

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

Issue 199 • Sept 2023

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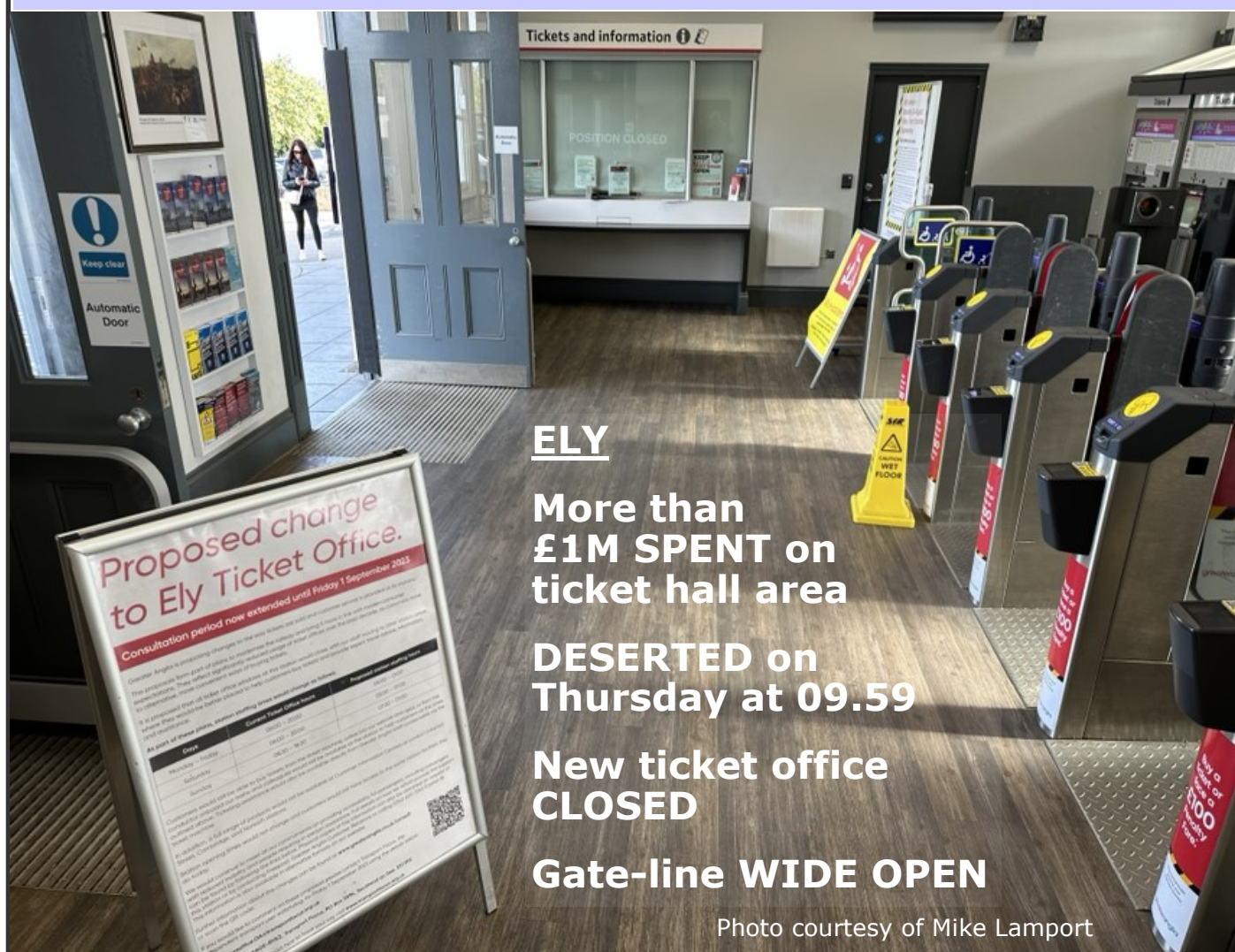
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STATION CUSTOMER SERVICE



ELY

**More than
£1M SPENT on
ticket hall area**

**DESERTED on
Thursday at 09.59**

**New ticket office
CLOSED**

Gate-line WIDE OPEN

Photo courtesy of Mike Lamport

WHAT SERVICE? A SIGN OF WHAT IS TO COME?

Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- Potential impact on travellers from station staffing changes
- What TVMs currently can't do
- East West Rail to Cambridge — why Railfuture supports route
- Essex missing rail link
- A metro for Greater Norwich
- Improving the railway's environmental credentials
- East Anglia rail news round-up

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE OF RAIL EAST

Chair's thoughts – [p.3](#)

Despite negative media headlines, rail still has success stories to report

Ticket office closures (1) – the regional picture – [p.4](#)

Why local evidence indicates that government and the industry need to look again urgently at misconceived proposals

Ticket office closures (2) – the national context – [p.5](#)

Key points from Railfuture's response to the proposals for England

TVMs – the urgent case for improvements – [p.6](#)

Exploiting available technology is essential for future growth

EW: Railfuture endorses the preferred route for the central section – [p.8](#)

Our reasons for supporting the chosen southern route to Cambridge via Tempsford & Cambourne

The Essex missing link – our next great regional challenge? – [p.12](#)

How new rail links around Stansted and north Essex might stimulate economic growth & ease pressures on the road network

Improving urban connectivity – a vision for Norwich (1) – [p.16](#)

The first of a two part examination of the potential for a Norwich metro and what it would mean for the city and surrounding communities

GTR Environmental forum – [p.20](#)

Hearing about best practice and innovation at one of our train operators

Railfuture's September public meeting – [p.21](#)

An opportunity to hear from the head of Transport East

News in brief – [p.22](#)

Featuring new stations, bridges, car parks – plus, the cost of sausage rolls

Take a look at our diagrammatic map on [p.11](#), which show the huge range of destinations that will be available from **Cambridge South** station by frequent direct trains (89) or by a single change.

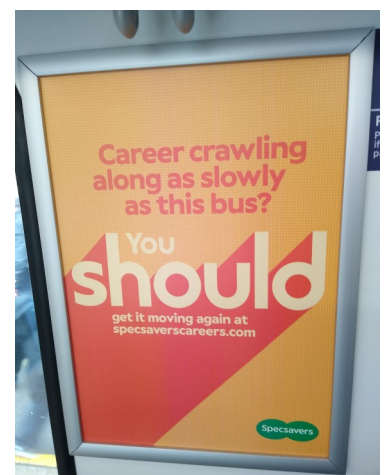
In August Network Rail (NR) issued a detailed report about how to use the capacity created by the opening of HS2 South along the West Coast Main Line South WCML (S) of Birmingham. It recommends the integration of EW services with the WCML (S) including a Cambridge - Milton Keynes Central - Northampton - Coventry - Birmingham service twice an hour via a new east to west curve at Bletchley and electrification of EW. We will report in detail in the next issue about this important piece of work. Note that the NR reports are published with permission of the DfT.

The December 2023 issue of RAIL EAST will be number 200. We will be looking back at some of things that it has covered since the branch was formed in 1972. If you are a long-term reader and have (brief) comments on how our railway has changed in 50 years, please email Peter Feeney (see [p.24](#)).

A smart ad in the wrong place?

Peter Feeney spotted this Specsavers advert on a Greater Anglia bi-mode train zooming along at more than 75mph and about to reach its destination on time. It was neither a bus nor crawling along. So, what is the advert saying to us?

Are some passengers so short-sighted to realise that they had boarded a train rather than a bus? You decide.



CHAIR'S THOUGHTS










BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH



And the good news is...

Rail news over the summer has not been the best. Plans to close many ticket offices at stations have dominated the headlines. The proposals are badly thought out and differ substantially between train operators. Such inconsistency is not the way to encourage people to use the train. A major rethink is required – you can read about the Railfuture response on [p.5](#). Although the train operators are getting the blame, the Department for Transport and the Treasury are behind this idea.

Another negative rail story is the decision by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority to give HS2 a red warning. This has resulted in the usual suspects calling for the entire project to be scrapped, totally ignoring the fact that Phase 1 of HS2 is around 40% complete. What people have forgotten is that just a few years ago, the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) project in London had the same status. The line was opened just over a year ago and has been an amazing success. It is worth re-reading the Oakervee Report into HS2, issued in February 2020 – read it online at www.gov.uk/government/publications/oakervee-review-of-hs2. This highlighted some of the issues faced by the project: lack of national transport strategy (still an issue and now flagged up by the Climate Change Committee), no coordinated plan for Euston (still not resolved) and an ineffective contract between central government and the builders (too late but costing billions). As with the ticketing issue, the DfT and Treasury have questions to answer.

Annual Report			Project Name
20/21	21/22	22/23	
			HS2 Phase 1
			HS2 Phase 2a
			HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg

So, is there any good news? Yes, there is! Greater Anglia continues to deliver impressive performance figures. Around the rail network, three new stations have opened in Reading, Bristol and Ramsgate with more to come. And closer to home, there are freight trains running from Lowestoft carrying ballast for use on the rail network (see [p.23](#)).

Looking to the future, you can read about our exciting ideas for a new rail route across Essex on [p.12](#). This is a long-term project, but it is important that local authorities think about it now, so we don't remove possible routes in the future. More on this at our Norwich meeting on Saturday 23 September (see [p.21](#)). Thank you to everyone who attended our meeting in Ipswich on 17 June. You can see the slides about new station design that our guest speaker, Anthony Dewar, of Network Rail (right) presented at www.railfuture.org.uk/display3467 (14MB).



You may recall in issue 198 (June 2023) we published the story of a Suffolk rail user frustrated and baffled to discover she couldn't purchase an e-ticket to Cambridge North from her local station. Despite the story eventually having a positive outcome, neither Railfuture nor the user have ever discovered how this anomaly arose. We are however happy to make clear that the problem originated with the ticketing agency Trainline and not with the train operator, Greater Anglia.

On a personal note, I will be leaving the area shortly to move to Sleaford, Lincolnshire. As a result, I will stand down as Chair and formally resign from the branch committee at the AGM on 24 February 2024. It has been a long journey since I first encountered the then Railway Development Society at a stall on Cambridge Station many years ago. If there is anyone who wants to fill this vacancy and join the committee, please contact me – I am happy to have a chat about what is involved, and the committee always welcomes new blood.

TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES – BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD?

AN EAST ANGLIAN PERSPECTIVE BY NICK DIBBEN

The rail news over summer 2023 has been dominated by proposals to change the way that tickets are sold and advice is provided, with most existing ticket offices being closed and staff deployed elsewhere on the station. The original 21-day consultation period was extended to 1 September. More than 680,000 responses from passengers have been sent in opposing the change. Although officially the changes are being developed by the Rail Delivery Group, representing the train operators, nearly everyone believes that the Department for Transport and the Treasury are behind the plans. Within our area, Cambridge North station — which was built without a ticket office — provides a pointer for what the future might bring. Passengers using that station will know the problems. These include:

- Ticket machines do not sell all types of ticket (e.g. the Anglia Plus Day Ranger).
- The existing ticketing system is very confusing, with multiple options available for some journeys (such as operator-specific fares). Help is often required to ensure the correct ticket is bought.
- Ticket support staff are not available all the time and the gate-line staff say they are not trained to use the ticket machines (TVMs).
- Although remote help is available from the Greater Anglia (GA) Customer Contact Centre in Norwich (they can even take over control of the TVM to select the tickets), that might not be obvious to passengers.
- Ticket machines cannot provide a printout of journey details in the same way that a ticket office can. They also cannot resolve incorrect purchases (refunds).

These issues could be overcome. For example, GA confirmed in an on-line meeting with rail user groups that staff would be retrained to become multi-function. It also indicated that pay-as-you-go ticketing could be extended to more stations, but this is a separate process and not part of the ticket office plans. What is not clear is that these things will be included in future contracts in the same way that ticket office hours are, meaning that future changes could be made without consultation. These issues form the basis of the Railfuture response to the proposals.

The main concern over the proposals is the lack of consistency between the different train operators' plans. For example, Greater Anglia plans to keep ticket offices at major stations such as Cambridge, Norwich, Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford and Stansted Airport, rebranded as Customer Information Centres. However, other train operators intend to close ticket offices at similar-sized stations. Where it is planned to close ticket offices, both Greater Anglia and GTR intend to keep staff at the station, but this is not the case elsewhere.

There are also discrepancies between train operators on the amount of information provided. Great Western Railway and Northern have provided detailed information for each station on the number of tickets sold by the ticket machines, on-line and the ticket office. These figures show that at some stations where the ticket office is earmarked for closure, they are currently selling 40 tickets each hour!

The changes are seen as a possible cost-saving measure, but have they considered the loss of revenue if people are put off travelling, or extra costs if newly unstaffed stations suffer from more vandalism? Equally there does not appear to have been a proper assessment of the needs of passengers with disabilities, a legal requirement. And it is significant that some of the most critical response to the consultation has come from groups advocating for the needs of disabled travellers.

Whilst changes in the way rail tickets are sold need to be recognised, the proposals are totally unacceptable and must be dropped. A proper review is required that establishes a set of consistent principles for the different classes of station around the network. For example, maintain ticket offices at stations with more than 2m passengers; for stations with 1-2m passengers, then staff are present throughout the day and so on. The lack of such transparent criteria underlines the rushed character of the existing proposals – and the need for a comprehensive rethink.

STATION STAFFING PROPOSALS

BY JERRY ALDERSON

COVER STORY

Railfuture, rail user groups and other campaigning organisations really come into their own when there appears to be a threat to the railway, and passengers in particular. The government-driven proposals (fronted by the Rail Delivery Group and train operators) are ultimately to save money — even if they dare not admit it.

Railfuture director Neil Middleton, who specialises in customer service along with fares and ticketing matters, has led the response with considerable input from the 12 English branches along with the Scottish and Welsh branches. Although neither nation should be directly affected, because transport is devolved, Scotland faces Glasgow Central's ticket office being closed — something that is hard to make up!

Please visit www.railfuture.org.uk/Ticket-Offices, which has links to the Railfuture work done since July 2023, and will be updated as more reports and responses are produced. You'll find our national response, which is largely a series of principles, and branch responses that focus on stations and routes. Our Press Releases are also there. Our representatives have been interviewed on television (Newsnight, BBC Breakfast), national radio (e.g. Radio 4 Today Programme) and on local radio.

The government has made no secret of the higher level of subsidy the railway is receiving as like-for-like fare revenue is almost 30% below that in 2019, and that it wants the taxpayers' contribution to be brought down. However, it has arguably hindered revenue growth by reducing the cost of travelling by car and plane journeys, whilst not allowing train operators the freedom to run more services, and instead focusing on controlling (i.e. minimising) costs. The changes to station staffing (moving staff to where customers are rather than making customers go to where the staff are located) could well be beneficial if the focus was on improving every aspect of customer service, which would then drive up usage of the railway. The problem is that few people (public or rail staff) believe this is the intention.

Imagine if the railway was run by business-focused managers, of the kind in British Rail's later years, rather than civil servants in the Treasury and DfT. We might see:

- Widening of the range of retailing at ticket offices / customer information centres, beyond rail tickets and rail cards (such as the MtoGo in Merseyside) and also the services they provide, such as adding tourist information and even selling tickets for buses or tourist attractions — this would help make their existence viable; otherwise reuse the space for the benefit of customers, such as seating areas, family-friendly areas, toilets and also 'changing places' toilets
- Sensible proposals to reduce the cost of running the railway but ensuring that the customer service (range of services provided to all types of customer, speed of delivering those services, hours of availability and resilience) was not reduced
- Getting better value for money from the current station staff – interacting with more passengers (which should be more enjoyable for them); reducing the headcount at stations where it will not affect customer service (see the criteria in first bullet point) by allowing excess staff from a larger station to visit other stations to fill gaps when a need arises, such as special events or holiday periods
- Multi-skilling staff (removing demarcation) so that all customer-facing members of station staff are equipped, trained and authorised to provide the full range of services; spreading staff around the station providing that customers can always find or summon and recognise them as staff — perhaps install the type of 'help points' present at unstaffed stations in the entrance areas of staffed stations
- Providing better real-time information at stations to reduce the reliance upon staff — Railfuture has seen 'meeters and greeters' at Ely ticket office ask for the arrival time of a train because there is no arrivals screen before the ticket gates
- Standardising ticket machines for the same look and feel — minimise keys pressed on the screen to undertake a purchase — and dramatically improve functionality to widen the range of tickets offered, with 'most popular' tickets on the first screen (see article on [p.6](#)). Provide a similar-looking website and app to buy tickets (and research journeys) plus Delay Repay to cover the full network.

MAKING TICKET VENDING MACHINES FIT FOR PURPOSE

BY JERRY ALDERSON

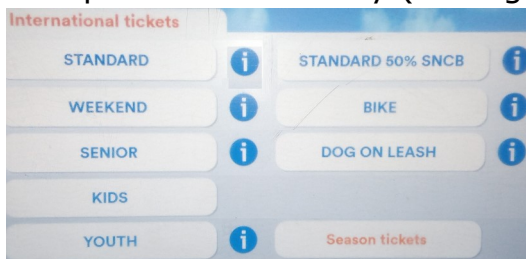
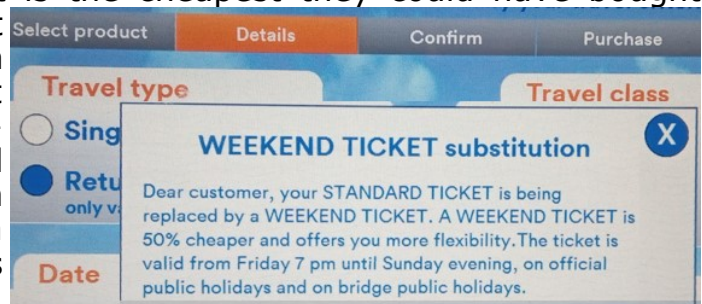
As recently as the 1990s (when few had access to the internet and smart phones did not exist) the vast majority of tickets were sold at a ticket office or (outside penalty fare areas) on trains. We're told that ticket offices now issue 12% of tickets sold nationally (one ticket may be many journeys, of course), and that the majority of purchases are made online or at ticket machines at stations. This trend will increase further, even if no changes to retailing or fare structures are made, just because of demographics, but will tail off unless an intervention occurs, such as:

- a) coercion, by closing ticket office, staff training customers to use machines, or offering bargain tickets only if purchased online
- b) simplifying fares, so that people do not feel the need to ask a person for advice
- c) making ticket vending machines fit for purpose so people choose to use them.

Ticket vending machines are known by the acronym TVM, but sometimes CSN, for Computer Says No (a phrase popularised by the Little Britain TV series) might be more appropriate. This is a failure by the rail industry to do its job properly. Don't blame TVMs as they are capable of almost anything if the industry could only get its act together to design them properly and remove unnecessary restrictions.

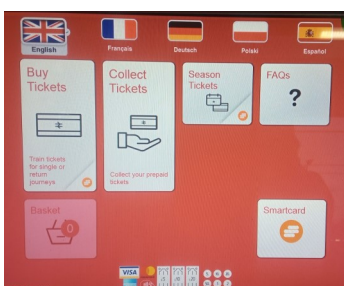
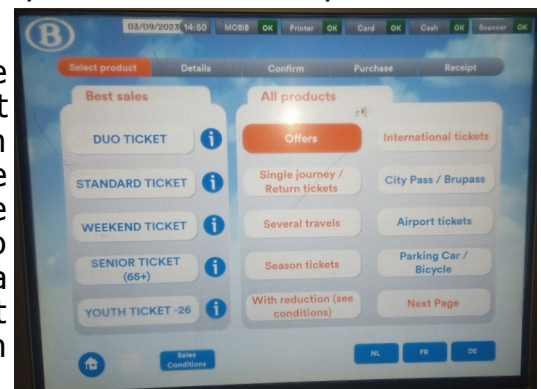
A key problem customers face is knowing whether they have bought the right ticket for their journey and whether it is the cheapest they could have bought.

Sensible interfaces would ask what journey you want to make and then show you the price — you should not need to know if you want a peak or off-peak ticket. In Belgium the national operator SNCB/NMBS offers you both standard or weekend but it tells you if a discount is available today and changes the price automatically (see right).



Another problem is having to navigate through several pages if you want to buy an obscure type of ticket. Not on SNCB. It is just one click and you can go to the international fares page and see a range of options that Britons would find surprising, such as having to buy a ticket for a bicycle or even a dog (left).

The home page (shown right) uses simple language and groups products into a sensible order, yet covers a wide range of ticket types. It's clear which tickets are flexible, and which are cheaper but have restrictions. Once you have chosen your ticket type it will then ask you for origin and destination — no hunting around to find the option to depart from a different station as a 'change' button is right next to the origin station and likewise for the date. In Britain changing the defaults can be a challenge.



Ever wondered if the ticket machine will print your ticket? Does it have ticket stock, or ink? The machine detects what is and is not working, and shows a status bar at the top for both customers and staff.

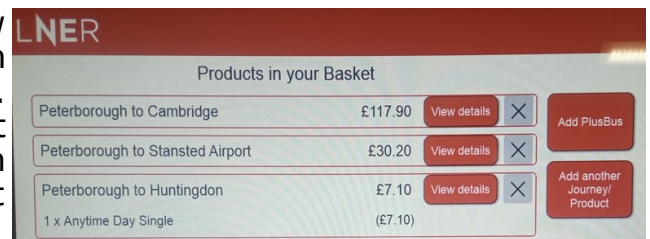
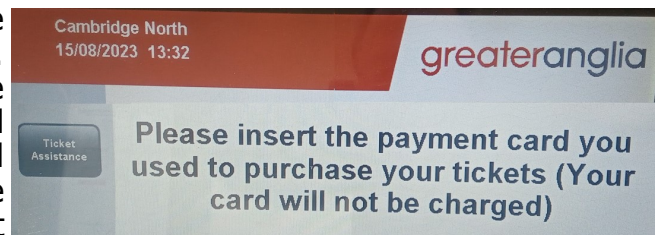
A totally fair criticism of Belgian railway's TVMs is that its screens are very text based. British TVMs are more graphical and arguably better if you don't understand the language. Like SNCB they also include foreign languages, but each TOC

seems to decide on which languages to support. LNER has four foreign languages, Greater Anglia (GA) has five and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has just two — all within Europe. Most RAIL EAST readers won't care but it is a good example of the inconsistency of TVMs, not least because GA and GTR use common software.

Much more worrying are the unreasonable rules for collecting pre-purchased tickets. TVMs require you to insert a card (of some kind) in order to print your tickets, and GA/GTR TVMs appear to require the actual card used to make the purchase (see image, right). This attempt to prevent fraud (even though most tickets are low value) hasn't kept pace with technology: what about online payments made without a card e.g. Apple Pay or Google Wallet?

A concern with TVMs is that the purchase could take longer than at a ticket office and therefore queues will build up. This is where the railway needs to be smarter.

Some operators such as LNER and GTR now support shopping baskets so that you can buy multiple products and pay at the end. This needs to be provided on all TVMs, but refinement is needed first. The LNER screen (right) doesn't explain that the first (expensive) item is a weekly season.



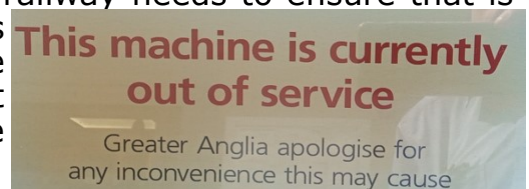
Purchases can be speeded up if the customer can find the ticket they want on the home page. Many TVMs have a list of popular destinations and these can vary by location so that stations on that line are shown (GTR image, left), but this could be more dynamic. These days artificial intelligence (AI) seems to be an answer to many problems.

The 'popular destinations' list could be integrated with the train timetable and show the next train due to arrive at the top of the list, perhaps allowing you to click on the route and select your destination station. GA's TVMs can be used to show real-time train information, but it is not integrated with purchasing so you can't click on it and select your ticket.

TVMs should also remember the purchases that have been made in the last hour or so — if there is an a major event today it's likely that many people will be going to the same place — and show tickets to that destination in the popular list.

Websites such as Amazon know what you have bought before. Why can't a TVM? Well it can, but it needs to recognise you before you press any keys on the screen. You could insert your debit/credit card up front (some people may prefer not to), or scan something on your smart phone. It might even recognise your face. Then your last three purchases could be shown and you'd only need to make one click. It's quite possible for TVM purchases to be much quicker than at a ticket office.

The rail industry is notoriously poor at managing change, such as adding new stations to the destinations available on TVMs. Staff can be trained in advance but customers cannot. As more people use TVMs the railway needs to ensure that it does not make too dramatic a change at once as queues could form if everyone using the machine needs twice as long to work out how to use it. But improvements to TVMs can fail at the first hurdle (see image, right). Reliability really matters!

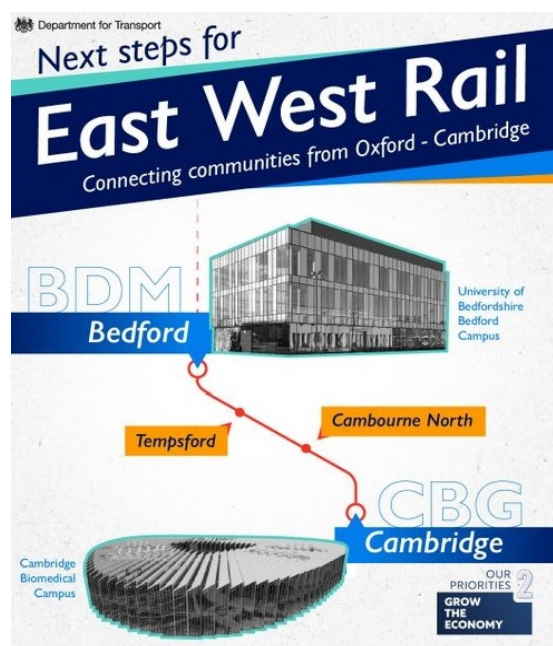


EAST WEST RAILWAY – BEDFORD-CAMBRIDGE SECTION: IT'S THE RIGHT ROUTE: NOW, JUST GET ON WITH IT

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

Railfuture is delighted that the government has committed to this entirely new section of the East West Mainline that is being routed through a redeveloped Bedford station to Cambourne and accessing Cambridge station via the new **Cambridge South Station** currently being built and scheduled to open in 2025.

Railfuture supports the East West Rail Company's detailed analysis of this route and the conclusions it comes to about where the line should go and why. In particular we support the difficult decisions made regarding Bedford station, including the conclusion that current and future development of services both on the Midland Mainline and north of Cambridge, must not be jeopardised in any way by the introduction of the new and frequent East West Mainline train service.



We see this announcement as an important first step towards achieving the broader vision for this strategic link that will provide **an up-fast line platform at Bedford**; an **east-to-north connection at Bletchley**; restoration of **double track between Cambridge and Newmarket**; and future-proofing the proposed **interchange station at Tempsford to provide four platforms to service all four tracks of the East Coast Mainline**, enabling connectivity not just with Thameslink services but also with long distance services to the North of England and Scotland.

Railfuture will engage in both the statutory consultation (to be held in 2024) on the route it will take and the development consent order application to construct it. We strongly support the choice of a southern route into Cambridge as explained below.

Old versus new routes

Some commentators have looked at the proposed new route (see official map on p.21 of RAIL EAST issue 198) and criticised it for being too "curvy". So here are the actual mileages. The mileage of the so-called "Varsity Line" is that given in the 1958 BR timetable, with each of the seven trains a day taking 60 minutes to complete the journey. Note that to make onward connections at Bedford in 1958 one had to walk across town to Bedford Midland (close to the current station), a mile away.

East West trains will run Cambridge to Bedford every 15 minutes early until late in about 30 minutes journey time, enabling connections at Bedford via footbridge/lifts to other platforms for multiple north/south onward destinations. The frequency of service there will cut the inevitable connection time penalty to a minimum.

The route was chosen after consultation with the public, local councils/councillors, Network Rail and the careful study of all local physical, economic, geographical factors.

Distances in miles:

A straight line between the current Cambridge and Bedford stations is 26.5 miles.

The original railway Cambridge to the old Bedford St Johns via Gamlingay, Potton and Sandy is 29.75 miles.

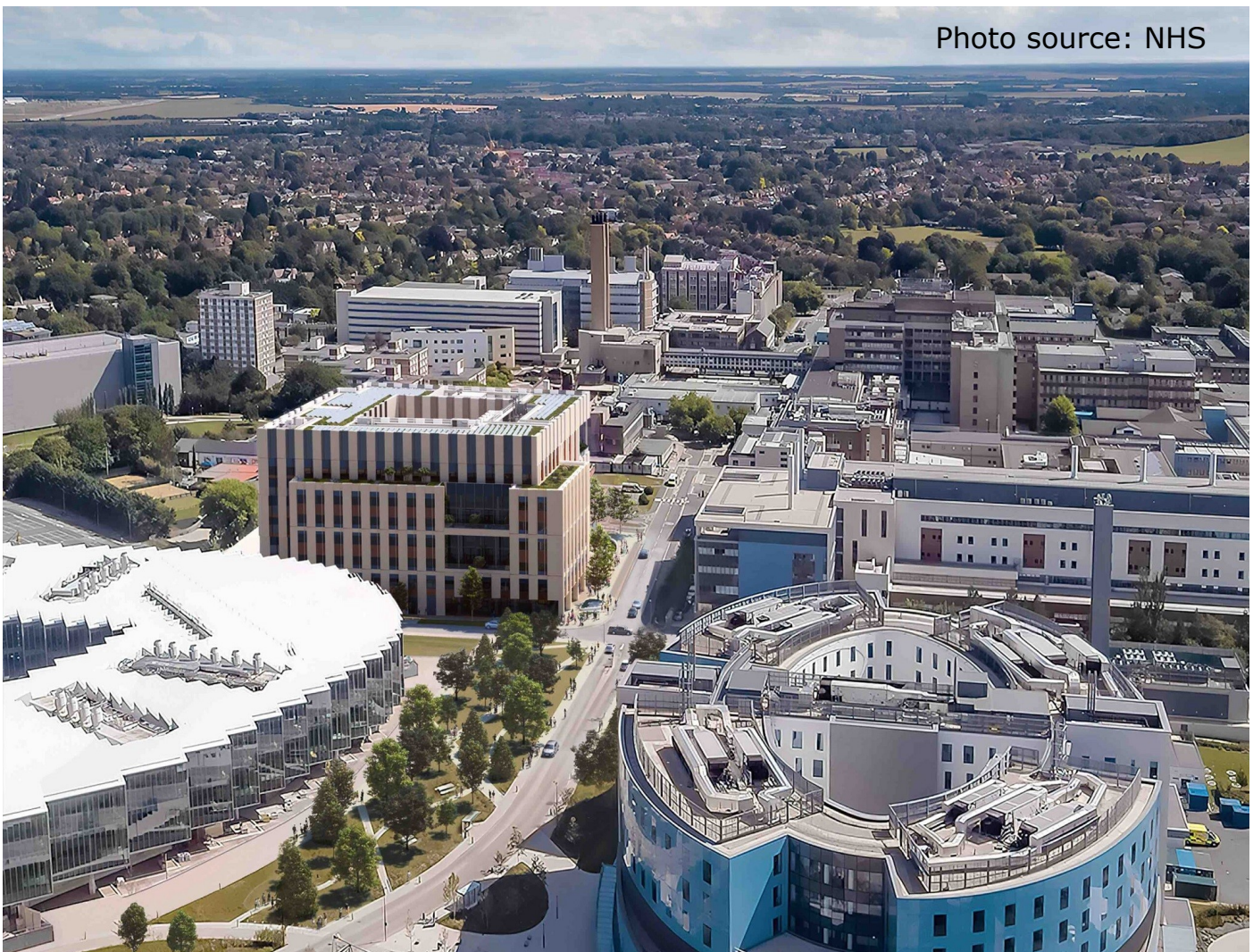
The East West Railway chosen route Cambridge - Bedford stations via Cambridge South, Cambourne, St Neots/Tempsford is about 35 miles.

Population and work

The point of a railway is its velocity and volume, safely and sustainably delivered.

But there is a compromise to be made within that statement, so it has to deviate from a straight line if it is to serve communities between the node at each end. Note that regarding stations on the original route, the current combined population of Sandy, Potton and Gamlingay is about 23,000. By contrast, on the EWR proposed route in Cambridgeshire, St Neots alone has a population of 38,000. Cambourne (currently 16,000) and Tempsford just south of St Neots (but in Bedfordshire) are planned to be substantially developed in line with the nationally approved Local Structure Plans.

From Cambourne, the line will run east directly to Cambridge South station, adjacent to the Cambridge Bio Medical Campus (see photo below) where there will be 27,000 jobs by 2031, as well as a major regional sixth form college, a huge teaching and four major specialist regional hospitals, plus nearby several thousand residents, all within a 10-minute walk of the station.



Going east from Bedford, after the East Coast Mainline (ECML) interchange station, the chosen route of the railway follows the A428 corridor past Little Barford, skirting St Neots (Cambridgeshire). We support the development of a network of cycle and pedestrian routes linking St Neots to the new station.

East West Rail's interface with existing railway operations

The East West Rail Company (EWR) quite rightly stresses its proposed service levels must not adversely affect existing services now or in the future. It has produced detailed analyses of the impact its services will have on operations at Bedford and Cambridge. These can be read online (via <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/>).

At Bedford the major impacts would be from/to the tightly timed cross-London Thameslink service and the frequent important freight services that share the Midland Mainline slow lines. If EWR was to share those same tracks the possibility of disruption from any part of the Thameslink/freight network through to Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford and beyond is considerable. EWR has made the decision that it must have its own tracks all the way through Bedford station and north of it to avoid the possibility of importing or exporting disruption.

At Cambridge the choice of route into the current main station is from Cambourne via a northern line through Cambridge North or a southern route through Cambridge South. EWR commissioned an analysis of the current timetables and came to the conclusion that the existing "north of Cambridge timetable" just would not work when four extra EWR services each way each hour are added (with some possibly making extra passes if continuing on to Ipswich or Norwich after reversal at Cambridge). The analysis indicated that some Ely - Cambridge services could have up to eight minutes or more added to their journey times. This is clearly not acceptable to existing users.

EWR has chosen the southern route which is more easily widened into four tracks from Shepreth Branch Junction through Cambridge South station to the main station and directly serves Cambridge South. It allows trains to continue seamlessly onward into East Anglia.

(A further factor is that the northern route could not be so easily widened, requiring a major rebuild of the rail bridge over the river Cam and land-take from commons, effectively turning Cambridge station into an inefficient terminal station).

What EWR is not remitted to do

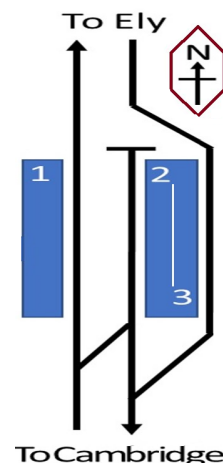
The EWR Company is tasked with building a railway from Oxford to Cambridge – not beyond either. However, Railfuture supports the aims of the consortium of local authorities called the East West Mainline Partnership, which takes a broader view of the strategic value of EWR. It wants through services from across East Anglia to beyond Oxford, westward to Swindon, Bristol and/or Cardiff. Its requirements are that Cambridge and Bedford stations are efficient "pause and go" through stations – not a situation like the time wasting, capacity eating reversals twice an hour at Ely on Norwich - Liverpool services.

At the same time, other authorities require other services to come into Cambridge from the north, for example from Wisbech as well as Peterborough to Cambridge. Any EWR 4tph northern entry service pattern into Cambridge would block such service development.

Cambridge station redevelopment

Cambridge "Central" station clearly is reaching the limits of its capacity in terms of train movements and passenger numbers. We say that train capacity constraints can be eased by making sure that no train service terminates at its through platforms, otherwise each service would block them for 20 minutes each hour. All such services should go on to, say, a new Cambridge East or better onto a redeveloped Newmarket station...Thameslink Brighton services for example. (Yes, the Newmarket line must be re-doubled!)

Cambridge is growing fast and the railway must keep pace with that. Additional turnbacks are needed at a redeveloped track layout at Cambridge North and Waterbeach new station (image right).



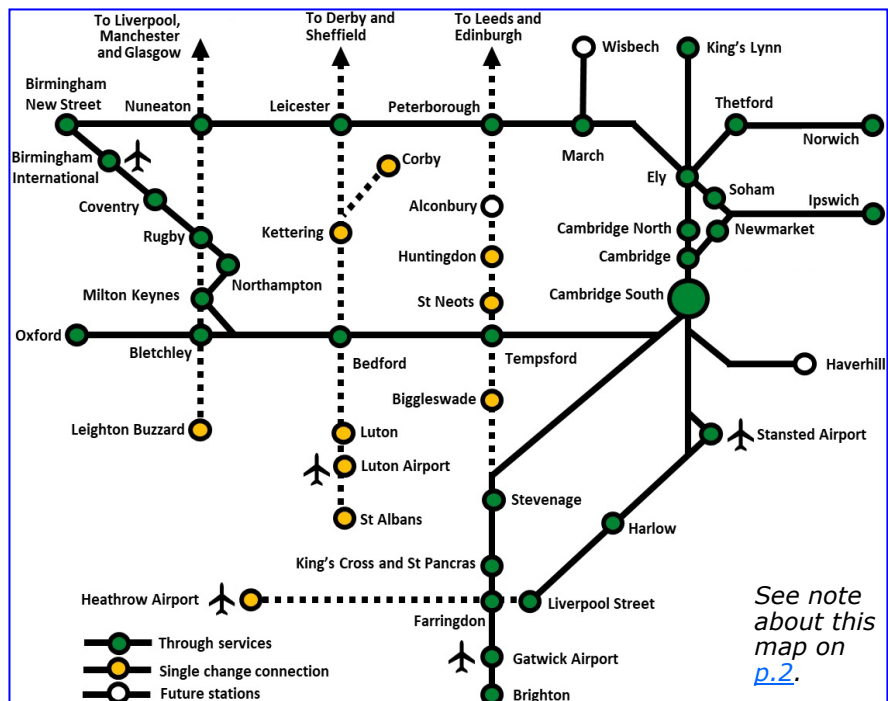
To cope with the ever-increasing footfall as the "Central" station becomes host to more services, an eastern entrance is imperative, accessed via a south-end foot bridge down to platforms 1 and 7/8 easing the current often chronic overcrowding leading to platform 4 and the north-end footbridge (see photo at top of next page).



Cambridge South station – a major hub

It is worth reminding ourselves how well connected this efficient four-platformed station will be. It is anticipated that it will have early until late services:

- half-hourly direct to Stansted and Gatwick Airports
- with one change half hourly to London Heathrow and Luton Airports
- at least half hourly to all stations to Ely and King's Lynn
- half hourly all stations to Hatfield, Potters Bar and Alexandra Palace
- four trains an hour to Royston, Baldock, Letchworth, Hitchin, Stevenage.
- at least two trains an hour most stations to Harlow, northeast London and London Liverpool Street
- half-hourly major stations to Brighton via central London, London Bridge, East Croydon
- two non-stop trains an hour to London King's Cross
- hourly trains to March, Peterborough and all stations on to Leicester and Birmingham.
- half hourly to Norwich (and Yarmouth?!)
- hourly to Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket, Ipswich
- four EWR trains an hour to Cambourne, St Neots area, Bedford, Milton Keynes (Bletchley)
- two EWR trains an hour to Winslow, Bicester and Oxford (and beyond to Swindon, Bath, Bristol, Cardiff?)



And, of course, to Soham, Wisbech and Haverhill when other plans come to fruition.

*Railfuture recognises that although big projects are process driven and take time to get to construction, in the meantime the Oxford - Milton Keynes - Cambridge corridor is booming, its roads are bursting at the seams so the **"just get on with it"** mantra demands urgent funding commitments and rapid action on the ground.*

THE NEXT EAST WEST CHALLENGE? ADDRESSING THE ESSEX MISSING LINK

BY MARTIN COOPER

Issue 197 (February 2023) highlighted the potential of a new east-west rail link between Stansted Airport and Colchester that would parallel the A120 corridor. The article noted that due to significant planned development this could become the busiest section of railway in the region. This follow-up article provides more detail of the scheme, the benefits to the whole region and how it might be delivered.

Human Geography and Economic issues

The southern part of East Anglia from Harlow in the west across to Colchester and east has seen a growth in technical and research centres in recent years and such development looks set to continue into the future. Access between these places and to adjacent research centres in Ipswich and Cambridge will grow and is key to the successful development of new technology clusters. This will put considerable pressure on the A120 road as there are no east-west rail alternatives at present.

The biggest issue is how to tackle simultaneously the need to improve access to a wider jobs market whilst reducing road traffic in line with meeting net-zero aspirations. Even keeping 2,000 cars (10% of peak flows) off trunk roads in the peak hours across this corridor will make a massive difference in terms of the congestion.

Garden Communities and the A120 corridor

Sites for new communities in North Essex are currently being discussed. However, some proposed sites have already been rejected by the Planning Inspector on the grounds of inadequate transport infrastructure. Whilst new sites may contain local alternatives to the car such as walking and cycle routes and local buses, there is a need to provide for longer distance journeys and this is where the potential of a **Rail 120** (R120) corridor comes into play.

Lessons from the Cambourne development west of Cambridge need to be learnt as no provision was made for long-distance public transport when the new town was proposed. It is nearly 30 years later that proposals for East-West Mainline between Oxford and Cambridge may finally give Cambourne its much-needed transport links. We cannot make the same mistake on the A120 corridor.

Failure to include long distance public transport options within this development will result in extra pressure on the existing road network which is already showing signs of congestion. This would not only apply to the A120 itself but also to the adjacent M11 and A12 roads and could result in significant cost to widen these roads and improve capacity at existing junctions.

New services and existing rail capacity

The existing Great Eastern Main Line (GEML) and West Anglia Main Line (WAML) are running close to capacity and it is unlikely that too many additional services can be added to these routes. However, there is scope for making better use of existing train paths. For example, there are currently four dedicated Stansted Express trains per hour between London Liverpool Street and Stansted Airport. These services with the new trains are not currently running at full capacity. Extending some of these services beyond Stansted to Cambridge would free up the existing London to Cambridge paths.

A new R120 rail route across to Braintree would also allow Stansted Express services to continue east, creating not only better access to the airport from these places but also to Harlow and other key towns in Essex and Hertfordshire. Extending some services towards the Great Eastern Mainline would free up paths on this route. Initial analysis suggests that a 55 - 60 minute fastest journey time

between London and Colchester is possible. As importantly, new east west services between Essex and Cambridge would be possible avoiding London.

The overall vision and the case

Recognising that East Anglia is a polycentric region, the volumes of travel demand as described in the previous articles demonstrate that the A120 corridor could well merit supplementing with a fast inter-urban east-west rail link focussing on the main towns and offering a limited-stop service with quick journey times between eight of the principal centres within the region.

The main choice for a route is to follow broadly the A120 from west of Colchester via Braintree towards Stansted, joining the WAML mainline there.

It is the combination of incremental gains, including GEML/WAML corridor links to serve flows which are not currently rail based, where the R120 will make its case. The benefits per mile of new fast railway should (using our inter-agglomeration assessment) be very strong. Fast Chelmsford / Colchester-Braintree-Cambridge rail journeys bypassing Stansted will transform travel choices across the region.

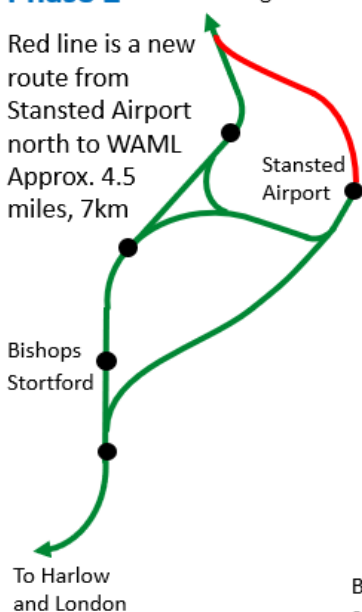
The Phases

This is a major project that needs to be built in phases over a timeframe that complements the pace of new housing and business park growth.

Phase One should start the redesign of the WAML and its links to Stansted with a new main line cut-off, diverging from the WAML north of Sawbridgeworth directly to Stansted Airport. This link would provide a shorter and quicker route from London and avoid the need to deal with the capacity constraints of the existing single-track tunnel.

Phase 2

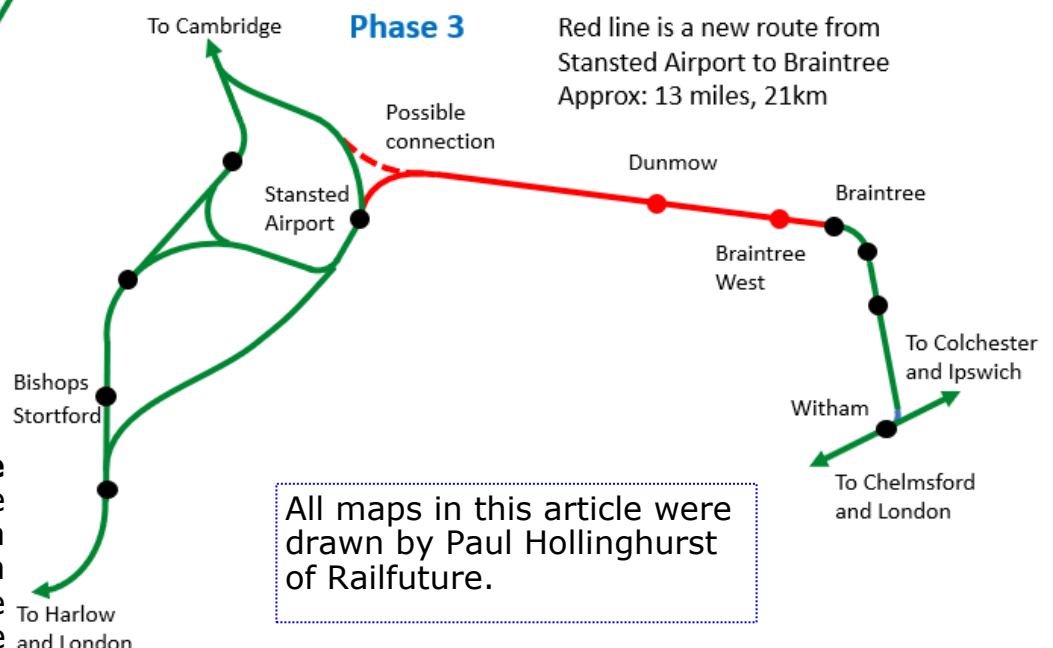
Red line is a new route from Stansted Airport north to WAML
Approx. 4.5 miles, 7km



The **second phase** is to extend the line from the airport to rejoin the WAML north of Elsenham, thereby creating a new West Anglia main line allowing London to Cambridge trains to also serve the airport.

Phase 3

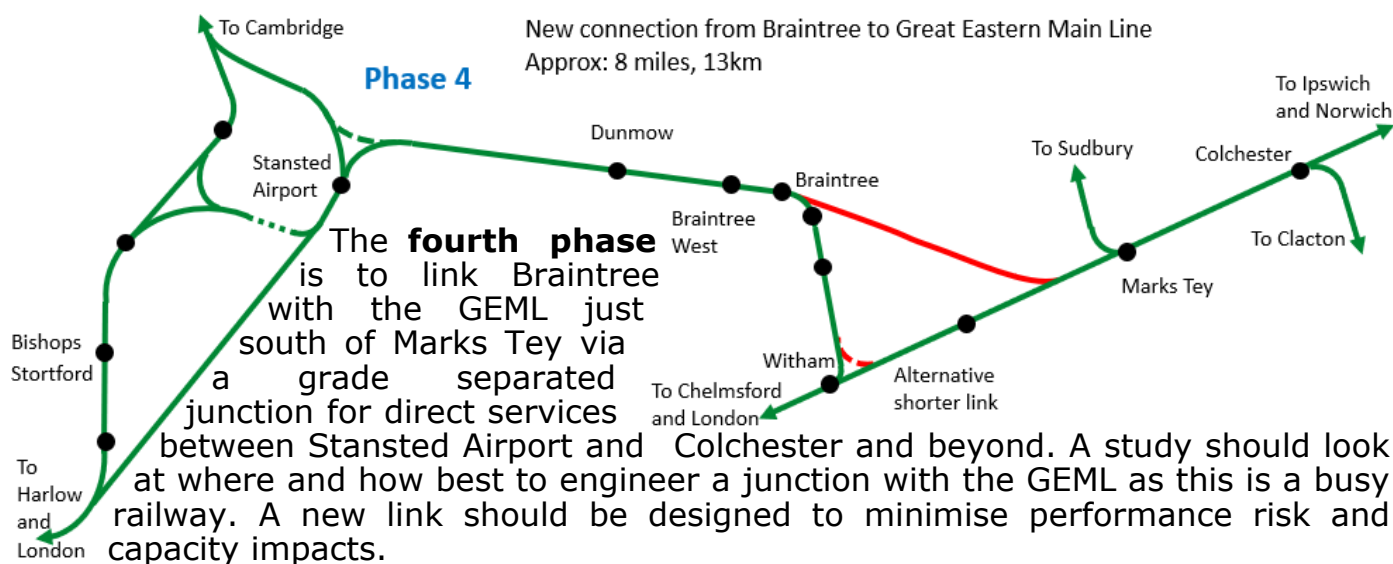
Red line is a new route from Stansted Airport to Braintree
Approx: 13 miles, 21km



A third phase

would see the construction of a delta junction connecting the north end of the WAML loop with a new line to Braintree, incorporating new stations at Dunmow and Braintree West. This will enable a Braintree loop service from London-Chelmsford-Braintree-Stansted-Bishops Stortford-London. It could also allow a Cambridge to Braintree service.

All maps in this article were drawn by Paul Hollinghurst of Railfuture.



The amount of new track would depend on the final locations of the junctions. A summary is given below. All of the new track should be electrified from the start.

Phase	Route	Miles	Km
1	WAML (Thorley) to Stansted Airport	6?	10?
2	Stansted Airport to WAML (Elsenham)	4.5	7
3	Stansted Airport to Braintree	13	21
4	Braintree to GEML (Marks Tey)	8	13

The Benefits - The envisaged R120 is potentially the busiest railway line in East Anglia, providing new connections between key centres. This new line would:

- Relieve pressure on the GEML and A12 corridor, where the two-track railway is full south of Colchester if looking to run trains to London.
- Provide a multi-functional route serving two very large extended conurbations at each end with significant intermediate populations.
- Create strong prospects for further substantial growth in jobs and housing along the corridor if the right public transport infrastructure is provided.
- Offer fast frequent inter-city services linking the eight agglomerations – all are within 15- to 60-minute rail journeys that road cannot match – if it is built as a serious, 2-4 track 100 mph railway.
- Provide frequent, high-volume metro services linking intermediate settlements with sustainable access to neighbouring agglomerations.
- Offer an alternative freight route avoiding the North London line.
- Avoid more car dependency creating urban sprawl – the R120 can help focus transport-oriented development in higher density ex-urban locations.
- Reduce the need for future road enhancement schemes – it is a policy choice as to which transport investment will offer the best long-term sustainable future.

Delivering the Project

The first priority for the R120 is to secure cross-party political and rail industry support for the range of studies required to scope the project, to identify the contingencies and associated impacts on the existing network, as well as to coordinate with the land planning issues and safeguard key route alignments in local plans. There is an urgent need to define and safeguard a rail corridor past the increasingly built-up area south of Braintree. There are not many options left here.

The key stakeholders should be brought together to form an R120 Taskforce to provide the necessary focus and political leadership that is essential to securing the desired outcomes over a number of years. Pursued as part of a master plan for development planning within the corridor, with building land value capture in the thinking from the start, should make this a highly attractive project. This approach would make it more deliverable with a lower call on Treasury funding.

Delivering those outcomes is important and the R120 should go to the top of the class. Delivery of the four stages over 10-15 years should be feasible given support from Network Rail, central government and key local authority and business leaders.

Rail can deliver in reasonable time frames and costs. We have recent precedents in East Anglia. For example, the 'Bacon Factory Chord' at Ipswich: once Network Rail was convinced that it was doable, the project then took one year to secure planning with all the necessary consultation because everything had been lined up with the local plan. The scheme was delivered in another two years after that, as there was political engagement that helped to accelerate the project.

Concluding Remarks

The winning arguments for an R120 are:

- Expansion and attraction of inward investment that better connectivity brings.
- Improved access to a wider job market.
- Reduced overheating of various housing markets with faster connections to the rapidly growing regional economic engine around Cambridge.
- Overall, a reduced volume of road journeys at critical times, so that car journeys become more reliable.

This managed approach to corridor development is critical to avoiding urban sprawl and protecting the rural character of much of the South Anglia sub-region.

Land Value Capture Funding is seen as a way to make the scale of scheme required more affordable to central and local government. Spreading the cost of the total package over four phases will make it easier to define and stick to a budget that will meet the scale of the challenge and deliver the desired outcomes and benefits. The point is that a serious two track, R120 line can serve multiple purposes, including adding capacity on the Norwich, Ipswich, Clacton and Colchester to London services.

In general, we are concerned with effective use of existing train capacity. There needs to be a review and redesign of the service pattern with the objective of maximising efficient use of the available paths by creating or releasing line slots. We do not pretend to have definitive answers to these questions, but we have articulated a credible and evidenced case of the need for new capacity, new longer trains and more intensive but varied service patterns. That calls for a timetable review, which is beyond our immediate resources.

The connectivity improvements that could be realised by making Stansted Airport a major railway hub and by the construction of the railway parallel to the A120 will lead to big wins for Levelling up, Sustainable Growth, Managed Development and Better Connectivity.

The pressure on the road system suggests a high level of travel demand to access huge new growth centres such as the Greater Cambridge area. It also reflects the post-Covid shift in travel patterns towards more intra-regional travel across East Anglia, which rail has not begun to address. Frankly, people from South Anglia currently have no option but to get into the car.

Railways are capital intensive investments that take many years to plan and deliver. It doesn't need a £2.5-3bn project spend up front – the key ask at this stage is for the essential proving studies to be commissioned so that the necessary coordinated development and transport planning is in place when money does become available.

We should have the plans ready to progress and develop a transport system that can support the economic growth in the corridor over the next thirty years.

We need a shared vision for the emerging economic powerhouse in the A120 corridor with a railway as its spine. This is the environmentally sustainable legacy that is achievable if we invest for our future regional prosperity.

A railway should be there as part of the total solution. Simple as that.

NEW GEOGRAPHY FOR EAST ANGLIA: GREATER NORWICH METRO (PART 1)

BY IAN COUZENS

As mentioned in recent issues, Railfuture commissioned transport consultant, Jonathan Roberts (pictured right), to look at scoping the degree to which the existing East Anglian rail network needs to be extended to address current and future needs. One of the key areas we asked him to look into was the prospects for introducing metro type services in our key regional cities, along the lines of those being implemented in Devon. This article looks at the study results for Norwich, where rail ought to provide a greater role in the transport needs of a rapidly growing city. As reported in RAIL EAST issue 197 (February 2023, see p.5), rail rides per head of population in Greater Norwich stood at a very modest 17 per head in 2020/21, compared to 64 for Cambridge.



But let's first look at the Devon Metro to see what has been achieved there. This is a valid exercise because the two counties of Norfolk and Devon share much in common. Both have important regional cities at the centre of local rail networks located in maritime counties and well away from excessive London influence. Both counties were traditionally rural but have developed rapidly in recent years with large amounts of new housing in the pipeline.

The Devon Metro (see low-quality map, right; use Google to find a larger map) is a scheme led by Devon County Council to encourage more rail use across the county's rail network by providing new stations and increased train frequencies. The aim is to reduce traffic congestion and to support the planned growth of Exeter in a more sustainable way. Of course, the Metro is able to build on the very good rail network which Exeter already has and the excellent location of Exeter Central.



Judges' Special Award: Devon County Council

Judges' comment: "Our first award to a local authority, for their sustained delivery of rail development. **Marsh Barton** most recently (the third new station in Devon Metro), plus winning DfT funding for their SOBC for the **Tamar-Tavistock RYR project**, opening the **Dartmoor Line** and **Okehampton station**, then winning Levelling-Up funding for a new **West Devon Transport Hub** at east Okehampton, **dedicated bus links** connecting Tavistock, Bude and Launceston with Dartmoor Line trains at Okehampton station plus Lynton & Lynmouth and Ilfracombe with Barnstaple station's Tarka Line trains, all based on high-level political and officer collaboration with their train operator and other key stakeholders."

Devon
County Council

Callum @callumLtfc · 11 Jul
England's Newest Railway Station - #MarshBarton Now Let's go for lunch in #Exmouth - @GWRHelp



Railfuture's Rail User Group Awards 2023 – Presented in London on 15 July 2023

railfuture

Devon County Council was awarded the prestigious Judges' Special Award at Railfuture's 2023 Rail User Group Awards. Representatives of the council travelled to London to receive it at the ceremony that followed Railfuture's AGM on 15 July.

A half-hourly service has now been successfully introduced on the core Torbay to Exmouth route via Exeter Central. Four new stations have been delivered since 2015, including Okehampton on the reopened Dartmoor line and most recently Marsh Barton at the edge of Exeter on the Great Western mainline. Four more stations are currently proposed, including Okehampton Parkway for which funding has recently been secured.

Although a smaller city than Norwich, entries and exits at all Exeter stations were 61% higher than Norwich for 2019/20 with a healthy 48 rides per head per year. Indeed, the figures for 2021/22 show Exeter's figures 78% higher than Norwich, albeit on lower post pandemic numbers. The increased divergence between the figures may well be due to the growth of local journeys encouraged by the Metro.

So, the initial results of the Devon Metro roll-out are looking impressive and show that it is possible for local authorities to make a difference in bringing about improved rail services and new stations for their residents where there is strategy in place and strong common purpose.

Could similar metro-style rail services be introduced for Greater Norwich? Norwich after all is a key regional city and in terms of its built-up area is the largest city in East Anglia. It offers everything and more which might be expected from such a city. It is a major employment and administrative centre with close on 100,000 jobs contained within the city council boundary. Added to this it's a major retail centre, educational hub, cultural centre and tourist destination.

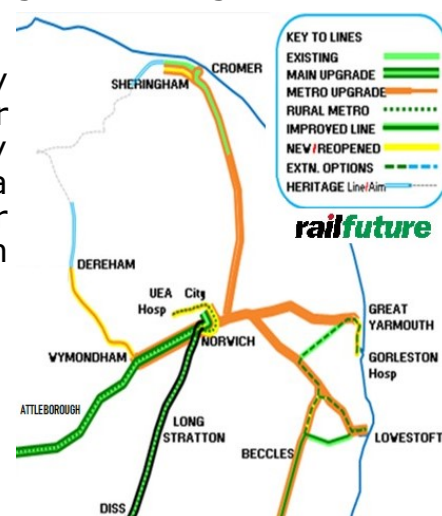
The city is expanding rapidly with 38,000 new homes being planned for over the 20-year period to 2036. A radical vision for transport policy is surely needed.

Prospects for a Norwich Metro

Devon County Council has shown how it is possible to develop a half-hourly interval rail service based around the city of Exeter which has helped improve the sustainable transport offer while at the same time reducing traffic congestion within the city.

The good news from Railfuture's East Anglian Rail Study is that rail could — and should — provide a much greater role in serving the transport needs of Norwich. The study broadly defines the Norwich metro area as being within a 30-mile radius of the city. So, the rail lines and their principal stations (see map on right—full region shown in RAIL EAST 197) would be:

- *Ely line*: Wymondham, Attleborough and Thetford
- *Great Eastern mainline (GEML)*: Diss and Stowmarket
- *Bittern line*: Hoveton & Wroxham, North Walsham, Cromer and Sheringham
- *Wherry lines*: Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft



High-frequency services need to be developed as these will drive up usage and increase rail share. It is certainly an aspiration for local policy makers in Norfolk to see half hourly services on all local routes into Norwich. There does however need to be a strategy to bring this about, as in Devon.



In terms of stations a single Norwich station (pictured left), off centre yet serving the whole of the city, can no longer be considered good enough. Apart from the Broadland Business Park station already proposed, new stations sited near the southern bypass at Hethersett and Dunston could provide easier access to many residents compared to the existing station. The study also reaffirms Railfuture's view that a station serving Long Stratton is needed (see the article making the case for a station there in the issue 198 of RAIL EAST, June 2023).

Unlike Exeter however Norwich does not have railway lines running through/across the centre of the city with well-located stations. Without more radical solutions the study is clear that rail will not meet its potential in meeting the city's transport needs.

Tram-Train

Within the UK there is a perception that only large cities with populations of around 500,000 or more can justify investment in a tram system. By contrast in France some 20 cities have introduced tram systems over the last 20 years, some comparable in size to Norwich. These often involve a core route running through the city centre linking key infrastructure such as main rail station, university and hospital. Bus interchanges at strategic points along the route provide connecting services. Tram systems are immensely popular and well used. They are a step change in building transport systems which simultaneously address both the challenges of the decarbonisation agenda and reducing traffic congestion.



Buses in Norwich—photo taken August 2023

While a self-contained tram system would be a major commitment, a tram-train hybrid could offer an alternative solution at less cost. This would involve extending the rail lines on the east side of Norwich station and running as tram tracks up Prince of Wales Road and along Castle Meadow to St Stephens. Tram-trains of the kind now being introduced on the South Wales valley routes would run on local rail routes into Norwich and direct to the city centre. A journey time of three minutes would bring the railway to the heart of the city for the first time in its history.

This would make the railway far more accessible, both to city residents living in adjoining areas to the north and west of the city centre and of course to incoming visitors. There would also be much better integration with the local bus network.

In the long run there would be an incentive to extend the tram lines to other parts of the city, particularly along the UEA, hospital and research park corridor, all in a complex several miles west of the city centre.

New Stations

Even though the rail lines only skirt the edge of the city, new stations are an important feature of the study's recommendations.

Hethersett

Access from the western and northwestern suburbs to Norwich station is very poor. Accepting that some rail travellers will only access their nearest station by car, a new parkway station located at Hethersett, close to the southern bypass, would offer easy access for residents from western suburbs such as Costessey. The station would also serve Hethersett itself and nearby Cringleford, both of which are rapidly growing communities in their own right. The station would only be two miles from the Norwich Research Park and Norfolk & Norwich Hospital and a fast bus link could be provided. Although the station would form a valuable link within a Norwich Metro, it would also serve as a principal stopping point on any new fast regional services. So potentially: Norwich-Hethersett-Cambridge North-Cambridge.



Dunston

A little further around the bypass heading east where the A140 meets the Great Eastern mainline, the study suggests a new station could be located at or near Dunston. Another parkway station, this would provide access to the GEML from suburbs to the west and east and also to large dormitory villages such as Poringland.

Long Stratton

Promoted by Railfuture for some time now, the study vindicates the need for a station located midway between Norwich and Diss. This would not only be of value to Long Stratton itself, which is on course to reach 10,000 inhabitants, but would serve many south Norfolk villages with their nearest railheads only accessible by long road journeys.

Broadland Business Park

Located one mile north of Whitlingham Junction on the Sheringham line, this station is already proposed by Norfolk County Council with further feasibility work planned. The station would serve the growing business park to the east of the line and the Dussindale housing development to the west.

Salhouse

Although currently a quiet rural station (pictured right), a major upgrade would be needed to serve new housing underway at North Rackheath. Greater Anglia's application to demolish the station building was refused in January 2022 after protests by locals.



Dereham

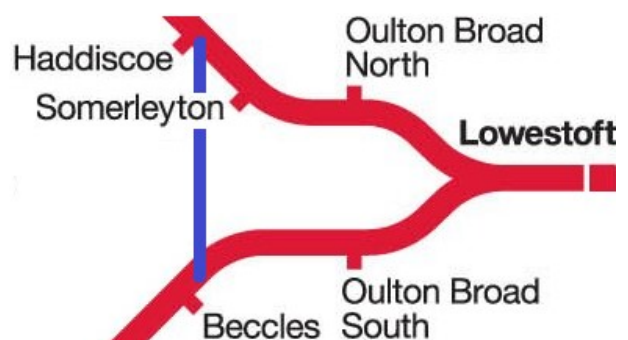
With the Dereham urban area exceeding 20,000 residents and the Mid-Norfolk Railway already in place, the study makes a case for Dereham being reconnected to the rail network (just as ATOC's Connecting Communities report did in 2009) and becoming part of the Norwich Metro. Dereham could also act as a railhead for large parts of rail free Norfolk to the north of the town (in a similar fashion to Okehampton in Devon acting as a railhead to locations further west) and would also open up potentially attractive rail options to Cambridge as well as Norwich.

Wymondham East

The study suggests a new metro station to the east of Wymondham to cater for new housing development nearby.

East Suffolk Line connections

The East Suffolk Line (running between Ipswich and Lowestoft) serves Beccles and Halesworth but the rail journey from those stations to Norwich via Lowestoft (including a change of train there) is much too slow compared to road. However, the relaying of 5.5 miles of track between Beccles and Haddiscoe (which is on the Norwich-Lowestoft line) with a fixed bridge across the Waveney would create a direct link between Norwich and the East Suffolk line, bring these towns within the Norwich metro area and make rail fully competitive with road.



The package of measures proposed by the study could radically transform the role of railways in the Norwich area and would place them at the core of local transport policy rather than being on the periphery.

Part 2 of this article will look at the study's findings as to how future rail services might operate on a route-by-route basis.

GTR ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

BY NICK DIBBEN

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), which operates many of the services to and from London in the west of our region, held its annual Environmental Forum on 26 June 2023 at a hotel adjacent to Luton Airport Parkway station (photo, right). Railfuture attended the event along with representatives from local rail user groups and community rail partnerships to get an update from GTR on meeting its environmental targets (see bottom of page). Those targets relate to issues such as recycling, water usage, noise and biodiversity.



GTR currently recycles 35% of waste generated and this is required to rise to 80% by the end of its contract in 2028. Limited turnaround times at stations and getting passengers to put items in the correct bins are key issues to be resolved. GTR owns around 100 road vehicles used for emergency call outs to failed trains and work at stations. Replacing these with more environmentally-friendly vehicles with the right availability and range is proposed and costs are being discussed with government.

The forum included two presentations from organisations that GTR is working with. The first was the London Wildlife Trust, which sees the railway as providing important wildlife corridors that help with the distribution of both plants and animals. Removal of lineside trees has been a controversial topic in recent years. Many passengers are aware of the issues caused in the autumn with leaves on the line, however many residents object to the removal of trees. The Wildlife Trust is less concerned and believes that replacing trees with low level scrub is actually better for many species of wildlife.

The other presentation was from Energy Garden, a company providing community-based solutions that include renewable energy which creates money to provide community gardens at stations and training for young people in environmental skills. Carriage sheds on GTR provide large roof spaces for solar panels. The first installation at Streatham Hill in South London has a capacity of 400kW and has already generated around 330MWh of electricity. The next installation will be at Bedford starting in autumn 2023 with others to follow. Despite the obvious benefits to the railway and the local community, it appears that the process to convince the Department for Transport was long and difficult.

An interesting afternoon about the various success stories from around the network.



RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 23 SEPTEMBER

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

At Railfuture we try to find and invite a wide range of relevant speakers for our public meetings — they are not just for our members; anyone with an interest in seeing our railway grow and improve is welcome to attend, whether you're 'just' a rail user, are involved with local government or politics, or work in the transport industry. It's a chance to hear presentations from people expert in their specialist area, ask questions, find out what Railfuture is campaigning for and help contribute to those campaigns. Admission is free and we provide refreshments.

In the last year our guest speakers have been Jonathan Roberts, the transport consultant we engaged for our New Geography for East Anglia study, Nick Flynn of the Campaign for Family-Friendly Trains (a group with which Railfuture shares many aspirations) and Anthony Dewar, Network Rail's Technical Head of Buildings and Architecture, who explained what new and rebuilt stations could look like.

For our Norwich meeting we are pleased to welcome **Andrew Summers** (right), the **Chief Executive of Transport East (TE)**, which is one of the important organisations that Railfuture East Anglia has been working with (and influencing) in recent years.



Andrew joined Transport East as its strategic director in 2020 having previously worked for Transport for London. He is responsible for a team of full time staff as well as being supported by officers from Local Authorities within the region.

Transport East is one of the seven Sub National Transport Bodies (STBs) in England (outside London) covering Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend and Thurrock. The others are Peninsula (Devon & Cornwall), Western Gateway, Transport for the South East, England's Economic Heartland (EEH), Midlands Connect and Transport for the North.

Its principal function is to determine transport priorities for the region across all modes and publish these in its Transport Strategy. This and other publications can be found at <https://www.transporteast.gov.uk/our-documents/>.

Among these is '*The state of rail in the east*' launched at Westminster in February this year highlighting the urgent need for rail investment in the East, particularly the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements (actually just over the border in EEH) which are so vital to the goal of supporting Felixstowe Port, one of the region's *international gateways*. Transport East works closely with EEH and together the two bodies published '*Keeping Trade on Track – the case for Ely*' in May.

Transport East also provides administrative support to the East West Mainline Partnership's Eastern Section Board.

Andrew will be addressing our meeting in Norwich and there will be opportunity to ask questions on these topics and we look forward to helping Transport East in developing its Rail Strategy.

We hope you will be able to attend the meeting, which starts at **14:00** (photo of building, below). The Friends' Meeting House is not far from Norwich Market. It is about 20–25 minutes' walk from Norwich station. A bus will take you most of the way. Please be aware that there will be track upgrades taking place on the Great Eastern Mainline between Ipswich and Norwich over the weekend. The Greater Anglia website says that the non-stop replacement bus will take 90 minutes to/from Ipswich. The bus calling at Stowmarket and Diss takes 30 minutes longer. There will also be buses on the mid-Suffolk line east of Bury St Edmunds. Line south of Cambridge will also be closed.



EAST ANGLIAN RAIL NEWS ROUND-UP

This issue of RAIL EAST has focused on the staffing of stations, so let's now look at the infrastructure, because there has been progress.

Firstly, the new footbridge at Royston station (photo below) is virtually complete and will soon be opening, which means that the temporary steps to allow people to cross platforms via the roadway above will be removed. The old footbridge, which was declared unsafe in 2020 and has been closed ever since, will be removed.



The new 112-space car park at Manea has finally opened. Problems with the CCTV was the excuse given for the delay. Unsurprisingly, it was hardly full on its first few days. After all, people need to be told that it is open, and those living further away need to be aware how easy it will be to use the station in future. However, that didn't stop the national newspapers (including the Times, Telegraph, Independent, Daily Mail and the Sun) creating a 'storm' by claiming that the car park's funder, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), 'wasted' £986,000 on a 'white elephant'. It is a long time since Manea received such attention. Locals hit back according to the Fenland Citizen.



The relocation of Waterbeach station has pros and cons. It will be very useful for those in the new town but take longer to access for villagers who live near the current station. The developers secured planning permission for the new station but it was due to expire in late 2022 so they simply planted a few stakes in the ground to show some activity occurring. Recently, a test drilling rig has been spotted.

Photo by Peter Wakefield



Site from the bottom of the slope across to the vertical white pipes and from the railway to the road in front of the blue building, the Royal Papworth (Heart) hospital.

Cambridge South is fully funded and work is being ramped up. Progress so far has focused on preparing the ground, setting up construction sites and access routes as well as planting new overhead stanchions. The line south of Cambridge will be closed on several weekends to allow work to be undertaken. Photo shows eastern entrance.

It's always good to hear of new freight flows. The photo (from Steve Goodrum) on the right, shows Reedham swing bridge with a Class 66 locomotive hauling wagons of ballast imported from abroad and unloaded at Lowestoft using a new siding (as Nick Dibben mentions on [p.3](#)).



INFLATED STATION CATERING PRICES?



In June 2023 the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) launched a market study into station catering, primarily whether customers are being exploited. It's potentially complex, but here's a simple comparison of the price of a pack of four sausage rolls from the ubiquitous Greggs. In the entrance area at Ipswich station its '4 for 3' offer was £4.35. At the Ocean Terminal in Leith, Edinburgh, where the Royal Yacht Britannia is permanently moored — attracting tourists from across Europe and beyond — it is just £3.60.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

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

All submissions by **3 November 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.

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

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

Railfuture works *constructively* with the rail industry, government (national and local), businesses and stakeholders to improve and expand the railway.

Annual membership fee is **£20** (£22 for joint membership); under 26 years can join for just £14. Join online at www.railfuture.org.uk/join/ using a credit/debit card or PayPal. Renewals can now be paid by direct debit — info from Lloyd Butler.

railfuture East Anglia

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MEETING DATES AND VENUES

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

SATURDAY 24 FEB 2024

Friends Meeting House
St John's Street

BURY ST EDMUNDS

IP33 1SJ

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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