR as arbiter of what is 'unsafe' — regardless of adverse consequences to neighbours or road and rail users.

The resignalling should have been completed by 2023, but it will now be 2025. COVID-19 delayed many projects, but in this case it was NR's "I'm alright Jack, you don't matter" attitude that stirred up a hornet's nest, not least amongst its friends: two local Rail User Groups. A few years ago it "upgraded" (converted is a more honest term) a level crossing at Shepreth from a highly-efficient automatic half barrier (AHB) to a "much safer" full barrier, resulting in enormous disruption to locals. So, when it proposed doing the same to another six level crossings (including one at nearby Meldreth Road) it should have seen what was coming, but didn't.

Network Rail needed legal powers to acquire parcels of land to install the new level crossing equipment. What should have been simple resulted in an unnecessarily expensive and time-consuming public inquiry (in which NR's Statement of Case amounted to more than a thousand pages), after the Secretary of State for Transport decided to include the objections from people affected by substantially increased level crossing closure times as part of the remit of the inspector. NR was shocked!

The Fen Line Users Association (FLUA) objected to the disruption that full barriers would cause at Waterbeach station. Its chair, John Grant, discovered that the total number of people killed by level crossing accidents per 100,000 population is an average of 0.345 throughout Europe, and just 0.02 in Britain. "It does make one wonder whether it's really necessary to 'upgrade' AHBs." he said.

SIMPLE SIGNALLING IMPROVEMENTS BENEFIT PASSENGERS BY JERRY ALDERSON (WITH THANKS TO JOHN GRANT FOR INFO)

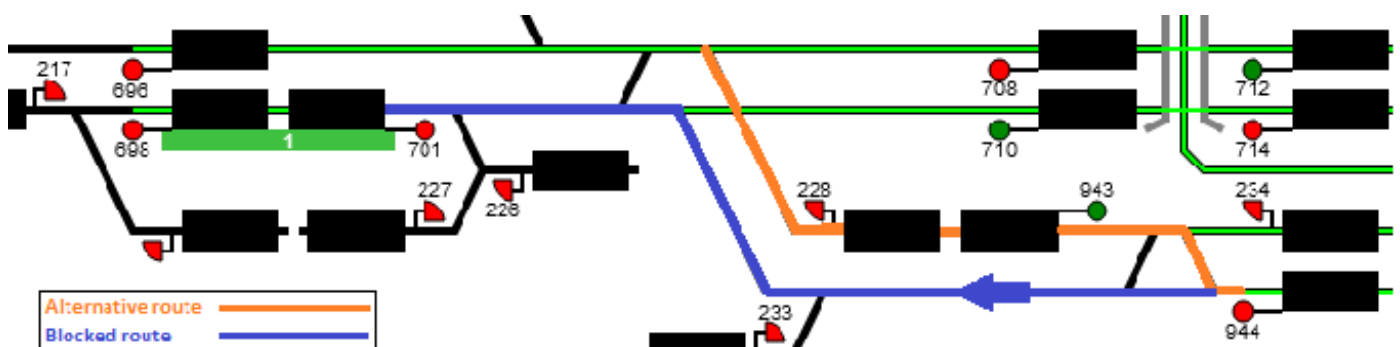
Railfuture is campaigning for important stretches of track to be reinstated across East Anglia so that new services can be operated. A good example is the Snailwell Curve just east of Newmarket station. Indeed, all of the track between Newmarket and Cambridge needs redoubling, which will also improve punctuality. Sometimes the track is already there, but 'poor' signalling prevents more punctual services.

When Hitchin flyover was created, the number of trains using the up line from Cambridge was unchanged but the number using the down line to Cambridge (using a facing cross-over — a major bottleneck) was much reduced, as intended. It's now just used by freight trains (as they cannot cope with the gradient of the flyover) and occasional passenger trains to maintain drivers' route knowledge for when the flyover route is closed (or perhaps for a fast train when the up fast and up slow are clear and the down slow isn't). This means that the down line is an underutilised asset, whilst the up line remains an unnecessary single point of failure, a problem that could be easily overcome if the down line was made bi-directional.

On 27 April 2023 John Grant, FLUA chair, took the 0855 from Waterbeach to King's Cross. From around Foxton it ran slowly but once the train passed Hitchin and onto the fast line there was no further hold-up. Several trains from the Cambridge direction were "delayed by ambulance service dealing with an incident", according to 'opentimetrains', presumably because a train was stationary at the platform for a long time whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive and the ill passenger to be removed. It was not possible for those trains to overtake (it appears the trains from Peterborough passed through on the fast line and skipped their stop at Hitchin).

The up line from Cambridge joins the up slow a little way before the platform, and there is no cross-over to the up fast until beyond the station. This means that all trains from Cambridge have to go through the platform, so a fast train that is behind a late-running stopping train must wait until after Hitchin to overtake it, and an incident blocking the platform road stops all trains from the Cambridge direction.

If a short stretch of the down track (coloured orange in the OpenTrainTimes graphic below) was made bi-directional, then an up fast service would have an alternative to using the track next to the up platform (coloured blue, below), where there could be a train waiting. John's train was waiting behind three or four trains in front (some might have been held at station stops), the first of which would have been stuck at signal 944, waiting for the blue route to become free.



There is even a shunting signal (228) that controls movements onto the up fast. So converting that short stretch of track to support bi-directional running must surely be straightforward, and cost less than all the delay minutes that accumulate over the years. A massive £1 billion is being spent on resignalling the first hundred miles from King's Cross (and Moorgate) to Grantham over the next six years. Clearly the East Coast Mainline is a vital rail artery deserving of that investment. One would hope that minor changes on the ECML, such as this one, could be slotted in. In fact, the radio-based European Train Control System (ETCS) which is being installed provides bi-directional running pretty much 'for free'.

PETERBOROUGH – A VISION FOR NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CITY & ITS HINTERLAND

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

In the last issue of RAIL EAST (197, p.23), we briefly mentioned the £48 million allocated to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Peterborough City Council for the development of the area around Peterborough railway station ("the Station Quarter") from the government's "levelling up fund". In its acknowledgement of the grant, Peterborough City Council noted that the grant is ring fenced in that it can only be used for "the Station Quarter" regeneration. It will now be released by the government to allow "the [wider] Peterborough Station Enhancements and Connectivity project" to move forward. Additional match funding to bring the total funds up to around £65 million is expected to come from Peterborough City Council and other partners, enabling future private investment in commercial and residential development as a further phase of the Station Quarter programme. This grant is followed by £1.5m from the Towns Fund to produce options for a public consultation.

The funds are partly for the correction of the damage done by road building projects from the 1970s. In Peterborough that damage was produced by Bourges Boulevard, a dual carriageway that carefully cut the city centre off from its railway station. So, one of the aims of the new project is "to make improvements to better connect Peterborough Train Station directly to the city centre with aim to:

- Create a great first impression of Peterborough for visitors and commuters
- Cut down on travelling time between the station and city centre
- Create a safer and more visible route between the station and city centre
- Improve accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and those with restricted mobility."

The City Council explains that the "wider Station Quarter area relates to the entire train station area and will include:

- Station improvements and enhancements
- A western entrance - creating a double-sided station
- Car parking
- Release of land for commercial and residential developments."

The western entrance will be connected to a new car park "with a new wider footbridge over the train lines. This will alleviate pressure on city centre roads, making it easier and safer to travel around the city by bicycle. Green areas with biodiversity, community spaces and better connections to the city centre will make it safer and more attractive for bikes and pedestrians."

These enhancements must improve rail user experience above all, as well as making Peterborough a better place. They must encourage more rail travel. This is another chance to put right the mistakes that the relatively recent station upgrade created – a dismal place both to change trains and to join the railway. Only if they are corrected will the station have a positive economic impact on the city and regionally. Peterborough is already well connected to key areas of Eastern England and the rest of the UK and if the plans are right, they will support Peterborough, as the City Council hopes, "in attracting more knowledge-intensive and high-level employers through its transport links."

Stephen Hind, Head of Business Development at Network Rail, said: "This brilliant investment will allow us to deliver a revamped and revitalised entrance to Peterborough. The major transformation would unlock opportunities for the city to thrive economically, as well as recognising the need for a cleaner, greener transport network in the future."

Meanwhile, in April 2022 Network Rail issued one its route / area reports concerning pinch-points and related problem areas of the network, called **Peterborough Area Strategic Advice** (front cover is shown at the top of page 9).

This document posed the question "What are Medium to long-term requirements in the Peterborough area?". There are strong links, of course, with the development of the station briefly described above. Indeed, one the major concerns outlined as critical is the need to safeguard the land that railway may need for future railway development from any non-railway development.

What are the medium to long-term rail requirements in the Peterborough area?



Peterborough Area Strategic Advice

April 2022

It specifically mentions the necessary safeguards in this respect of the future needs of the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands. However, its **first recommendation** is a fourth line between Woodwalton over the 6.4 miles (8.1 miles from Connington) to Huntingdon - as a "no regrets" intervention; then the need to take advantage of the forthcoming renewals to deliver an **enhanced version** at Fletton to allow much higher speeds - not "like for like" as is sadly the norm; instead a programme of level crossing closures north of the city to eventually enable 140mph operation to and from Stoke Tunnel. Besides these imperatives, platform capacity at Peterborough and flexibility on both the northern and southern approaches to Peterborough is flagged as a real issue. The use of all seven platforms is analysed and slow entry into 1 and 2 is identified as a problem - hence the call to improve speeds north and south of the station. These two platforms are also used by terminating trains that limit their use for through trains. An additional through platform (8) is seen as eventually needed on the East Anglia side of the station as well as a bay for the Spalding line service.

Peterborough North? Peterborough City? Peterborough South?

Peterborough station is going to get busier - as it always has done. But it seems odd that any train service should terminate at its platforms. As cities get larger and the central station gets remoter from the suburbs, it seems to us that the policy should be not to waste resources at the central station but to build new stations at the edge where possible.

The report explains how the terminating Horsham-Peterborough Thameslink trains effectively block the down Main twice an hour as they slow on it to cross and then block the up fast Main to enter and block platform 2 most of every hour.

Would it be better if each terminating Thameslink train ran into and paused at the under used platform 5, then continued via the new Werrington Dive under to a new park and ride station with a turnback platform at a Werrington A15 Bypass station... Peterborough "North"? (Or even further north to the long called for station to serve the Deepings. However, Werrington Parkway would be close to Market Deeping.)

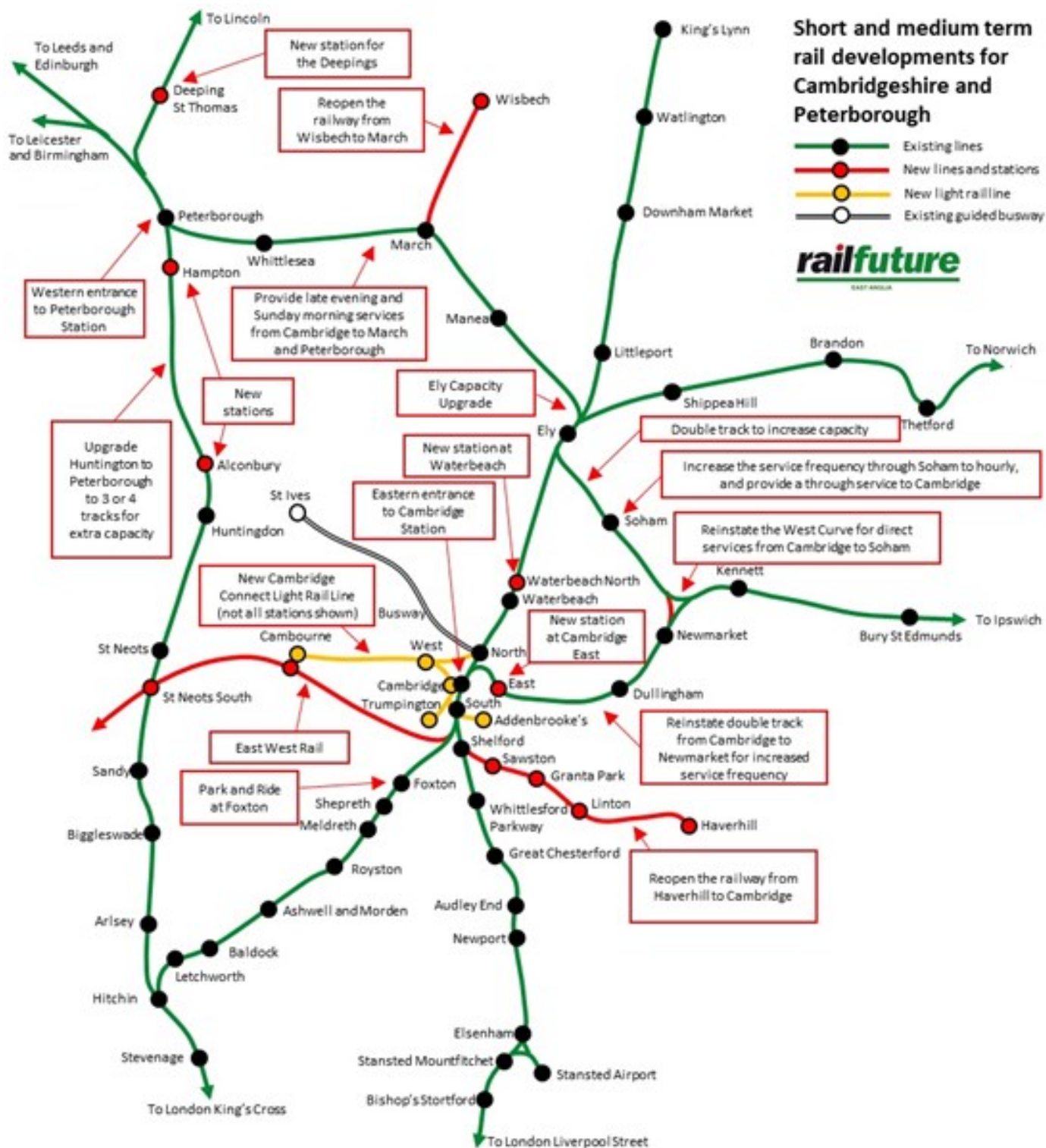
Terminate there, start back south, no track crossed at grade, pause at platform 1 or 2 and continue south. A pause at a Peterborough southern suburban station (Peterborough South) would be possible, then Alconbury New Town and Huntingdon.

These could possibly be a cheaper solution, a better use of resources and also get more access to the railway for thousands remote from it north of the city.

The Network Rail document can be viewed here:

<https://sacuksprodnrdigital0001.blob.core.windows.net/regional-long-term-planning/Eastern/Peterborough%20Area%20Strategic%20Advice%202022.pdf>

On page 10, see a map showing Railfuture's proposals for Cambs and Peterborough.



RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 17 JUNE 2023

St Mary's at Stoke, Stoke Street Ipswich IP2 8BX



We are delighted to have a Network Rail speaker, and hope as many RAIL EAST readers will join us as possible. Starts 14.00.

Anthony Dewar is NR's Technical Head of Buildings and Architecture, and his presentation will focus on 'modular stations and footbridges', including some latest innovations. Railfuture cares about making the station environment as good as possible for passengers. Q&A before refreshments are served at 15.00.

The venue is less than 20 minutes' walk from Ipswich station. Briefly walk along Burrell Road, turn right for Willoughby Road (uphill a little), and left into Belstead Road. This becomes Stoke Street and after you curve to the left you'll see the Church Hall.

HALF-HOURLY TRAIN SERVICES ON EAST ANGLIAN RAIL ROUTES – A MODEST PROPOSAL

BY DEREK MONNERY



Imagine yourself on a bleak local station with limited waiting facilities. How long would you be prepared to wait for a train? If you were in central London, you would start getting impatient after waiting more than ten minutes. In West Anglia, most services south of Cambridge are half-hourly, but for the rest of East Anglia hourly train services are normal (and every two hours Ipswich to Peterborough).

In my experience most people don't mind waiting a short while for a train, but when it gets to over half an hour, they will inevitably think about an alternative, maybe a car, taxi or bus, if there is one available. For many journeys, although the outward journey is known, the return time is uncertain, so having to wait more than half an hour on the way back is enough to dismiss rail as a viable means of travel.

It has long been the policy of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils that all rail routes in their areas should have half-hourly train services to improve connectivity and prosperity. Following the Covid-19 pandemic and shutdowns, more people are working from home and peak hour train services have been reduced. This has left our train operator, Greater Anglia, with some surplus trains and drivers.

We now have a unique opportunity to exploit this situation by trialling half-hourly train services on selected branch lines that have infrastructure that can take these services now without modification. In the Tendring area, there are three areas of comparative deprivation, which are parts of Clacton (Jaywick), Walton-on-the-Naze and Harwich/Dovercourt, with many people totally dependent on public transport to get to work. Many of the less well-paid jobs have early or late start times.

There are three railway lines that serve these areas, the Clacton, Walton, and Harwich branches. Each line only runs hourly off-peak. It is understood that all three of these lines could potentially take a half-hourly service all day using the existing infrastructure, including the branch to Colchester Town.

Elsewhere, the lines from Norwich to Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft could probably take a half-hourly service without substantial modification, but platform space at Norwich station may well be an issue. Both resorts contain areas of deprivation. Both the Colchester to Colchester Town and Shenfield to Southend Victoria lines already run services at least half-hourly.

Other branch lines in East Anglia currently have infrastructure issues that preclude half hourly services because they need substantial infrastructure investment, which may be hard to obtain in today's economic climate. These include:

- Wickford to Southminster (mostly single track, needs a second passing loop)
- Witham to Braintree (all single track, needs a passing loop)
- Marks Tey to Sudbury (all single track, needs a passing loop)

Both Ipswich and Norwich stations have capacity issues that would prevent reliable half-hourly services on the following routes:

- Ipswich to Felixstowe (part single track and heavily congested with freight)
- Ipswich to Lowestoft (single track with passing loops north of Woodbridge)
- Ipswich to Bury and Cambridge (single track with one passing loop between Newmarket and Cambridge and congestion at Haughley Junction)
- Ipswich to Peterborough (congestion at Haughley, Soham and Ely with single track sections; services currently run every two hours due to these issues)
- Norwich to Ely, Cambridge and Stansted (congestion caused by long single lead junctions at Ely North and the Trowse single track swing bridge)
- Norwich to Sheringham (single track sections beyond North Walsham)

The bay platform at Manningtree station, platform 1, where the Harwich branch train is waiting for the 1000 from London before forming the 1059 to Harwich. The new 720s only just fit the platform with their 5x24m coaches.



At present, it is only possible to provide reliable half-hourly services on the three Tendring branch lines until infrastructure improvements can be made elsewhere. As all three lines are in the same local authority area, they could be used as a testbed to show how well half-hourly services would be used. The only other recent evidence comes from when the Ipswich to Lowestoft branch line services were doubled, made possible by the opening of the Beccles loop. Services went from every two hours to hourly, and since then use has doubled, completely justifying the investment made in the loop to the extent that new four car trains are full at certain times of day.

Common sense tells us that the trial of half-hourly services should be a success, but the Treasury currently holds the purse strings on rail expenditure and will need a lot of convincing before any trial can go ahead. Lobbying by all interested parties is needed to build the momentum needed for more frequent train services to be widely implemented.

The author, who is pictured at the top of page 11, is Chairman of Essex Rail Users Federation



The Manningtree-Harwich branch at Bradfield near the site of the old station that was closed in 1958 and demolished in 1986

TURNING THE MELDRETH TO MELBOURN UNDERPASS INTO A WONDERPASS

BY SARAH GROVE

The A10 underpass forms part of a safe, off-road walking route between Melbourn Village and Meldreth Station for pupils walking to school, for employees at Melbourn Science Park and for local recreation and leisure. After an attempted assault in the underpass, a project group was set up including members from the Community Safety Partnership, the Think Communities Team and the Community Rail Partnership. A workshop was held at Melbourn Village College (MVC) to ask the pupils using the underpass to walk to school what they thought about it. They came up with words like dodgy, intimidating and scary. They flagged up the lack of light, bushes obscuring the view and 15-year-old artwork that had been covered in graffiti.

A survey was carried out in June 2022 to find out what people in Meldreth and Melbourn thought of the underpass. There were 375 responses about the lighting, the vegetation and the artwork. The results showed that 69% of respondents would avoid using the underpass at night and that 62% felt the underpass was not well enough lit at dusk.

A plan of improvements was developed and fundraising commenced. Grants were obtained from Melbourn and Meldreth Parish Councils, Govia Thameslink Railway, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Community Rail Development Fund and South Cambs District Council.

A new lighting pillar was installed so that the lights can come on earlier in the evening and stay on later in the morning and the vegetation was cut back to improve the sight lines.

Respondents said that they were eager to see new artwork in the underpass, designed by the community. A local artist, Bec Barnes, was employed to work on a design which would incorporate art from different sections of the community, including schools, youth groups, places of worship and community groups.

The design is an "Art Gallery" layout along the length of the walls, with different sizes and shapes of frames painted on the wall. Each of these frames contains an artwork representing 40 different groups and organisations. Two "meet the artist" sessions took place at the Warm Hub in Melbourn for people to explore and refine their ideas.

To create the "Wonderpass" feel, a colourful, fantastical border stretches the length of the underpass. Since there was such a big space to fill, help was needed to paint the magical background, and this was planned for six days during the Easter Holidays. The artist chalked out the outline of the mural, and paint and paintbrushes were provided for people to come down and fill in as much or as little as they wanted to – like a giant paint by numbers! The local schools have classes named for flowers, animals and creatures, so the design incorporates a rabbit, fox, hedgehogs, bluebells, daisies, ladybirds and butterflies.

Over the course of six days, nearly 200 volunteers came to help with the painting – over 100 of these were under 18 (see photo, right). Some people who had designed frames came down and painted them themselves, and others were transferred to the walls by our artist and other volunteers. After the mural painting, the walls were covered by a layer of anti-graffiti paint – the labour and materials were donated by the contractors working on an extension to Melbourn Science Park.



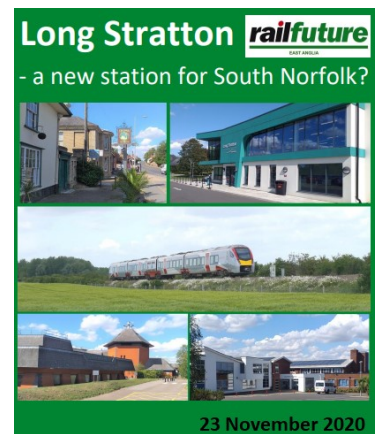
The Parish Councils and local people have been delighted by the results; Anna Connolly, class teacher at Melbourn Primary School said, "Thank you so much for making such a difference to the local area and creating brilliant memories for our children." *The author is Project Officer, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership*



“A BIGGER & BETTER RAILWAY” – THE CONTINUING CASE FOR LONG STRATTON

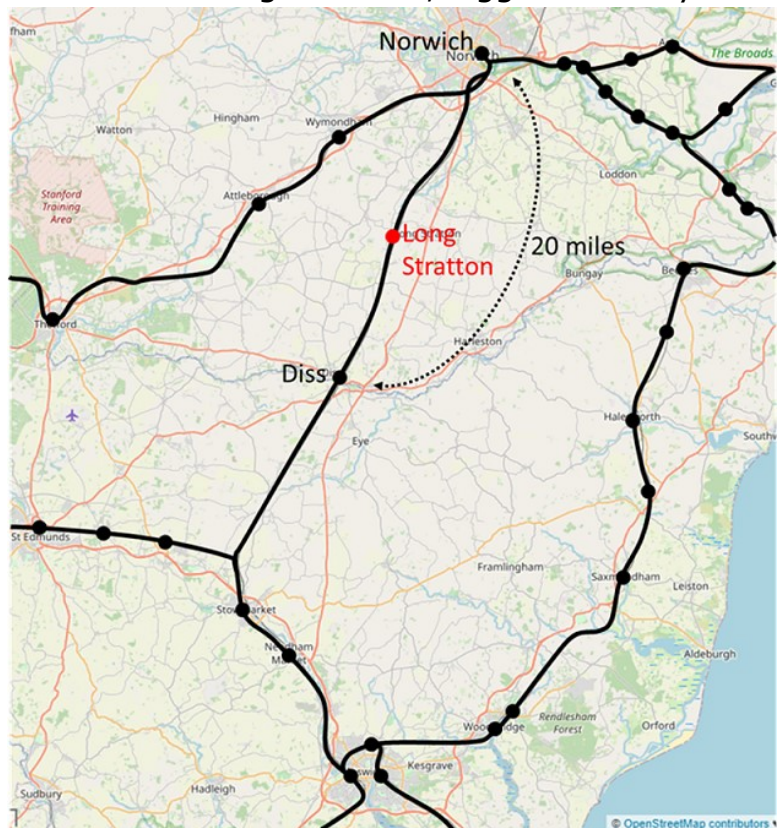
BY IAN COUZENS & PETER FEENEY

It is now a little over two years since Railfuture published its strategic case for building a new station on the Great Eastern Main Line (GEML) to serve the expanding population of South Norfolk. This article summarises the key points in that case and updates RAIL EAST readers on developments since the end of 2020. The original document is available at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/docs/Railfuture-East-Anglia-2020-11-23-Long-Stratton-Station-Report.pdf>.



The basic premiss behind the argument for a new station is that a growing population currently has no railhead between Diss and Norwich, a distance of 20 miles – the longest interval between stations in the entire East of England region. The result is that to access rail services residents have to travel up to 10 miles north or south (see the accompanying map). This is a powerful disincentive to using rail, the result being more cars and congestion on already heavily trafficked local roads, with consequent impact on carbon emissions and air quality. Taking local house building plans into account, the best estimate in 2020 was for a Long Stratton population of approximately 10,000 by the late 2030s, with a further 15,000 people living within a five-mile radius of the town. The publication recently of Office for National Statistics 2021 census data reinforces these estimates: South Norfolk was in the top quartile of East of England districts/councils for population growth in the decade since the 2011 census, with an increase of 14.5% or around 18,000 people. (Some of the key implications for rail policy in the east arising from the 2021 census returns were explored in an article by Peter Wakefield in RAIL EAST issue 195, p.7).

Historically, on paper at least, South Norfolk was far better served by the railway network than it is today. Up until November 1966 four intermediate stations survived between Norwich and Diss (with further stations southwards between Diss and Stowmarket at Mellis, Finningham and Haughley Junction). All fell prey to the vicious circle of poor service patterns and declining demand, aggravated by the growing accessibility of car ownership. Additionally, patterns of travel nearly sixty years ago, together with the economic make up and size of the local population, were radically different. The sober fact that many “rural” stations were judged non-viable and closed in the latter part of the twentieth century provides no rationale for rejecting the case for re-opening today. Indeed the government’s “Restore Your Railway” programme is itself testament to the recognition that as social and economic geography changes, so the case for new and restored stations is increasingly necessary and needs to be made. And Railfuture’s position is that in the case of Long Stratton, with a re-opened station on the GEML two miles to the east at Fornsett, there are robust arguments based on population and travel patterns.



A new station for Long Stratton would make rail journeys to Norwich or to destinations to the south much speedier than is currently the case. In terms of active travel, the road between the town and the proposed station is suitable for cycling and walking, whilst the five minute car journey between town and railhead would make drop off and pick up arrangements straightforward. Given the dispersed distribution of the local population beyond the town itself, if the new station is to serve as a south Norfolk railhead then adequate parking arrangements would be essential (the 2021 census shows that the district is among the 15% least densely populated areas in England, along with most of the corresponding council districts in Suffolk and Norfolk). A bus connection to Long Stratton itself is also entirely feasible, using a short extension to the existing service from Norwich. However to make that integrated public transport option as attractive as it needs to be, provision of a better evening service and new provision on Sundays would need to be developed. Building a new station is not in itself a sufficient condition for establishing a radically better non-car option for travel in South Norfolk, but it is both critical and necessary.

The assumption in the 2020 strategy proposal was that Long Stratton would initially benefit from an hourly service in each direction as part of the three trains per hour ambition in the most recent Greater Anglia franchise. The proposal emphasised that a new station requiring an additional stop for some services would not prejudice the "Norwich in 90" commitment – although since COVID that service has not returned to the timetable, and with the ongoing decline in the daily London commuting market there seems little obvious demand for its restoration. Pre-COVID annual footfall statistics for Diss stood at around 670,000 exits and entrances – some of whom doubtless would otherwise have used a railhead at Long Stratton. But a conveniently located station that obviates the need for a 10 mile road journey to Diss would unquestionably attract new rail users. In other words, the new station wouldn't just split up existing demand – if the early experience at Soham is anything to go by, railway provision continues to bear out the truth of the mantra, "build it & they will come". And some of that new market would be attracted to the opportunities the new station would provide for car-free travel to the North Norfolk coast, Cambridge, Peterborough and beyond.

In 2020 Railfuture suggested that a new station build might cost in the region of £15 million (the model then was based on a new station opened at Kintore in Aberdeenshire). The most recent East of England re-opening, at Soham in December 2021, is estimated to have a price tag of about £18.6 million. In the case of Long Stratton, the capital costs for construction could be met from a variety of sources, including developer contributions from local house building as well as funding from a further round of the "Restore Your Railway" programme. Importantly, the point was made that local authorities would not be expected to provide any ongoing revenue subsidy.

That seems a sensible investment when it connects an expanding Long Stratton population more speedily to the rest of the region and beyond – and when it does so at a fraction of the larger environmental price paid when that increasing population only otherwise has recourse to road transport for connectivity. Assuming better onward public transport provision at the destination station, who wouldn't prefer to get from Long Stratton to Norwich in about 10 minutes as compared to 40 minutes plus by car along the increasingly congested A140?

Following publication we sent our report to local authority councillors, officers and MP's. This stirred up a good response from some of the district and county councillors serving Long Stratton and other nearby communities – who were either supportive or at least interested to find out more. We also had the opportunity to present our case to the Norfolk Rail Group (a rail stakeholder forum run by the County Council) from whom we received a warm response. However, we didn't receive a response from the local MP or Long Stratton Town Council and so clearly

more work will need to be done to promote the benefits of a new station to the local community. Also, as the leader of South Norfolk Council pointed out, with the current Greater Norwich Local Plan being in the final stages of adoption there was little prospect of making allowance for a new station at this point. We understand that of course, but since plans are capable of periodic revision we will be looking for that to happen at the next opportunity.

While we at Railfuture continue to push for Long Stratton to be taken up by Norfolk County Council, a new station for Broadland Business Park is now back on the agenda, which hopefully shows an improved commitment to new rail infrastructure by the Council, even compared to a few months ago. However, there is a lot of catching up to do considering the last new rail station to be opened in Norfolk was Roughton Road in 1985. Our East Anglian Rail Study – as set out in RAIL EAST issue 197 – reinforces the case for a new station in the Long Stratton area (amongst others) and the County Council will surely need to be considering more than one project at a time if local rail is to deliver its full potential within the decarbonisation agenda in the run up to 2050.

PETER LAWRENCE

It is with great sadness we have to report the death of our friend and colleague Peter Lawrence. A vigorous champion of rail, particularly in East Anglia, he was steadfast in helping build what has evolved into Railfuture over many years. Always courteous, kind and thoughtful, he achieved so much in ensuring the railway continued to develop an increasingly important role in achieving a sustainable economy.

Peter was born in Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire but after moving to Norwich in 1970 he became deeply involved over the next half century in campaigning for “a bigger and better railway”.



Peter and Wendy at Norwich station on 27 September 2019. Attending at Greater Anglia's invitation the inauguration of the new class 755 regional trains.

Following concerns over the Norwich to Cambridge rail route which was being considered for closure, he saw a letter in the Eastern Daily Press in 1972 publicising the Railway Invigoration Society. Peter went to a meeting and subsequently joined. He soon became involved in the East Anglian committee and was branch chairman and vice chairman on two occasions, as well as serving a spell as branch secretary.

Peter joined the Railway Development Society national executive in the 1980s, becoming national chairman in 2000 and president in 2004. He decided to step down as president in 2012 on reaching 75 years of age, and became a vice president.

Peter was the national RDS media and local spokesperson for a number of years. He also co-operated with the Office of the Rail Regulator and the Rail Passenger Council in the publication of the Directory of Rail User Groups. Peter was also a director of Transport 2000 – now the Campaign for Better Transport – and from 1974 a member of the Mid-Norfolk Railway Preservation Trust. He was also involved with the Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail User Group.

Latterly he was vice chairman of the Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership which he formerly chaired and attended meetings of Bittern Line Community Rail Partnership and Norfolk Rail Policy Group, representing Railfuture East Anglia. He had sat on the Suffolk Rail Policy Group and was a Norfolk Railway Society member.

We send condolences to his wife, Wendy, son Robin and their family. He will be missed.

TIMETABLE CHANGES MAY-DECEMBER 2023

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The last timetable operated by our four train operating companies (TOCs) ended on Saturday 20 May 2023. Thus the current schedule started Sunday 21 May and runs until Saturday 9 December.

In spite of the difficulties imposed on the TOCs by DfT/HM Treasury – including the edict that service improvements can only be self funded – the new timetable does show some improvements. The differing energy levels demonstrated by varying TOCs is reflected here.



GTR emailed its Great Northern customers about the timetable changes. Greater Anglia did the same.

For example, Govia Thameslink (GTR) has made a real effort in spite of the difficulties, as demonstrated during a recent online presentation. It was fascinating to hear that by analysing carefully collected data, savings could be made and those savings then used in making improvements elsewhere on the network where growth required it. Two particular areas of growth identified were at Cambridge and Brighton.

In the Cambridge area GTR improvements have been made to the King's Lynn - Ely - Cambridge service (and of course onto London) because of reallocation of resources and the cooperation of Greater Anglia (GA). The latter has agreed that its peak service from King's Lynn to London Liverpool Street should not be restored and its one remaining service each way north of Ely be withdrawn between King's Lynn and Ely. This agreement plus GTR's careful use of resources has allowed the Monday-Friday service between King's Lynn and Cambridge to be dramatically improved. Instead of just seven trains daily at fairly erratic departure times from 04.43 to 07.48 from King's Lynn to Cambridge, there are now nine trains at 30-minute intervals from 04.44 until 08.42 ... when it goes hourly until 16.40 ... then back to every 30 minutes until 20.42, then again hourly until the last train at 22.42. (Remember that each train has eight coaches so that is 72 coaches in the morning peak into Cambridge from King's Lynn alone – up from 53).

In the northbound direction, morning peak arrivals at King's Lynn were at 06.38, 07.33, 08.35. Now they arrive half hourly from 06.30 until 08.30, then hourly throughout until the big improvements during the evening peak. Previously there were 10 arrivals from 16.31 to 21.31, again at widely differing intervals that ranged from nine minutes to 54. Now there are 11 arrivals at more or less 30-minute intervals from 16.30 to 21.30. After that it is hourly until 01.30 – a total of 88 coaches up from 77. (Note that the current 16.20 relief service to the 16.35 departure from Cambridge to King's Lynn is cut back to Cambridge-Ely, as the 16.05 departure is extended from Ely to King's Lynn.)

"We need a more extensive, integrated rail system that is not London-centric, one that reflects changing patterns of living and working." - Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Cambridge City Councillor.

GTR identified that the growth is in Cambridge. And although all services run through to and from London King's Cross, GTR planners used their data to provide a better service into Cambridge from the King's Lynn line's five intermediate stations

to Cambridge North and "Central". When Cambridge South station opens (hopefully in 2025), there will be even faster growth and Railfuture backs calls for all King's Lynn line services to call there too.

We should note that although there are big improvements north of Ely there is still a 30-minute interval service **all day** from Ely southwards.

In achieving these improvements Railfuture must congratulate GTR timetable planners. Its services are as reliable as any other local operator and in spite of having two very long single line sections between Ely and King's Lynn, it has enabled a half hourly service

with up and down trains arriving at the Littleport passing point without delay to either service. If only our other operators could be as creative.

GTR-Thameslink services operate with little change every 30 minutes between Cambridge-Brighton and Peterborough-Horsham, thus every 15 minutes from Hitchin and Stevenage through central London to East Croydon etc. A minor change is that the former now call at Ashwell & Morden twice an hour. The stopping train service that follows the Brighton trains out of Cambridge no longer calls at Ashwell & Morden but does so additionally, and usefully, at Alexandra Palace.

So, it is very good to see that GTR, at least, recognises that growth will not be coming from its London commuter market for a while and really is trying hard to cope with growth in its regional markets instead.

Greater Anglia has made some improvements to its Stansted Express services with a partial restoration of the 15-minute service in the morning and afternoon peaks. For example, in the up direction, departures start from Stansted Airport at 06.00 and every 15 minutes to 09.15; half hourly until 16.45; every 15 minutes until 20.15 reverting to every 30 minutes again until 23.45 and finally at 00.30.

Its Ely extensions of the Cambridge North to London Liverpool Street service rises from two to four trains departing hourly from 05.52 to 07.59 – three of them calling at Waterbeach, all at Cambridge North then Cambridge-London Liverpool Street with various calls. Arrivals in the evening start at 17.42, then approximately hourly until 20.45.

On the Mid-Anglia Cambridge-Ipswich route Kennett has been allocated an extra peak time call from otherwise non-stop services each way. Now the first five consecutive hourly trains in the morning call on the way to Cambridge. In the afternoon, from the 15.47 departure from Cambridge, there is a train every hour for 5 hours. A simple change but a big impact. Sadly, GA shows no urgency in dealing with the latent demand along the Ipswich to Cambridge corridor as there are no additional services at all. The usual summer only extra services from Norwich to Yarmouth and Lowestoft operate once again.

The Cambridge to Stansted Airport service remains dire, with **Cross Country Trains** showing no inclination to resume its services. It is content to run just a train every two hours – the trains that should be working the hourly service instead block platform 6 at Cambridge most of the day... doing nothing. Cross Country, so far, has been unable to run even the missing 09.18 ex Birmingham to Cambridge nor its 14.00 return. This creates a two-hour gap in the hourly service.

East Midland Railway's service from Norwich to the East Midlands, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool continues hourly with little change.

Changes from Sunday 21 May 2023

Working within a similar financial environment to 2022, three themes to changes in May 2023:

1. Responding to passenger demand hotspots and stakeholder requests and suggestions for services.
2. Introducing a new design to East Coastway services to promote more journey options per hour.
3. Efficiency savings where demand is lighter to offset high inflation and enable improvements across the network.

GTR We're with you

A slide about the timetable changes from GTR's presentation to stakeholders on 27 March.

GREATER ANGLIA “USING THE WIRES”

BY PETER FEENEY

Never let it be said that our train operators are not receptive to suggestions from their critical friends.

Exactly two years ago, in issue 190, Jerry Alderson contributed an article for RAIL EAST that looked over the first two years in service of the Stadler bi-mode fleet that serves most of the regional rail network in East Anglia. In recognising the step change in facilities and performance that this fleet represents, Jerry also challenged Greater Anglia to reinforce its environmental credentials by making more use of electric power rather than diesel by exploiting the capacity of the units to switch from one to the other whilst on the move (rather than only when at a station).

Well, it's good to report that Jerry's challenge is now at last being addressed. The catchy technical term for what Jerry identified is *Dynamic Manual Power Changeover* – DMPCO – and it is now in place and operating at several sites on the network.

Switching from diesel to electricity (pantograph raises automatically):

- Haughley Jn – Up Main – for trains which have come from Bury St Edmunds
- Marks Tey – Down Main – for trains which have come from the Sudbury branch.

Switching from electricity to diesel (pantograph drops automatically):

- Lakenham – Up Main – for trains departing Norwich station on the Cambridge route
- Haughley Jn – Down Main – for trains routed towards Bury St Edmunds, allowing them to depart Stowmarket station in electric mode
- Marks Tey – Up Main – for trains heading towards the Sudbury branch.

We understand that Ely North Jn is being commissioned in May 2023 to cater for:

- Ely North Jn – Down Cambridge – Electric to Diesel (for trains which are routed towards Norwich, allowing them to depart Ely in electric mode. Note trains which have come from Bury St Edmunds heading for Peterborough will remain in diesel mode throughout).

Electrically-powered trains can also accelerate faster, which reduces journey time.

Jerry's article also identified the scope for dynamic power changeover at locations including East Suffolk junction, for bi-modes to/from Lowestoft and Felixstowe and Ipswich, and Norwich, for the short stretch of wires into the station for services from Sheringham, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. Let's hope the scope for DMPCO at these locations is also being explored – although we know from information released by Greater Anglia that extending the scheme to the short section between Cambridge station and Coldham's Lane junction for Mid-Anglia services has been ruled out for operational reasons, and these factors may also limit DMPCO at some other locations. That said, Jerry's article estimated that if all possible sites for dynamic power changeover were exploited, an additional 100,000 kilometres per year might be powered directly by electricity rather than diesel. Surely long term a real financial saving for the operator, as well as a significant move towards a zero-emission railway that has regard for its lineside neighbours and the air they all breathe.



A DMPCO sign for the driver at Stowmarket station when heading for Bury St Edmunds — photo by Peter Feeney

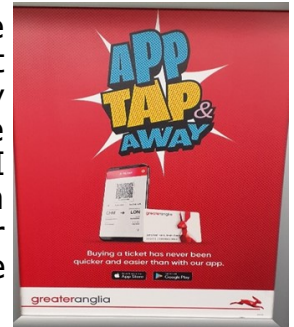
APP, TAP AND AWAY? – MY BATTLE FOR EQUAL ACCESS TO E-TICKETS

BY SARAH MANSEL



As a reasonably regular rail-user, and someone who likes to make best use of modern technology, I downloaded the Greater Anglia (GA) App onto my phone a few years ago. At that time there was no ticket machine at Elmswell on the Mid-Anglia line, so you either had to purchase tickets in advance and collect them from somewhere else (e.g. Stowmarket) or buy a ticket on the train. So the ability to use e-tickets seemed like a good idea to me and it became the norm for my journeys to Ipswich or Cambridge.

Then in December 2022 I had reason to make the first of three journeys to Cambridge North. As the weather was inclement during that week before Christmas I didn't attempt to buy my ticket on the App until shortly before leaving home to walk to the station. The App didn't allow me to buy an e-ticket, which I thought was strange, so I purchased the ticket online and then collected it from the machine at Elmswell. I spoke to the conductor on that train about not being able to get an e-ticket – she explained that it was too close to the departure of that train.



So a few weeks later, when I made my second trip to Cambridge North, I attempted to purchase my ticket the evening before my journey. I still was not given the option of a e-ticket. This time I decided that it really wasn't worth bothering with paying via the App and collecting at the ticket machine. What use was an App which did not allow you to buy e-tickets?

I decided to email the GA contact centre with my query as to why I was unable to get e-tickets for a journey from Elmswell to Cambridge North. I got a response saying that it all been rectified and I should now be able to get e-tickets for this journey. Alas, having received this notification, I proceeded again to try to purchase e-tickets for my third journey to Cambridge North, only to discover I still only had the option of collection from a ticket machine or a smart card! Again, I spoke to the conductor whilst purchasing the ticket on the train. This time she actually tried it on her iPhone and seemed to have the option of an e-ticket, and maybe I was unable to do so because I was using the Android version of the App. In hindsight I think she was only trying to get a single ticket not a return – more of that below.

I subsequently resumed my e-mail dialogue with the customer contact centre and began researching the issue further. I discovered that you *did* get the option for e-tickets from all the other stations on the Ipswich-Cambridge line to Cambridge North – it was just Elmswell which was different. This did not seem fair to me – discrimination against Elmswell rail users, and I wasn't going to give up that easily.

I was told to uninstall and reinstall the App – this made no difference. I was also asked some questions about purchasing tickets on the web as well as the App, so did some experiments using the website. Still no option of e-tickets. In fact, I had never seen an option for e-tickets on the App until I tried to purchase a ticket from Thurston to Cambridge North. The issue seemed to be with Elmswell, not Cambridge North and in fact the problem was the same for journeys to Ely and probably other stations too.

My subscription reminder for membership to MARPA (the local user group) came through, so I let them know of my battle with the Greater Anglia App, maybe other members had had similar issues. They too made contact with Greater Anglia, but it didn't seem like we were getting anywhere. Whilst navigating around the website I came across the sales support email, so I thought I'd try dropping them a line. I was given the following not entirely satisfactory responses (next page):

- e-tickets are not available in all routes. Some Train Operating Companies do not provide e-tickets option
- tickets are subject to availability and tickets for particular routes are made available for sale as per the guidelines set by UK Rail Industry and the traffic in a particular route. In your case, as I have checked only single journey e-tickets are available and you can book individually for each journey in order to complete your journey. (The price of two singles is £29.00, the price of an off-peak day return is £18.10. Why should Elmswell passengers have to do this?)

I wasn't happy and passed on my concerns to MARPA and to Paul Hollinghurst at Railfuture, and I'm not sure if it was their involvement or the fact that I was using my council email to pursue it, but I was pleased to receive a message finally – after several months – that it was now possible to purchase e-tickets for a return journey Elmswell to Cambridge North. It works on the Android App and website.

At no point however have I – or my fellow inquirers – received an intelligible explanation from GA as to the Elmswell e-ticket anomaly. Does it affect travellers from other stations too, I wonder?

Sarah Mansel is a Green Party District Councillor for Elmswell and Woolpit (Mid Suffolk District Council). She is passionate about sustainable transport and a keen cyclist.

EAST WEST RAIL CENTRAL ROUTE ANNOUNCEMENT “STOP PRESS” BY PETER WAKEFIELD

After a painstakingly careful analysis of potential traffic flows, all aspects of the physical and economic geography of south Cambridgeshire, East West Rail has decided, as Railfuture has long campaigned for, to run its services **south** from Cambridge station, through Cambridge South station, sharing the existing railway towards Hitchin along the Cam/Rhee Valley for about 5.5 miles to Harston. Here, by way of a proposed flying junction, the new railway begins. It climbs northwest towards Cambourne, higher up on the plateau, a further 9.5 miles on. The station site will be north of the current new town but is envisaged it will be eventually central to the new town as new suburbs will be built to the north. Continuing 10 miles westwards, following the A428 road, skirting the eastern suburbs of St Neots past Little Barford into Bedfordshire to just over the county border, a new town is being proposed where the new line crosses the East Coast Main Line (ECML) – to serve it, a new station at Tempsford (with platforms on both on the ECML and EWR). The line continues across Bedfordshire to enter Bedford station (about 31 miles from Harston) from the north alongside the Midland Mainline. The route announcement has been welcomed by the East West Mainline Partnership of local authorities.



TWO STATION DEVELOPMENTS IN BRIEF

BY NICK DIBBEN

Work on the bus interchange at **Biggleswade** is almost complete. Five new bus stands with shelters (see photo from May 2023, right) are being provided. The town centre bus station, not far away, is served by a number of routes, with buses linking to adjacent towns and villages. Hopefully all these buses will also call at the railway station. As part of the work to create a better interchange for passengers, new public toilets are being provided. New cycle racks (photo, left) are already in use. The only



All photos on this page by Nick Dibben

disappointment with the scheme is that, yet again, the architect, local authority and transport companies have chosen to use a "splotchy pavement" for the finishes. These designs are very confusing for people who are partially sighted or suffer from dementia and do not provide clear route finding between the bus stops and the station entrance. A proper review by an accessibility group should have picked this up.

Four years ago, funding was announced to provide step free access to the station; its two island platforms are currently served by a footbridge with steps to each platform. The steps are quite narrow and can often get congested in the evening peak period when passengers return from London. The idea was therefore to create a new footbridge with steps and a lift towards the southern end of the station. The new steps were removed from the scheme to save money, leading to many complaints from station users and accessibility groups. Rather than simply re-introduce the steps, the rail industry is now saying there is insufficient clearance between the new lifts and stairs to the platform edge and that the project will be delayed by another 18 months. It could be 2024/2025 before the scheme is delivered. Not surprisingly, local passenger groups are up in arms about the delay and demanding the rail industry just gets on with the job.

Meanwhile, at **Huntingdon** the new station car park and taxi rank were due to open a year ago. Whilst the car park adjacent to the main station building has opened, there is no sign that the taxi rank and the two deck car park on the west side of the station will open anytime soon. There is no obvious reason why they can't be completed nor is there any sign of work being done to complete the project. The existing car park is nearly full most days, so that train operator GTR and Apoca Parking agreed to stop the pre-booking of car park places as passengers were paying for parking only to find there were no space available. The new car park would add around 150 car parking spaces at the station – and with it useful income for the railway by attracting extra passengers.



Huntingdon station multi-deck car park – May 2023. It looks finished but when will it open?

There is also no progress inside the station building regarding the buffet that has been closed for many years. The problem appears to be a dispute between the heritage groups that want to protect the décor of the listed station building, including the existing wooden serving counter, and modern hygiene standards that would require a stainless steel work top when serving food. Meanwhile anyone wanting a drink or food needs to queue up at the trailer parked outside the station. By any standards, a sub-optimal arrangement that displays little concern for the needs of the travelling public.

NETWORK RAIL'S INNOVATIVE FOOTBRIDGE

The image below is a new 'FLOW' footbridge (the initials stands for Fibre-reinforced polymer, Lower cost, Optimised design, Working bridge), which Network Rail has trialled and intends to roll out where suitable, No doubt, the Network Rail guest speaker at our public meeting in Ipswich (see page 10) will explain this design.



Network Rail media centre
image published January

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

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

All submissions by **20 August 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 www.railfuture.org.uk/east/rail-east/.

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, £14 if under 26 years). Join online at 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

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

MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 17 JUNE 2023

St Mary's at Stoke
Stoke Street
IPSWICH
IP2 8BX

SATURDAY 23 SEPT 2023

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

SATURDAY 2 DEC 2023

Signal Box Comm. 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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