

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

Issue 205 • Feb 2025

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THOUSANDS FLOCK TO TRAVEL ON REOPENED RAILWAY

THIS ISN'T EAST ANGLIA BUT IT COULD BE!



WISBECH AND HAVERHILL RESIDENTS LOOK ON WITH ENVY

Sunday 15 December 2024 — opening day of the Northumberland line. Photo: Jerry Alderson

This edition of RAIL EAST focuses on stations

- East West Rail consultation
- Making East Anglia's railway fully accessible and busier (pt 2)
- National Rail Awards judging
- Expanding Cambridge 'Central'
- 2023/24 station usage figures
- Stowmarket's new footbridge
- Poor station waiting environment
- East Coast 2025 timetable at last
- Suffolk's Local Transport Plan
- Transport East annual conference
- GBR plans scrutinised
- Railfuture's regional mini-conference in May — book now!

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE OF RAIL EAST

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Strong response to EWR consultation - but what will be the fate of other key rail projects?

Sixteen steps to a more truly accessible railway – [p.5](#)

The conclusion to a two part study looks across the North Sea to glimpse how we might achieve meaningful access

Does Cambridge station warrant the National Rail Awards plaudits? – [p.8](#)

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Some disappointment that the draft document lacks ambition

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Further details from Transport Select Committee of emerging priorities

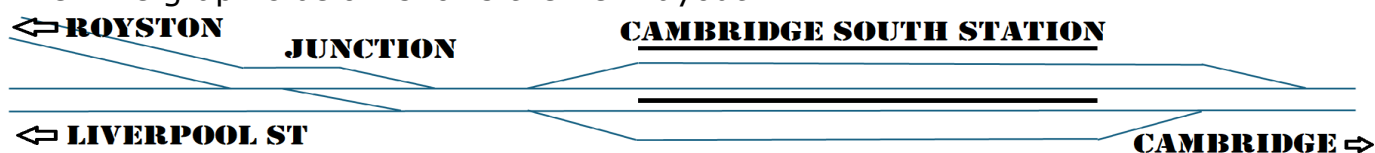
News in brief – [p.23](#)

Rounding up local news - including change of rolling stock on Fenline services, countering fare evasion at Nottingham and CrossCountry timetable restored from May 2025

The media love a rail story and it's good to see smiling passengers. Much praise is deserved for the South East Northumberland Rail User Group and its chair, Dennis Fancett (being interviewed by a Sky News reporter). Photos by Jerry Alderson on 15 December 2025.



The major work over Christmas 2024 to complete the track and overhead wire remodelling at Shepreth Branch junction is covered on page 18. The railway south of Cambridge reopened on 6 January 2025. The loops at Cambridge South station are now in place, although the loops themselves are not operational. Trains can now travel at 50mph over the remodelled junction — the diamond crossing has gone and the up trains to London King's Cross now take a ladder via the down line. The graphic below shows the new layout.



FROM THE CHAIR

BY IAN COUZENS, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

Firstly, can I thank all those Railfuture members and supporters who have contributed to the East West Rail (EWR) non-statutory consultation. The EWR Company has reported massive public engagement with more than 5,500 responses to the consultation and with over 5,200 people attending their community events. It's highly encouraging there has been so much interest in the project.



See <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display3935> for Railfuture's three-page national response, with views from East Anglia, London & SE and Thames Valley branches.



People carefully studying the detailed maps at the EWR Cambridge event on 18 January.

The next step will be for the company to prepare a report of the consultation carried out. This will set out the feedback received during the consultation, how it has been responded to, and details of any changes made to the company's plans arising from the consultation. Later in 2025 the company will launch a statutory consultation and then submit an application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order (DCO). This will include a report of the consultation report. If the application is accepted in principle by the Planning Inspectorate there will be further stages in the process, including a detailed examination, before the DCO can be given, which is expected to be 2026.

There have been worrying press reports recently about future levels of capital spending on rail. This includes talk of a freeze until after the next election for all new major capital projects apart from HS2 to Birmingham, TransPennine upgrade and East West Rail — but what do 'new' and 'major' actually mean? So, while East West Rail will hopefully be secure (the CEO is very positive, see right), where would that leave Ely North and rail freight electrification? To compound our concerns, it is also reported that Sir John Armitt, Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, has suggested to MPs that capital spending should reorientate to some degree back to roads! Maybe these reports are overdone, but we will find out more when the Spending Review is announced on 26 March 2025.



DAVID HUGHES

Chief Executive Officer,
East West Railway Company

"I was passionate to lead the project and now we have the backing, a clear mandate, funding from Government"

RailBusinessDaily

Everyone who follows rail will know that this year marks the 200th anniversary of the opening of the world's first public steam railway by the Stockton & Darlington Railway – a culmination of railway developments going back several hundred years. While Railfuture's mission might be to campaign for a bigger and better railway, we can be sure that most of our campaigners will have a strong grasp of rail history, how it created the transport revolution that helped bring about the modern age and how rail continues to evolve to meet the needs of the travelling public and the moving of freight.

I hope that members will look at the Railway 200 website <https://railway200.co.uk>. You will find details of events across the country marking the anniversary. There are several in East Anglia and it would be great if you could get to one or two and show support to the organisers.

Our mini-conference in Peterborough on Thursday 15 May 2025 (see page 4) will include a minor celebration by way of a 45-minute presentation by amateur filmmaker and train enthusiast Barry Coward. Please book up to attend that event.



RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 22 FEBRUARY

FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, BURY ST EDMUNDS IP33 1SJ

We hope you will be able to attend our free-to-attend meeting in Bury St Edmunds, starting at 14:00. Our guest speaker will be Mark Walker (pictured right), the Chief Executive of Cogitamus.

Mark has worked in the transport industry since starting his first job with British Rail at Bedford Midland Road station in 1977. Serving the National Union of Railwaymen full-time through the 1980s and 1990s, Mark experienced changes across the sector including bus privatisation and London Transport reform. With the creation of RMT, Mark also dealt with merchant shipping. His trade union career culminated in lobbying for changes to rail privatisation legislation protecting employees and consumers.



Since 1998, Mark has been a commercial public affairs consultant, establishing his own company – Cogitamus Limited – in 2007 which advises a range of private and public sector organisations campaigning on transport, infrastructure and technology issues with a particular focus on the rail sector.

Mark produces and co-presents with Christian Wolmar the popular 'Calling All Stations - the transport podcast', which many Railfuture members and RAIL EAST readers listen to. Mark was admitted in 2023 to the Company of Communicators. He has been a Trustee Director of Campaign for Better Transport for over 20 years.

Railfuture has invited Mark to speak because his exchanges with political contacts give him a good idea about what could happen. He will cover how the Labour Government is getting on with implementing its rail policies and his overall view of what the rail industry could be doing to maximise its success in the future and the big competitive pressures faced from road and air travel, with particular reference to possible alternatives to the Lower Thames Crossing.

The slides from our meeting in Cambridge on 7 December 2025 can be viewed at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/docs/Railfuture-East-Anglia-Meeting-2024-12-07-Cambridge-meeting-presentation.pdf>. Unfortunately, the file does not include the presentation from Govia Thameslink Railway, as these have not been provided.

RAILFUTURE REGIONAL MINI-CONFERENCE, PETERBOROUGH

THURSDAY 15 MAY 2025 12:00 TO 16:30 — BOOKING REQUIRED

Railfuture is organising a mini-conference for members of its East Anglia, East Midlands and Lincolnshire branches along with members of the public. The event will be held at Peterborough Museum, which is a 20-minute walk from the station.

Doors open at 12:00, and there will be refreshments including a small buffet. As we don't normally provide food at a free event, an obligatory donation of £5 will be requested upon arrival. The presentations will begin at 13:00, and we are hoping to have five speakers. Three are confirmed so far, including the Rail 200 video. The other two are Anthony Smith, chair of the Independent Rail Retailers, and Stefanie Foster, General Manager of Green Signals, the very successful podcast that has clocked up thousands of listeners and viewers. She will be explaining how it is put together, whilst Anthony Smith has been asked to talk about how Great British Railways and independent retailers, such as Trainline, will complement each other and improve the experience.

See <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/> for more information, including a link to book via Eventbrite. The room capacity is limited to 60, so please book to ensure that you will be admitted.



MAKING THE EAST ANGLIA RAILWAY NETWORK FULLY ACCESSIBLE AND EVEN BUSIER – PART TWO

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The Way Ahead?

In Part One (issue 204, December 2024) we analysed some of the problems of accessing the railway created by the tendency to plan in silos. Can we do better? It looks as if Norfolk and Suffolk will be getting their combined authorities along with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (CPCA). Will they, in combination with our two Sub National Transport Authorities – England's Economic Heartland and Transport East – be able to break out of the planning silos and create a plan for a railway network, a bus network, an active travel network, that is truly integrated?

An example of the way ahead is given us by our Dutch cousins. The Netherlands is two thirds larger in land area than East Anglia (Essex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk). But its railway operates as one big commuter network serving all its major regional centres equitably. With some adjustments at key junctions, plus doubling of the track from Newmarket to Cambridge, our network could also serve our five big urban centres too – as well as London and Stansted Airport.

"By reducing congestion, we keep the city accessible and liveable".

The quotation is from an article in the *New Commute*, a special report on urban mobility in Europe from POLITICO's Global Policy Lab: Living Cities. It continues:

Utrecht scales up

The Dutch model is not without its challenges. In the city of Utrecht, for example, more than half of the jobs are held by workers who live outside it, according to the Dutch Statistical Office.

As one of the Netherlands' most important economic and technological centres, Utrecht's population has grown steadily in recent years. The number of residents increased by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2021 to nearly 360,000, and it is forecast to exceed 500,000 by 2050.

To deal with the strain, the city put in place a 10-year mobility plan, building more bike lines, pedestrianising parts of the city and creating a network of "public transport hubs" that "connect functions such as living, working and amenities," said Lot van Hooijdonk, Utrecht's deputy mayor for mobility.

The central station, for example, integrates bus, tram, rail and an underground three-floor bicycle parking lot whose 12,500 spaces make it the largest such facility in the world.



Cars were very much not part of the equation

Commuters driving into Utrecht are encouraged to leave them at "Park+Ride" locations on the periphery and buy an affordable combined ticket covering daily parking costs and urban public transport travel. By reducing congestion, "we keep the city accessible and liveable," explained van Hooijdonk.

Utrecht's policymakers have also urged workers — and their employers — to minimise commuting at all whenever possible. Working through a public agency called Goedopweg (or GoodWay), the city "advise[s] companies on how to get their employees to travel more sustainably," said van Hooijdonk, or "simply work from home."

In East Anglia, let's start with Cambridge and Cambridgeshire. Cambridge could easily be matching Utrecht in population in 30 years' time. Unlike Utrecht there is

no vision for the future in Cambridgeshire. But it is the ideal place to start developing one for its railway.

This is our Plan. Cambridgeshire could adopt something like this.

The local authority should “own” its plan and work with the railway company aiming for:

1. Frequent fast services from each station. Two trains an hour minimum on every line all day long, early to late.

The 20 Cambridgeshire stations all upgraded to modern easy-to-use travel hubs.

Every rural station to have easy-to-use, free car parking.

The “free” incorporated into the train fare, always slightly above that for those who do not use their car to access the train.

2. Every station must be linked to its catchments by high quality active travel routes: train+bike+walking.

Photo (by Peter Wakefield) of the brand new high quality greenway from Meldreth station towards Melbourn. This has been achieved by years of hard work by the Meldreth Shepreth Foxton Community Rail Partnership and Rail User Group.

But just in front of the camera, a small ramp off this lovely piece of tarmac up to the **up platform** has still NOT been achieved even after nigh on 20 years of campaigning – let alone lifts. No level access off this platform the result. We are not a serious nation.



3. Every station must be the centre of its district with bus links and be safe for all users.

4. Every new housing development to be linked to its station from its inception.

5. Existing parts of the settlement gradually “retro-fitted”.

6. High quality cycle storage must be provided.

A good example of the storage facility provided at Whittlesford Parkway station. However, the long awaited cycle and walking route to nearby Sawston has yet to be provided by the local authority in spite of many promises. Photo (right) by Peter Wakefield.



7. Bike and train are natural partners... each makes the other's range larger.

8. Work to develop intermodal Smart Cards for all fares.

9. The designated Strategic Travel hubs of train, bus, car, bike and walking to be staffed from first to last service. Safe bike storage. Café. Shops. Free car parking for local trips.

10. New stations at Waterbeach New Town; Cambridge East; St Neots EWR; Cambourne, to be provided now to enable easy access to the network from day one of the new town and other developments.

11. Keep Waterbeach Village station – serve it with 2tph Waterbeach New to Potters Bar etc stopping trains.

12. A new station should be provided at Alconbury to serve it and the very considerable developments expected around Huntingdon.

13. A northern suburban station must be provided in Peterborough on the Spalding line.
14. A southern suburban station must be provided in Peterborough near Hampton.
15. Provide “turnback” platforms at Waterbeach New, Cambridge East and Whittlesford and Peterborough “North” stations. “Plan them” into the plans for the network now.
16. All lines in Cambridgeshire to be electrified.

The railway should be developed as the core transport network, with strategic bus links into the region between Cambridge and Peterborough that currently have no plans for a rail route. But we note that although the CPCA is developing plans for a much-needed reform of bus routes within Cambridgeshire, these are local. Experience shows that speed and frequency is vital to enable modal shift from road to public transport and that must be rail.

There has been no effort so far to develop a rail strategy for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) area and its relationship with the railway. The bus network, the active travel routes, the railway are one. There must be a plan to work to. There is not one at the moment.*

The CPCA and other local authorities must ensure that different policies are properly coordinated and that they don't work in silos. The priority should be to develop a Cambridge Area light railway network for long term dependable last-to-first-mile transport from the Cambridgeshire Railway Network. Note the Utrecht plan is all about capacity, quality and the user. Trams as well as buses.

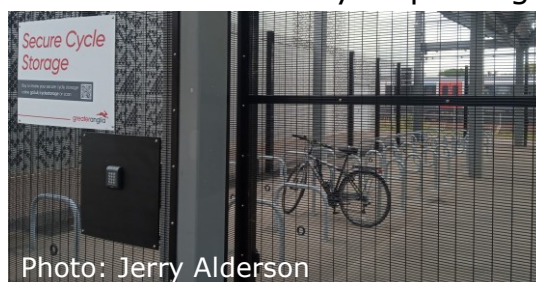
For the whole of East Anglia, we need to collect data, specifically where new housing and industry has received planning permission. This includes sites designated within the Local Plan, as well as smallish “windfall sites” that get permission from opportunistic applications.

We wish to map the pattern of new developments and build up a case for better train services on all our routes. If you are able to help, please gather such information and send it to me (peter.wakefield@railfuture.org.uk).

To end on a positive note, it is good to report that Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk District Council together with the Department for Transport and Greater Anglia, show the way by jointly planning to install a quality cycle hub under Bury St Edmunds station close to the new northern entrance to the station. There will be 52 cycle spaces on, as GA explains, “a first come, first served basis ... it will be fully enclosed and covered by additional lighting and CCTV to enhance security. As part of the Cycle Hub, there will also be a special access-controlled space for 16 cycles, offering additional security. Access to the access-controlled area will be via a SMART Card, which can be purchased for £25 per year....” We hope that this great initiative will be followed up by careful waymarking from the town to the new hub.

* And just a reminder – Railfuture’s plan is not merely for Cambridgeshire but for the whole of East Anglia – see Railfuture’s New Geography document (late 2023) at www.railfuture.org.uk/display3542.

Jerry Alderson writes: Peter Wakefield is quite right to demand secure cycle parking (“special access-controlled space”). Greater Anglia successfully deployed this at Ely. However, it did not when Cambridge North opened in 2017, and it became a bicycle theft hotspot. The government has given £600,000 of our money to GA to erect a metal fence around 730 existing spaces in the 1000-space cycle park, turning it into a cage. Unfortunately very few pay £25 a year to use it.



CAMBRIDGE WINS AWARD YET AGAIN - BUT SHOULD IT?

BY JERRY ALDERSON

These days many industries stage awards ceremonies to give management and staff a pat on the back. The railway has the National Rail Awards (NRA), which has been running for two decades and is managed by *RAIL* Magazine. The promotion for it and results from it are a cheap way of filling numerous pages across several issues. One assumes they are a money spinner as well, given the extensive sponsorship and high price for companies to secure a table at the annual 'black tie' event.

No doubt many of the award winners richly deserve their prize. But do they all? In particular, how much research is actually performed by the single jury member that visits each station? An anonymous visit on one day surely isn't sufficient.

In 2024 Cambridge station was awarded the Large Station of the Year award, having "demonstrated continuous improvement" since it last won that title in 2017, which had already taken account of the enlargement and upgrading of the ticket hall. Regular (or perhaps even occasional) users might find that 'continuous' improvement hard to believe. One cannot praise a station for its fortunate position of being served by two entirely new train fleets, the new carriage stabling facilities on the eastern side or the new carriage washing facilities north of the station.

In fairness, there have been some modest improvements at the station over the last seven years, despite COVID. These are largely limited to the completion of the developments around the (now very attractive) station square, which has a wide range of refreshment outlets; a new fully enclosed waiting room and separate coffee outlet backing onto it (but disappointingly without a serving hatch) on the island platform (a dreadful omission when it was built in 2011) and an extension of platform 4 by 40 metres (reported as costing £4 million) providing a fourth platform for 12-car trains. At the front of the station there is now a Subway outlet in former rail offices, but not accessible from the platform. The Old Ticket Office pub is popular and it now has a window onto the platform in order to sell drinks and food (photo, right, by author). The large multi-storey cycle park has been given improved security, but the NRA judge would be unlikely to know this. We now have high-quality customer information screens, but Greater Anglia has also rolled these out to almost all of its stations, so hardly a differentiator for Cambridge station. More recently, two southern train movements at the island platform will soon be possible thanks to enhanced trackwork and signalling to support the new Cambridge South station.



One might argue that the recently-installed protective yellow barrier at the scissors crossing separating platforms 1 and 4 is an improvement, as it reduces a safety risk. However, others may say that it makes the platform area much more cramped. Greater Anglia has announced that the glazing on the canopy of platforms 1 and 4 was replaced over Christmas 2024, although several *RAIL EAST* readers had not noticed until being told. As for the future, the car park is to be much reduced in size. Some will approve, others will say that it makes the station less usable, and the price for parking at the weekend is almost as much as a train fare to London with a rail card.

So, in what ways is the station still deficient?

The canopy on platforms 1 and 4 cover little more than two of the 12 carriages (and there's a gap between the platform 4 canopy and the footbridge), whilst platforms 2 and 5 have no covers at all and it is minimal on platform 6. There are no seats before the automatic ticket gates for 'meeters and greeters', although space could be found by repurposing two of the eight ticket office windows as they are rarely (if

ever) all in use. Given the lack of ticket checks on London-bound trains, platform tickets are probably not a solution. There is a very small shelter in front of the taxi rank, but no cover between it and the building. The bus stops are a considerable distance from the station entrance, with no cover along the walking route to them. The footbridge to the island platform cannot cope with a full train of passengers alighting (the East West Rail team recognise this). There are numerous retail outlets, but most are closed by the early evening, despite the station being very busy at that time and sufficient demand existing. It's not uncommon to see WH Smith shut at lunchtime, presumably because of a lack of staff.

In some ways the station has gone backwards, not just in the lack of repairs as the station facilities and fixtures have aged. The cash machine has disappeared. AMT Coffee went bust in late 2022 but the kiosk on platform 1 is boarded up more than two years later (as is the kiosk on the island platform), with the same notice (right) displayed on both. On platform 4 a new outlet has replaced AMT, but there is no longer a window in the waiting room, so you have to leave the warmth of it to go outside to stand in the queue to buy a drink. Platform 1's ticket office no longer has a television screen (it used to show BBC1).

AMT Coffee Limited entered administration on 18 November 2022.

As a result, this site has ceased to trade.

For any queries, please contact
AMTgeneral@interpathadvisory.com

The lifts to the island platform have been frequently out of order, much to the annoyance of not just passengers but also Greater Anglia, which had to wait ages for them to be repaired. The sole set of toilets, on platform 4, were out of use for several weeks continuously, although GA did provide some temporary ones in the front of the station—in January 2025 a RAIL EAST reader spotted they were shut yet again (photo), so whatever was done in 2024 didn't solve things. The much-trumpeted water bottle refill machine was also out of use for a while.

greateranglia

THIS TOILET
IS OUT OF USE,
TEMPORARILY.

SORRY FOR ANY
INCONVENIENCE.

TOILET FACILITIES ARE
AVAILABLE ON ALL
TRAINS FROM THIS
STATION.

To determine whether a station award is justified one hopes that the judges would ask the local rail user group(s) to understand the passenger experience across an entire year. Both FLUA and MARPA have a noticeboard with contact details on platform 4. No excuse for the judge not to contact them.

So, what improvements might have justified the award for "continuous improvement"? A link from the cycle park to the footbridge to save a lot of time. An eastern entrance (something that Railfuture East Anglia has long called for) would be an even greater time saver and increase patronage. Extending the platform canopies and installing more seats and shelters would be much appreciated, as would providing a second set of toilets. What is clear is that station facilities need a serious upgrade to support the increased usage that East West Rail will bring (see page 10).

The author wishes to make it clear that this article is not intended as criticism of Greater Anglia, which manages the station, or its staff, but questions the awards process and the reason given for the 2024 award. Some RAIL EAST readers might well ask "If this is best large station, then what is the worst one like?" Since March 2020 the government has run the railway – improvements that passengers would appreciate could have been delivered had it provided the funding.

Compare the 2017 and 2024 reviews – is there some 'double-counting' of the improvements?

- <https://www.railmagazine.com/news/network/national-rail-awards-2017-cambridge-wins-large-station-of-the-year> (22 September 2017)
- <https://www.railmagazine.com/features-1/nra-large-station-of-the-year-award-cambridge-greater-anglia> (16 September 2024).

Read more about the platform 4 extension at <https://www.megatechprojects.co.uk/projects/cambridge-case-study/>, which has 29 photos.

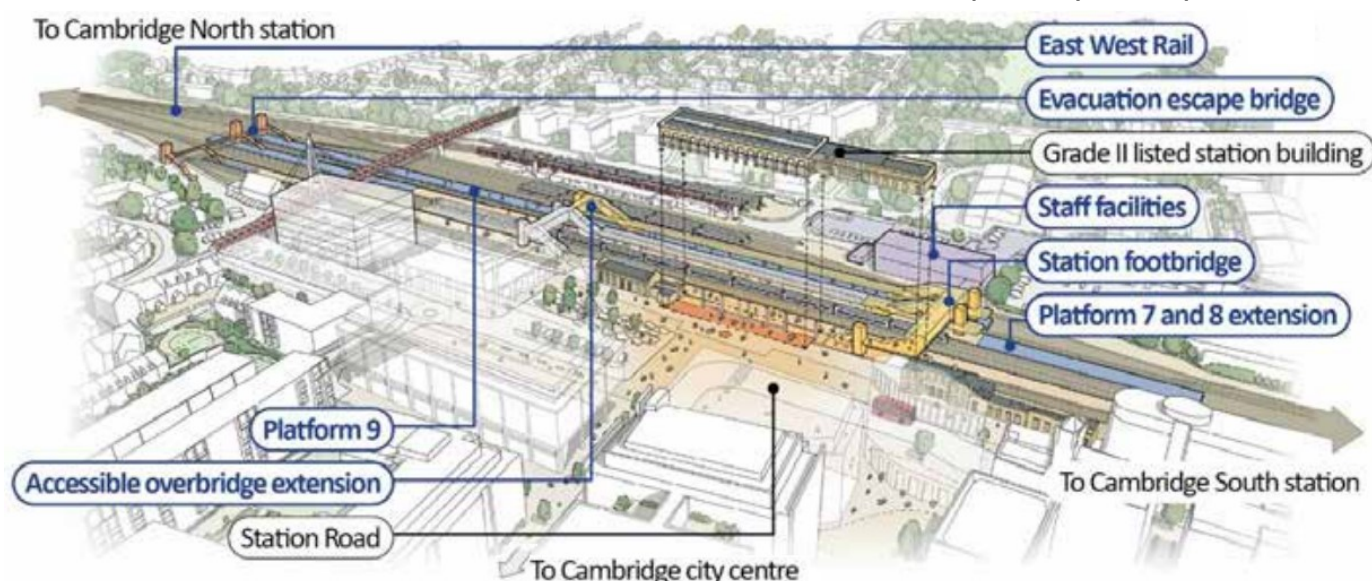
EAST WEST RAIL — ITS PLANS FOR CAMBRIDGE ‘CENTRAL’ BY JERRY ALDERSON

The number of passengers using Cambridge ‘Central’ station (see pages 12-13) is set only to grow, despite some short-term abstraction when Cambridge South opens in January 2026 (a date confirmed by the speaker from Govia Thameslink Railway at Railfuture East Anglia’s public meeting in Cambridge on 7 December 2024, disappointing those who were counting on the long-promised 2025 opening).

Cambridge is going to grow for decades to come, and East West Rail (EWR) will give all three stations a big boost when it opens in the 2030s (EWR representatives were claiming 2035 at the public events). Of course, that boost would be even greater if EWR was treated like a key part of the British rail network, with direct long-distance services, not just a ‘shuttle’ to and from Oxford / Milton Keynes.

When more and longer services are introduced, the railway has a habit of thinking that only the platforms need extending, or perhaps an extra platform. The reality is that more users require more facilities. You cannot add millions of new passengers a year without expanding the toilets, for example, something that didn’t appear on any of the EWR literature or displays — upon asking, more could be provided on platform 1, but the extended island platform seemed more challenging. When new platforms were added at Peterborough, all of them have toilets, there’s no excuse!

More people cause more congestion within the station. EWR understands this and realised that the footbridge cannot cope with current usage when full trains arrive. Its solution is to add a second footbridge at the south. That merely splits people into two queues all heading for the station exit into the station square. Extending the footbridge to provide an eastern exit both eases passenger flow and makes the railway more attractive, as the door-to-door journey time is reduced in both cases. EWR staff received this feedback loud and clear, so let’s hope they act upon it.



The above graphic is from the EWR consultation document (Figure 77: Indicative illustration of our proposed changes at Cambridge station). Note the reference to “staff facilities” (a legal obligation for any employer) but no reference to “passenger facilities” anywhere (no equivalent obligation). EWR confirmed that the erection of a large building for staff facilities, right in the way of an eastern entrance, could easily be moved out of the way as its location was only illustrative.

These days planning for an evacuation is very important. Cambridge South will have a partial footbridge at its southern end for people on the island platform, but there will be no lift. Will a wheelchair user receive a “firefighter’s lift”? No such worry for Cambridge ‘Central’ as a new footbridge with lifts (to the western side only) will be provided for evacuation only — does it really make sense to skimp on facilities that improve the passenger experience and instead spend many millions on something that will hopefully never be used?

EAST ANGLIA STATION ANNUAL FOOTFALL FIGURES — 23/24

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The latest station footfall figures for the year ending 31 March 2024 (see list on pages 12-13) show a pleasing continued recovery from the pandemic.

Every line showed more footfall, as did most stations. Some, like the Roughton Road, Cromer, West Runton and Sheringham group, dealt with their highest ever volume of passengers, with 546,538 between them.

The route that seems to have most rapid growth is from Ipswich towards Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge/Ely. Every station has double digit growth ranging from 20% at Elmswell and Bury St Edmunds to 12% at Stowmarket. The latter's total is still high – but the lower percentage rise may reflect the slower growth towards London, for which it is a major railhead. Bury St Edmunds total footfall has reached 834,744, the highest recorded under the modern system.



Bury St Edmunds: Crowds gathering for the next hourly train to Cambridge. Toilet located on the opposite platform and no waiting room on this, the Cambridge bound platform, despite the renovation of the station building. Cambridge is now the main destination from this station. How much might patronage increase (especially in winter time) if the passenger experience was better?

This photo from Peter Wakefield also shows the gap between the tracks where there used to be two through tracks, which are crying out for reinstatement to allow passenger and freight trains to pass.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), which typically needs seven months to compile the figures, now records the destination station to which most tickets are sold from every station. Bury St Edmunds now sells most to Cambridge, another indication of the latent demand that currently cannot be met from Bury line stations towards Cambridge. We will record this useful data 'of most tickets sold to' next year. It also showed that Cambridge is the place most tickets are sold to from London King's Cross, in spite of a plethora of large cities in the north that are served by frequent fast long-distance trains.

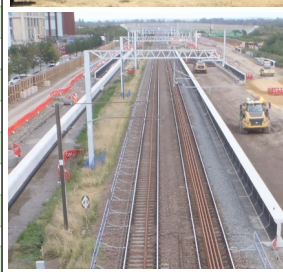
The growth from the Greater Anglia (GA) stations tends to be higher than that from the Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) routes. Only Royston and Watlington get into a double digit increase on our two GTR lines. Train quality is good on both routes. However, it may be a reflection that GA services have few if any cancellations owing to staff shortages, time keeping is generally excellent, the trains are kept very clean inside and out (see comment on page 21 about the cleanliness of GTR's trains).

EAST ANGLIA STATION USAGE ESTIMATES 2019-2024 (Source: Office of Rail & Road 21/11/2024)

Station name [code]	Year ended 31 March						% change 2024	
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2019	2023
Norwich [NRW]	4,250,834	4,041,818	967,650	3,213,504	3,963,948	4,176,640	-2	5
Salhouse [SAH]	11,778	9,856	11,566	12,692	14,006	13,566	15	-3
Hoveton & Wroxham [HXM]	136,414	125,260	38,880	112,218	124,804	126,828	-7	2
Worstead [WRT]	25,650	25,404	6,730	22,270	26,816	27,188	6	1
North Walsham [NWA]	265,400	226,116	54,894	221,032	243,208	221,002	-17	-9
Guntton [GNT]	19,188	18,560	3,334	22,228	28,446	30,084	57	6
Roughton Road [RNR]	21,766	21,552	3,304	20,956	24,670	21,736	0	-12
Cromer [CMR]	219,244	213,936	60,352	212,590	244,294	245,658	12	1
West Runton [WRN]	27,212	26,076	9,144	31,834	32,918	34,194	26	4
Sheringham [SHM]	225,894	182,288	53,214	233,550	232,222	244,950	8	5
Brundall Gardens [BGA]	12,248	9,408	9,318	11,358	14,558	19,246	57	32
Brundall [BDA]	97,164	89,742	33,282	83,006	92,068	100,552	3	9
Lingwood [LGD]	46,134	43,536	12,622	37,524	44,230	45,572	-1	3
Acle [ACL]	45,336	41,618	8,478	33,642	40,672	41,334	-9	2
Great Yarmouth [GYM]	381,002	344,276	117,164	347,854	393,322	402,658	6	2
Cantley [CNY]	20,590	17,048	7,004	14,776	15,740	18,298	-11	16
Reedham (Norfolk) [REE]	45,618	41,074	10,770	36,230	37,042	39,320	-14	6
Berney Arms [BYA]	442	42	348	868	950	800	81	-16
Haddiscoe [HAD]	13,580	12,650	2,870	9,086	10,304	12,064	-11	17
Buckenham [BUC]	216	212	98	300	354	360	67	2
Somerleyton [SYT]	12,972	10,898	2,194	8,696	9,010	10,076	-22	12
Oulton Broad North [OUN]	112,600	106,438	21,768	98,344	109,170	125,458	11	15
Lowestoft [LWT]	438,476	406,440	103,144	354,928	396,618	426,034	-3	7
Oulton Broad South [OUS]	47,696	43,518	7,212	45,430	51,210	56,484	18	10
Beccles [BCC]	114,302	110,152	17,682	97,838	111,814	118,074	3	6
Brampton (Suffolk) [BRP]	9,532	9,858	1,342	7,674	9,390	11,920	25	27
Halesworth [HAS]	102,016	99,838	15,854	84,792	99,576	107,644	6	8
Darsham [DSM]	59,924	61,534	13,092	48,180	55,964	60,836	2	9
Saxmundham [SAX]	164,400	165,274	35,022	138,696	157,214	164,480	0	5
Wickham Market [WCM]	50,932	55,266	11,570	47,570	57,274	62,200	22	9
Melton [MES]	84,358	82,562	14,742	55,112	67,954	77,364	-8	14
Woodbridge [WDB]	210,440	209,172	50,570	168,694	189,784	208,998	-1	10
Westerfield [WFI]	11,642	11,284	10,188	12,988	13,970	16,444	41	18
Derby Road [DBR]	47,938	46,808	18,040	56,746	73,198	81,986	71	12
Trimley [TRM]	32,178	31,122	7,366	35,612	41,164	45,948	43	12
Felixstowe [FLX]	187,454	170,412	58,704	193,072	218,542	238,190	27	9
Ipswich [IPS]	3,416,026	3,292,182	726,756	2,125,686	2,682,574	3,028,054	-11	13
Mistley [MIS]	75,366	71,784	14,418	36,520	47,958	54,074	-28	13
Wrabness [WRB]	30,348	29,056	5,458	17,280	20,006	23,178	-24	16
Harwich International [HPQ]	110,944	109,876	33,030	74,476	95,228	103,856	-6	9
Dovercourt [DVC]	177,752	163,728	46,460	118,474	130,342	148,728	-16	14
Harwich Town [HWC]	151,076	128,454	27,818	79,978	87,472	102,334	-32	17
Diss [DIS]	700,586	671,300	124,442	422,272	559,966	615,118	-12	10
Manningtree [MNG]	1,106,204	1,068,816	200,350	634,684	783,130	907,374	-18	16
Colchester [COL]	4,453,178	4,249,444	1,029,176	2,913,266	3,392,742	3,719,094	-16	10
Colchester Town [CET]	771,090	735,814	178,206	504,448	587,470	643,980	-16	10
Hythe [HYH]	265,716	279,464	59,242	178,362	265,670	327,640	23	23
Wivenhoe [WIV]	401,240	403,306	70,786	216,778	278,916	323,558	-19	16
Alresford [ALR]	62,994	65,602	15,816	47,180	63,450	85,564	36	35
Great Bentley [GRB]	81,144	78,634	18,728	50,764	64,860	85,784	6	32
Weeley [WEE]	34,908	37,652	11,506	30,360	32,642	35,504	2	9
Thorpe-le-Soken [TLS]	131,088	135,486	32,264	95,582	119,048	132,260	1	11
Clacton-on-Sea [CLT]	799,344	763,016	276,656	623,870	705,916	792,630	-1	12
Kirby Cross [KBX]	44,782	47,842	13,726	36,664	48,908	58,260	30	19
Frinton-on-Sea [FRI]	200,904	184,550	51,010	134,952	159,442	178,506	-11	12
Walton-on-the-Naze [WON]	136,708	130,090	40,024	97,784	111,400	125,642	-8	13

Below are some photos of the construction (in chronological order) of the eagerly awaited Cambridge South station, which will become a new entry in this table for the 2025/26 year.

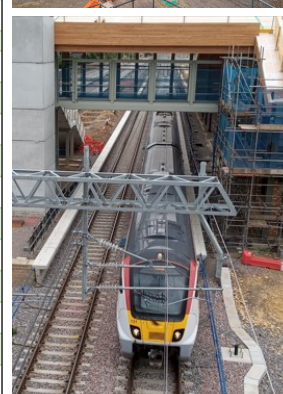
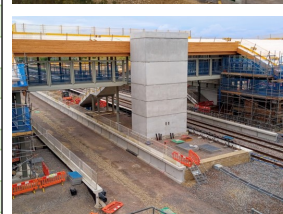
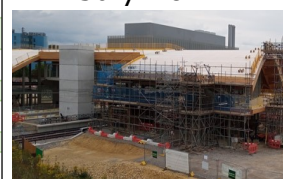
September 2023



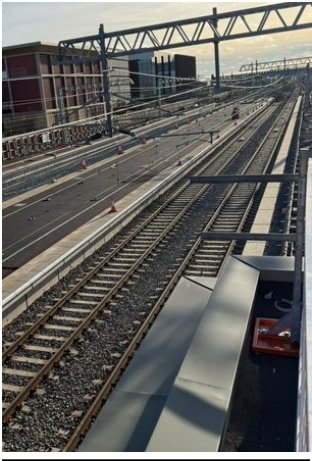
May 2024



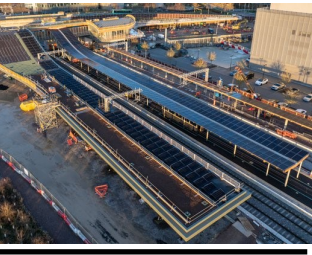
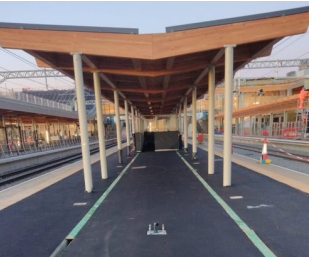
July 2024



December 2024
posted on X/Twitter
by Network Rail



January 2025
posted on X/Twitter
by Network Rail



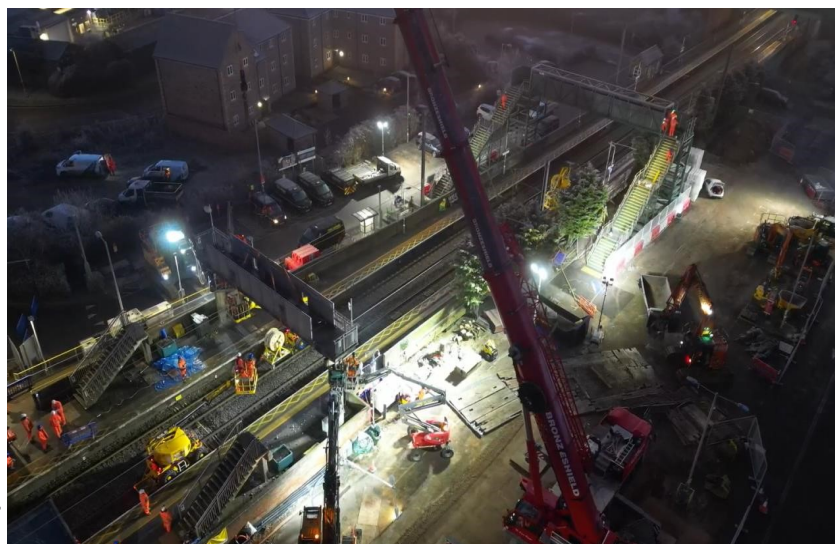
Photos taken by
Peter Wakefield,
Jerry Alderson,
John Grant, Jeff
Beckett and Paul
Hollinghurst, plus
Network Rail

Station name [code]	Year ended 31 March						% change 2024	
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2019	2023
Marks Tey [MKT]	604,902	606,914	112,616	302,470	401,950	452,940	-25	13
Chappel & Wakes Colne [CWC]	39,360	46,258	4,090	22,490	28,176	28,762	-27	2
Bures [BUE]	60,432	58,024	8,626	35,712	45,068	46,312	-23	3
Sudbury [SUY]	334,274	334,694	61,846	224,284	278,534	319,430	-4	15
Kelvedon [KEL]	847,748	797,650	119,948	355,632	482,106	545,692	-36	13
Needham Market [NMT]	102,320	100,754	33,484	79,196	94,148	112,342	10	19
Stowmarket [SMK]	967,114	916,094	185,762	615,232	764,552	859,800	-11	12
Elmswell [ESW]	71,078	71,050	13,570	67,164	91,892	109,934	55	20
Thurston [TRS]	77,592	71,562	15,688	76,036	95,720	114,330	47	19
Bury St.Edmunds [BSE]	665,112	657,942	151,514	564,972	698,282	834,744	26	20
Kennett [KNE]	42,684	42,516	9,408	36,538	43,782	50,226	18	15
Newmarket [NMK]	355,068	335,652	77,602	255,860	303,332	347,148	-2	14
Dullingham [DUL]	41,832	35,086	10,842	22,798	25,314	28,974	-31	14
Shelford [SED]	207,478	216,194	57,942	140,840	170,262	207,250	0	22
Whittlesford Parkway [WLF]	558,134	552,024	93,042	291,808	376,432	424,092	-24	13
Great Chesterford [GRC]	110,120	110,198	24,252	77,954	86,096	98,778	-10	15
Audley End [AUD]	979,414	1,006,730	172,636	502,644	623,570	751,334	-23	20
Newport (Essex) [NWE]	188,094	195,984	64,436	167,346	198,334	205,164	9	3
Elsenham [ESM]	252,716	245,240	63,386	155,610	191,746	207,816	-18	8
Stansted Airport [SSD]	9,773,870	8,474,784	794,992	3,368,742	7,906,474	9,280,540	-5	17
Stansted Mountfitchet [SST]	599,478	578,766	150,136	406,316	455,236	537,304	-10	18
Foxton [FXN]	101,990	105,404	30,564	75,252	87,794	94,124	-8	7
Shepreth [STH]	115,600	117,102	23,676	68,718	91,082	98,754	-15	8
Meldreth [MEL]	295,470	305,888	82,016	181,362	217,158	230,482	-22	6
Royston [RYS]	1,467,154	1,435,616	289,662	835,428	1,081,014	1,272,012	-13	18
Ashwell & Morden [AWM]	156,490	159,254	34,748	104,212	140,696	146,024	-7	4
Baldock [BDK]	637,664	654,320	154,004	387,170	502,586	527,306	-17	5
Letchworth [LET]	1,856,558	1,834,720	457,590	1,189,236	1,471,004	1,598,310	-14	9
Hitchin [HIT]	3,265,142	3,233,772	750,478	1,981,466	2,512,254	2,682,410	-18	7
Arlesey [ARL]	662,676	696,708	152,836	407,022	552,150	592,464	-11	7
Biggleswade [BIW]	1,038,164	1,033,622	227,702	592,254	753,050	789,284	-24	5
Sandy [SDY]	497,992	495,528	143,316	385,704	524,068	571,530	15	9
St.Neots [SNO]	1,325,534	1,261,664	246,330	672,958	886,088	959,298	-28	8
Huntingdon [HUN]	1,786,548	1,723,088	337,704	949,924	1,302,160	1,421,020	-20	9
Peterborough [PBO]	5,059,576	4,934,692	1,089,232	3,719,850	4,519,016	4,720,686	-7	4
Whittlesea [WLE]	31,986	35,230	8,026	26,436	33,738	43,364	36	29
March [MCH]	407,914	385,956	87,832	251,638	305,354	340,976	-16	12
Manea [MNE]	18,950	18,834	3,910	16,192	21,038	24,904	31	18
Soham [SOJ]				14,196	55,518	65,912		19
Ely [ELY]	2,386,744	2,363,818	577,460	1,634,548	1,894,014	2,052,282	-14	8
Shippea Hill [SPP]	432	164	36	102	142	70	-84	-51
Lakenheath [LAK]	454	416	246	476	562	480	6	-15
Brandon [BND]	117,798	111,572	26,804	93,682	115,102	119,300	1	4
Thetford [TTF]	299,752	286,700	73,700	226,022	276,522	295,514	-1	7
Harling Road [HRD]	2,880	3,794	646	978	2,104	3,364	17	60
Eccles Road [ECS]	2,952	2,390	296	1,276	1,830	1,568	-47	-14
Attleborough [ATL]	163,062	158,464	41,592	131,918	168,896	172,376	6	2
Spooner Row [SPN]	1,344	276	74	320	382	698	-48	83
Wymondham [WMD]	200,332	196,036	56,424	150,466	196,452	186,470	-7	-5
King's Lynn [KLN]	991,252	931,394	240,162	683,706	757,034	789,204	-20	4
Watlington [WTG]	153,782	138,366	39,078	105,886	107,724	118,846	-23	10
Downham Market [DOW]	549,562	512,772	129,058	341,550	386,270	399,600	-27	3
Littleport [LTP]	248,808	238,488	60,976	153,660	186,752	204,358	-18	9
Waterbeach [WBC]	407,650	377,660	100,176	265,180	309,130	331,764	-19	7
Cambridge [CBG]	11,983,320	11,599,814	2,300,528	6,952,780	9,341,600	10,033,088	-16	7
Cambridge North [CMB]	812,972	949,550	220,958	733,612	1,074,602	1,268,788	56	18
Total for Railfuture East Anglia	74,631,292	71,514,332	14,989,042	45,676,094	60,719,456	66,844,866	-10	10

NEW TECHNOLOGY TO BENEFIT TRAVELLERS AT STOWMARKET

BY PETER FEENEY

Derek Monnery's article on page 16 highlights an ongoing shortcoming in passenger facilities at a key hub station for travellers in the east. On a more positive note, it is encouraging to report that the first stage in delivering the long awaited and overdue new footbridge and lifts at Stowmarket station was completed in January. The photo right, provided by Greater Anglia (GA), shows a night view of works from above.



The existing footbridge, right, installed during the works for the completion of the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML) electrification north of Ipswich during the late 1980s, was removed and replaced by a temporary replacement structure. Following two further weekend possessions in mid-May and the start of July, we understand from GA that the permanent new structure with lifts will be installed and fully operational by early summer 2025.



The scheme, funded by the Access for All programme, addresses a serious need: annual footfall at Stowmarket, a major junction serving both intercity traffic on GEML and the heavily subscribed regional routes between Ipswich and Cambridge/Ely/Peterborough, continues to grow post-COVID and is likely to reach a million in the near future. For travellers unable to access the existing steep footbridge between platforms, the only current alternative is to use the level crossing at the west end of the station, which is frequently down due to the volume of passenger and freight traffic on the line.

The innovative modular design of the proposed new bridge has excited considerable interest: as noted in an article by Jerry Alderson several years ago in RAIL EAST (issue 194, June 2022), the bridge will be the first of its kind to be installed on Britain's rail network. According to the industry, the modular concept behind the new design, plus the fact that it is largely constructed from steel rather than concrete, means the bridge is both lighter and cheaper than traditional alternatives, as well as being much easier to install - à la Meccano of old, the new bridge will arrive in sections at the station and be assembled on site. And apart from the all-important "plug & play" lift modules, the new structure will also benefit from a roof, a touch of civilisation its predecessor lacked. As with GA's decision to go with the Stadler FLIRT design for fleet upgrade, Network Rail is to be commended for embracing genuinely state of the art technology for essential infrastructure — something everyone interested in enhancing rail usage should applaud.



Inevitably the temporary structure comes with drawbacks – the chief of which, due to its location with stairways sitting in each of the station's car parks, means that passengers crossing over the bridge now take longer to reach the exit or connections on the other platform – but this at least is an inconvenience for a matter of months.

Given the very large number of stations nationally still without level access to one or more platforms, an engineering solution that promises both flexibility and greater value for money has to be worth pursuing.

Assuming the Department for Transport will be in a position to fund future rounds of Access for All, it is to be hoped that the Stowmarket bridge will be the trailblazer for many other fully accessible bridges – and not a one off.



For a technical overview of the modular bridge concept, and how radically it differs from more traditional designs, see this article in New Civil Engineer from 2021 — <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/innovative-thinking/modular-footbridge-revolutionises-railway-crossings-25-06-2021/>. It is worth noting that some of the bold ambition described in the article has been toned down — certainly Network Rail showed no intention of completing the operation over a single 48-hour possession, a possibility raised in the article. But the caution obviously makes sense in the context of this being the pioneer installation on the network. Certainly, once proof of concept has been thoroughly demonstrated at Stowmarket, it would be good to see timescales for completion of future schemes being reduced. Maybe as expertise and confidence with this new technology develops, it might indeed be feasible in the future for a fully accessible modular footbridge replacement, lifts and all, to be installed over a single weekend possession...

And so, the focus shifts to the remaining major East Anglian rail hub where many passengers currently face a significant barrier – Marks Tey. This surely has to be *the* regional priority in any further round of Access for All funding.

PASSING THE TIME AT STOWMARKET – WELCOME INITIATIVE

Recently spotted in the platform 2 waiting room at Stowmarket station, a jigsaw puzzle for distracted travellers to work on and maybe regain some mindfulness. It sits beside a shelf of books and offers a welcome diversion, as well as the opportunity to do something other than scroll through your phone!



The railway theme (in the photo on the right) is apt.

Congratulations to all the imaginative station adopters responsible for this diversion.



WHY ARE EAST ANGLIA PASSENGERS BEING LEFT OUT IN THE COLD (AND WET)?

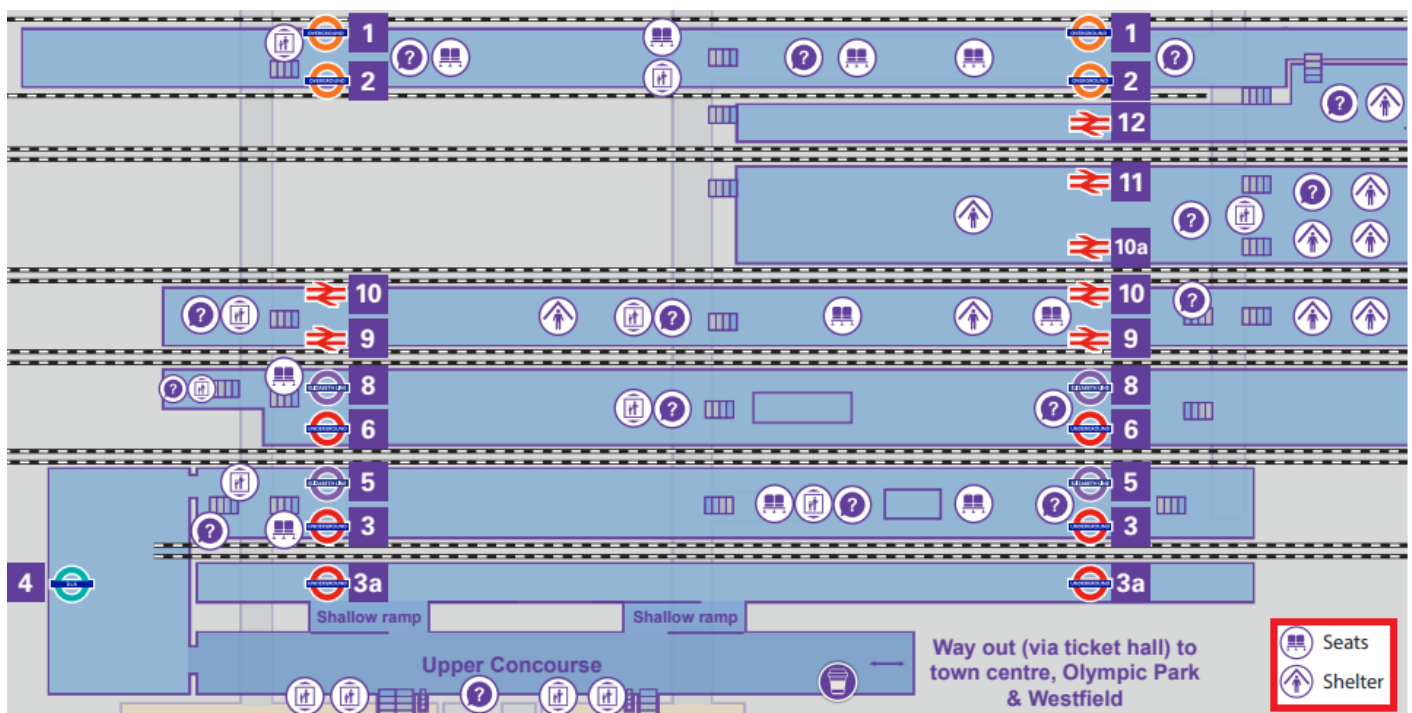
BY DEREK MONNERY

When Stratford (East London) station was being upgraded to be the main transport hub for the 2012 Olympic Games, the funding was made available for all Transport for London (TfL) platforms to have new canopies to keep rail passengers dry and sheltered from the elements. These were deemed essential because the station is situated on the estuary of the River Lee in a very exposed location.

However, as the station is run by TfL no one thought about providing canopies for the Greater Anglia platforms 9, 10, 10a and 11. These remain bleak and windswept, and people get soaked every time there is a downpour. Two small bus type shelters provide the only protection on these platforms, apart from the subway staircases which are covered. This is particularly galling because the train services on these platforms are less frequent, involving a longer wait than the TfL platforms, which have a train service every few minutes. At present if the weather is bad in the evening peak, passengers tend to gather and bunch up at the top of the staircases to the subways, and this creates a safety hazard.

Stratford station is one of the top ten busiest stations in the country, so this is no backwater, and the station is very busy indeed in the peak hours. However, in today's fragmented railway system, there are no quick fixes. According to Greater Anglia and Network Rail, when asked in 2024, there is no funding available to provide canopies to these platforms. Because the station is TfL operated, London council taxpayers should not be required to pay for the work, which will only benefit people who live outside the Greater London area (the Elizabeth Line platforms are covered). This stalemate could mean that Greater Anglia rail users will continue to get soaked for several years hence.

With the change of government, I wrote to my MP, Sir Bernard Jenkin, to remind him of this problem. He bounced it straight on to the new Rail Minister, Lord Peter Hendy, who replied promptly to say that he would request that this work package be considered for inclusion in the next round of works to the station as this "would contribute to improving the passenger experience at the station". Maybe there could be an end to getting soaked at Stratford station in the not too distant future?

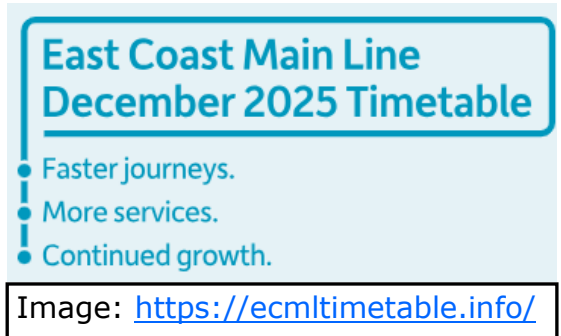


This 2024 diagram of Stratford's mainline platforms is from www.nationalrail.co.uk.

EAST COAST MAINLINE TIMETABLE – ARRIVING AT LAST!

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

This long-anticipated timetable has been finalised and will be implemented at the timetable change in December 2025. Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) will then be able to introduce its changes to the timetable that serves the west of East Anglia (King's Lynn - Ely - Cambridge - Royston / Peterborough - Huntingdon - St Neots - Biggleswade - Hitchin - Stevenage - London King's Cross/St Pancras, shown as London KX/StP in the following commentary).



A brief summary of the Monday-Friday GTR service shows a slight variation from that operating currently in the **up direction** from each terminus – for example the new standard is xx.45 from King's Lynn (instead hovering around xx.42) with the addition of xx.15 in the morning and afternoon peaks. From Peterborough off peak up services, the standard GTR departures are at xx.23 and xx.53, Huntingdon xx.10 and xx.40. LNER completes its obligation to the city in a hurry at xx.04; xx.10; xx.17 plus in odd hours at xx.47(!).

Cambridge - London KX/StP **peak** services are much improved, with each departure arriving at KX/StP in the order they started from Cambridge. Thus the **"stoppers"** from Cambridge at xx.25 and xx.55 call 'all stations' to Hitchin then fast to KX calling only at Welwyn North. Fourteen trains will leave Cambridge between 05.55 and 08.25 for KX/StP and none will be overtaken by that following. The xx.25 and xx.55 services call at all stations (Foxton, Shepreth, Meldreth etc) to Hitchin and then Welwyn North to KX/StP, so they get a much faster service to London. Passengers for Stevenage off those six speeded-up services have to change at Hitchin and wait for four minutes.

In the down direction, off peak trains leave London KX/StP for Peterborough at xx.03; xx.10; xx.47 as LNER fasts with Thameslink semi-fasts at xx.16 and xx.46; GTR's additional fast services at 12 and 42 minutes past the hour from KX to Stevenage, Biggleswade, St Neots, Huntingdon and Peterborough provide relief to the basic half hourly evening service from StP.

The basic off-peak service to Cambridge leaves KX/StP at xx.01; xx.24; xx.31; xx.54. Ely at xx.24 and xx.54 and King's Lynn at xx.54. By moving the xx.24 and xx.54 from the current xx.14 and xx.44, GTR has created much more capacity from Cambridge and beyond, as no train leaving KX/StP overtakes the preceding one, as now (for example the xx.44 currently overtakes the xx.31). The xx.24 and the xx.54 call at Cambridge South and leave Cambridge 'Central' off-peak at xx.15(18) and xx.45(48) for Ely (18 and 48 peak).

In the evening peak the current Cambridge line stoppers will leave KX at xx.24 and xx.54 and run fast to Welwyn GC, Welwyn North, Knebworth then Hitchin and all stations to Cambridge – from 16.54, 17.24, 17.54, 18.24, 18.54 reverting to hourly at the normal calling pattern until end of service. Both the xx.24 and xx.54 peak departures from KX for Ely continue through to King's Lynn.

Off peak GTR has not restored the missing five trains that would make the stopping train service half hourly from Letchworth to Cambridge throughout the busiest part of the day. A great shame with Cambridge South station opening in January 2026.

Cambridge South – recent welcome developments

This new timetable reveals the stopping pattern at this new station – **all** GTR trains will stop there. In each direction that will mean six every hour except for the missing stopper for five hours in the middle of the day. With there being five major hospitals served by Cambridge South, the missing trains at staff shift changeover times will not be helpful in making the service as convenient as it should be.

Up trains during each hour will be at xx.16, xx.25, xx.29, xx.45, xx.55, xx.58. **Down** services call at xx.05, xx.09, xx.29, xx.35, xx.39, xx.59 – less one for five hours in the middle of the day.

The Cross Country service will also call en route at Stansted Airport to / from Peterborough etc. as well as all GA services – so up to 12 services in each direction.



The above photo (by Peter Wakefield) shows Shepreth Branch Junction where huge changes have been taking place (on and off the Royston lines) to enable trains to save time to offset the time lost when calling at Cambridge South station, 2km north of this scene.



A few days later – the result of all that planning and hard work over the Christmas 2024 period – a GA class 720 train from Liverpool Street crosses the newly laid track on its way to Cambridge (biomedical campus buildings can be seen in the distance, but new overhead masts hide Cambridge South station). Photo also by author.

Well done all you planners and installers. Amazing. We can do it!

Referencing the GTR services, the changes overall are very beneficial, reflecting fast growth since the pandemic from both northern termini towards London.

TRANSPORT EAST CONFERENCE

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

Transport East is one of England's Sub National Transport Bodies, based in Ipswich at Suffolk County Council's offices, and covers Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex – from the North Norfolk Coast to the Thames Estuary. Regular RAIL EAST readers will be aware of its role in determining regional transport strategy, where it has been developing a consistent message about the critical role rail – for both passengers and freight – must play in helping economic development across the region.

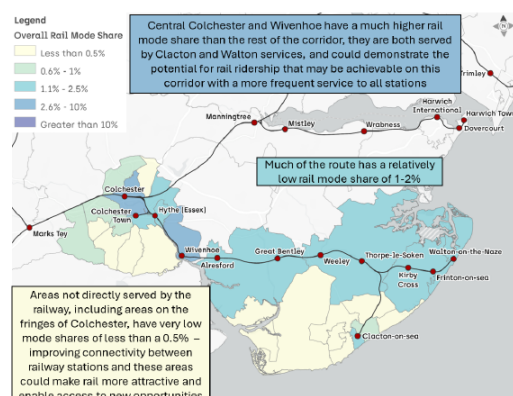
It held its annual conference at the Hold in Ipswich on Thursday 16 January 2025. Railfuture attended along with representatives of all our local authorities, transport operators, Chambers of Commerce and politicians local and national. Simon Lightwood MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the DfT, Minister for Local Transport, started the conference off with a talk emphasising the importance of local integrated transport that includes active travel designed for local needs by the new devolved authorities.

The conference centred around the importance of the economy of "The East" to the nation and how it needs much more investment in its infrastructure to make it work. The railway figured large in all this, as every speaker, every panel, referenced the urgency of sorting the bottlenecks in the railway network at Ely and Haughley – and so the necessity of "The East" speaking with one voice for appropriate infrastructure funding was emphasised again and again. On the railway, Jonathan Denby of Greater Anglia stressed that spending need not necessarily be on big, capital hungry projects, as easy wins such as the doubling of the train service between Clacton and Colchester to two trains an hour (see slide, right) could have enormous social and economic benefits locally.

Rail opportunities between Colchester and Clacton-on-Sea

TRANSPORTEAST

Delivering an all-day half hourly service to create a step change in connectivity



Currently 1 train an hour most of the day

Approximately 70,000 people live within 1km of a station on the route, however, only 1% are regular rail users

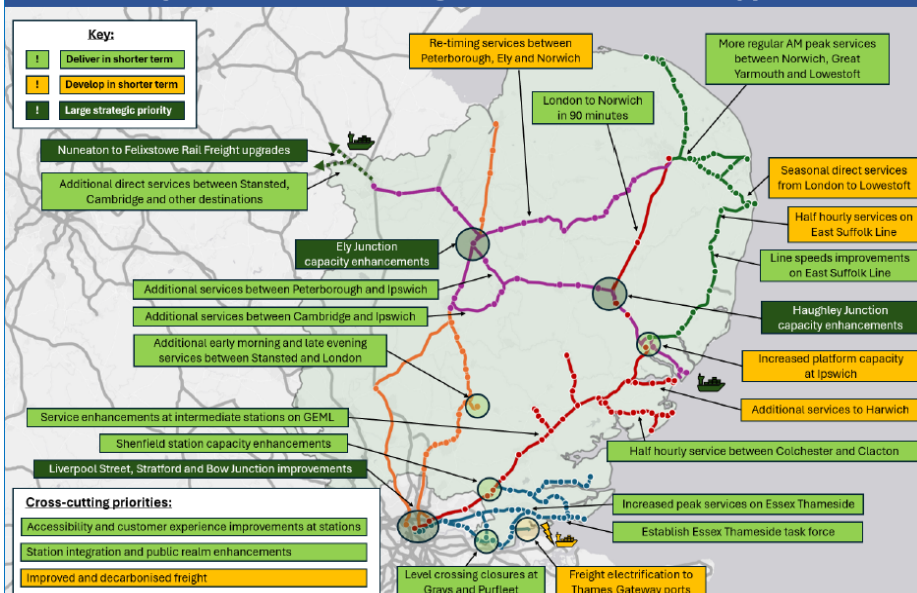
Better utilising existing infrastructure and improving service levels would provide travel time savings, enable additional choice, and provide greater flexibility for over one million existing annual rail users on this corridor.

A step change in service also has the potential to increase rail revenues by attracting new users to rail; shifting people from cars.

Additional services would be deliverable at a relatively low cost, without new infrastructure

Public transport, whether rail or bus services, is the enabler of the economy. One way or another this has to be recognised. A strong speech from Jackie Sadek, former government adviser and an influential voice in urban regeneration, emphasised this, insisting that high quality rail links between all the thriving centres of research in our region, whether in Cambridge, Colchester, Chelmsford, Ipswich or Norwich, can create an agglomeration effect that makes their output as a whole greater than the sum of their individual efforts... East Anglia as the UK's centre of silicon excellence.

Summary of all identified strategic and shorter-term rail opportunities



SUFFOLK'S DRAFT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – IN PROGRESS...

BY IAN COUZENS

Railfuture has submitted its response to the public consultation on the Suffolk County Council's (SCC) emerging Local Transport Plan.

While the draft plan contains many warm words about improving public transport and making it more environmentally friendly, we find the plan lacking in specific actions, especially for rail. Support is offered for East West Rail, junction improvements at Haughley/Ely North and for electrification of the freight corridor. That's good to see, but what about aspirations for other rail improvements over the life of the plan to 2040?

We know that SCC doesn't have the resources and powers to implement improvements on the Suffolk rail network itself, but it does have influence. So, to positively state what exactly its aspirations are, is very important. Even where support is shown, for example the desired electrification of the Felixstowe to Peterborough rail freight corridor, it needs to be expressed more forthrightly and with SCC taking on more of a leadership role.

In our response, Railfuture put forward these additional priorities:

More frequent services

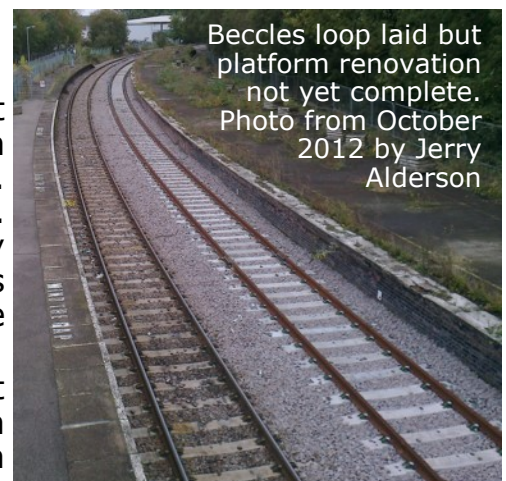
- Aim for half-hourly services on all routes where the service is currently hourly. While in some cases this may not be achievable for many years, at least it provides a strategic starting point. A move to hourly service on the Ipswich – Peterborough route from two-hourly is priority.

Better connectivity from West Suffolk towns and villages to Cambridge

- SCC should consider more carefully the massive economic pull of Cambridge and how rail would be well placed to deliver the connectivity needed. Accordingly, strong support should be given to redoubling the line from Newmarket to Cambridge. This would enable far more rail journeys to be made from Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket into Cambridge, as can already be evidenced by the extremely busy Ely to Cambridge route.
- SCC should back Railfuture's proposal for a rail or light rail link from Haverhill to Cambridge. It cannot be tenable for Haverhill's population to expand towards 40,000 without considering the need to restore the rail connection. An independent study commissioned by Railfuture showed that a new link could be extraordinarily successful with as many as 2,000 journeys each day during peak hours alone.

Better connectivity for East Suffolk

- The installation of the Beccles loop on the East Suffolk line in 2012 and increasing services from two-hourly to hourly has been a great success. However, more work needs to be done. Improvements in line speeds are desperately needed where journey times are in some cases slower than they were 50 years ago – despite the introduction of the new Stadler trains.
- It would be an opportunity missed if SCC did not consider running through services to Leiston when Sizewell C works are concluded. An hourly Leiston



to Ipswich service could potentially form part of a half hourly service pattern on the southern section of the line.

Better accessibility for passengers

- There is a pressing need for better accessibility at some stations, especially the interchange stations of Stowmarket and Marks Tey where lifts need to be provided (although work at Stowmarket is now underway - see page 14).

Better rail integration with buses

- Much more work needs to be done on identifying rail/bus interchanges and bringing about proper integrated services. For example, the Greater Anglia timetable shows a bus connection at Saxmundham for Leiston and Aldeburgh, yet the bus doesn't stop at Saxmundham station.

Some of the above proposals were included in SCC's 2015 Rail Prospectus, so why not carry these forward into the new Local Transport Plan?

Our hope is that any revisions to the draft plan will incorporate at least some of Railfuture's recommendations. On a positive note, we understand that SCC is planning an update of its existing Rail Prospectus, first published a decade ago. This will be an excellent opportunity to look in more detail at future rail provision.

NEWS IN BRIEF

POPULAR CLASS 379 TRAINS ON THEIR WAY ON GREAT NORTHERN

Rail user groups, particularly the Fen Line Users Association, have been eager to see the former Greater Anglia class 379 trains, which are considered superior but had been languishing in sidings for three years, return to service in place of the 387s Great Northern currently uses.



The photo at King's Lynn on 11 January 2025, courtesy of Mike Lamport, shows the arrival of the first class 379. It's stabled in the middle road between the two platforms. On its right is class 387 301, standing in platform 1 after its 99-mile sprint from London King's Cross.

Number 301's external condition is typical of the awful state Great Northern has allowed the fleet to sink to. The 379 by comparison is pristine. The photographer remarked "Let's hope Hornsey depot look after them better than the 387s!"

The 387s are being transferred to south of the River Thames where we hope they are shown more love than north of it. Thanks to them for the sterling service they have given us.

INTERCHANGING AT NOTTINGHAM STATION

RAIL EAST issue 204 (December 2024) mentioned EMR's 'solution' to reduce persistent fare evasion meant the (temporary, as a trial) closure of the footbridge that leads off the platforms at Nottingham station. On 31 January, East Midlands Railway (EMR) issued a press release, which revealed an "estimated revenue loss" of £80,000 in those three weeks, adding up to £1.1 million in a year of potentially lost revenue. The press release omitted to say how much of this loss arises from not checking tickets on trains.

EMR will repeat the closure of the centre footbridge from Saturday 22 February (without any confirmed end date). This closure will be kept under review, allowing EMR to "capture further evidence and data to verify the results of the initial pilot."

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE SESSION WITH LAURA SHOAF AND LORD HENDY

BY JOHN GRANT

Image: Parliament TV



On 22 January 2025 Laura Shoaf, who chairs Shadow Great British Railways (SGBR) but will not continue once it comes into legal existence, and Lord Hendy, the Minister for Rail, appeared before the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee for just over two hours. SGBR brings together the chief executives of Network Rail, the Department for Transport (DfT) train operator, and the DfT itself for weekly meetings; no minutes are kept, which allows them to have "rather challenging conversations". Laura Shoaf has fortnightly meetings with the Secretary of State and the Rail Minister to update on progress; as well as providing some democratic oversight of SGBR, the meetings allow her to robustly challenge them if things are not moving in the right direction.

SGBR is intended to deliver some of the benefits of GBR ahead of the legislation being enacted to create GBR. Its priorities include: integration between track and train; the "passenger experience"; fares and ticketing reform; and innovative use of technology. They aim to "learn from the operators that are doing a great job", which may be why Greater Anglia (GA) will be one of the first operators to be taken over (scheduled for autumn 2025). It seems to be a very lean operation, but with access to resources where needed, for instance the GBR Transition Team (GBRTT) is looking at fares and ticketing. They also have access to resources in Great British Railways Innovation (GBRX) and DfT.

The bill to set GBR up will be published "real soon now" as we say in the IT industry, at which point there will be a public consultation, as there was for the one proposed by the previous administration in 2024.

Lord Hendy was clear that GBR will be at arm's length, without the micromanagement of "several hundred people in the Department working out whether I get four trains an hour from Richmond in the peak hours or six". However, given the amount of public money the railways will continue to consume, it is inevitable that the Secretary of State will have some power of direction.

He was also clear that most decision-making in GBR needs to be at local, rather than national level — if it is a "megalithic eastern European organisation with a massive office" it will fail. Andrew Haines re-organised Network Rail into regions and routes soon after he was appointed as CEO (by Lord Hendy, who was chairman at the time), and we can expect that GBR will have a similar structure. There was some discussion as to whether the divisions might be aligned with local authority boundaries, but that is unlikely and indeed Transport for London works well with multiple Network Rail regions.

So we can be cautiously optimistic that, half a decade after Keith Williams wrote his Rail Review (published May 2021), progress is being made in the right direction.

The full 39-page transcript of the session, which includes a link to the video recording, is at <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/15261/pdf/>.

NEWS IN BRIEF CONTINUED: CROSS COUNTRY SERVICES

The full CrossCountry (XC) pre-COVID timetable will be restored as from the start of the 2025 Summer Timetable that starts in May. Trains will again operate hourly throughout the day from Stansted Airport to Cambridge-Peterborough-Leicester-Birmingham. No extra services operate. The first Sunday train to Peterborough from Cambridge is still at 11.00!

The XC three-car diesel units are having their interiors “refreshed” to a high standard. Currently they are distinctly “tired”. Some services are being operated by two-car units instead of the usual three-car ones, hopefully a temporary situation as units are withdrawn into the works to be dealt with.

RAIL EAST GETS THINGS DONE

RAIL EAST 204 mentioned that Greater Anglia had failed to update the Community for Rail Partnerships map on its website for the new Cambridge to Ipswich CPR. We are grateful to Alan Neville for arranging to get it fixed and informing us. See: <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/about-us/community-rail-partnerships>

RAIL EAST BACK ISSUES WANTED — CAN YOU HELP?

RAIL EAST goes back to 1972 when the East Anglia branch of (what is now) Railfuture was formed. We would like to have every back issue on the website, but sadly we do not have copies of 74 out of 205 issues.

Can you help fill the gaps? The issues that are missing are: up to 1986 (issues 1-58), 1987 (61), 1988 (65), 1989 (68), 1991 (72), 1995 (90), 1996 (94), 1998 (101), 1999 (104), 2000 (107-108), 2000 (110), 2001 (111), 2003 (121-122), 2004 (124-125). [Note: the numbers listed here are the real issue numbers and dates. Unfortunately, a production error meant that issue “123 June 2004” had been mistitled as “122”, “126 January 2005” was “122 January 2004” and “127 May 2005” was “127 May 2004”.]

If you have any of the missing issues, please post a copy to Peter Wakefield (see back page for address – we will be happy to reimburse the postage and return the original if requested), or if you are able to take a good quality scan then please email that instead.

We wish to thank Martin Thorne for providing 30 issues (70, plus between 98 and 132) and Peter Wakefield for 18 issues (between 59 and 82).

PDFs of the 131 issues (so far) can be viewed at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/index.php?dashboard=East+Anglia&group=BUL/MAG>. It is a great research tool and fascinating to read the stories of numerous rail schemes that were expected to happen imminently but didn't.

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 to make RAIL EAST visually attractive.

All submissions by **17 May 2025**, 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?

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

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

railfuture East Anglia

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MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 22 FEB 2025

Friends Meeting House
St John's Street

BURY ST EDMUNDS

IP33 1SJ

SATURDAY 21 JUNE 2025

St Mary's at Stoke
Stoke Street

IPSWICH

IP2 8BX

SATURDAY 27 SEPT 2025

Friends Meeting House,
5 Upper Goat Lane

NORWICH

NR2 1EW

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

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

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