

## EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT

Presented at Annual General Meeting, May 18<sup>th</sup> 2019

This has been a very busy 12-month period of campaigning, reflecting and responding to local train and bus developments, evidence-gathering, recruiting new members and the renewal of our association following a membership consultation.

ESTA's campaigning has included 4 issues to ESTA NEWS and 3 public meetings (in Woodbridge, Halesworth and Beccles) plus meetings with Greater Anglia, First Eastern Counties and Konectbus.

We were pleased that through ticketing between train and bus at Saxmundham for Leiston and Aldeburgh was introduced, as we had campaigned for some time for such a facility; and that the first of the bi-mode trains arrived, bringing closer the possibility of some through services between the East Suffolk Line and London.

Our long-standing campaign for a shelter for passengers awaiting southbound buses outside Lowestoft rail station included approaches to the Town Council and to County Councillors, among others, but then took another twist when First Eastern Counties announced the permanent diversion of these buses to Waveney Road. This is less convenient for people arriving by train, but is tolerable given proper signage and a shelter – and we are pleased that the County Council has found the money for pay for one.

Meanwhile we have actively pursued improvements for passengers going to Pontins at Pakefield and to Ipswich Hospital by bus. At Lowestoft, Beccles and Woodbridge we also installed new boards particularly to inform bus users of our work; and expressed our concern that Suffolk County Council is no longer providing timetable information at bus stops..

The other major bus issue has been the withdrawal by Konectbus from the Norwich – Bungay – Halesworth route and we immediately lobbied Suffolk County Council to seek a replacement. This included a radio interview and an intervention at the full council meeting by our Vice-Chairman.

We are pleased that service 99A has been introduced as a replacement between Southwold, Halesworth and Bungay; but it needs better co-ordination with the trains at Halesworth and our aspiration is to see it restored to an hourly frequency with some through working to Norwich. Meanwhile we updated and reprinted our leaflet “Discover the Blyth Valley” and printed 4000 copies to encourage local people and visitors to use the service.

It is disappointing that Greater Anglia no longer include this link in their new timetable leaflet. They do however mention the bus to Aldeburgh and we have just produced a brand new leaflet “Saxmundham to the Coast” to promote the train and bus integration between Saxmundham, Leiston and Aldeburgh.

We are impatient that the promised work to rebuild Saxmundham station has not yet started. In November we took part in a site meeting which was, itself, very encouraging.

During March ESTA protested against Greater Anglia’s proposal to withdraw the sale of advance purchase tickets from staffed stations and we are pleased that this policy has now been reversed. We also corresponded with Network Rail about the connection policy at Ipswich.

In October ESTA members reported on some 150 local journeys made by train or bus and we produced a hard-hitting summary. Our association also issued comments on transport aspects of the

Sizewell C consultation and the Williams Review of rail franchising – which have been posted for all to see on our website.

Finally, we also believe in having some social events for members and in 2018 these comprised a relaxing cruise down the Orwell, an evening buffet to thank our long-serving former Secretary Rod Lock (now our President) and an enjoyable Christmas Lunch.

We shall continue all these aspects of our work during 2019-20, including the constructive relationship we have had with the two Community Rail Partnerships covering the Ipswich – Lowestoft and Lowestoft – Norwich lines respectively.

Thank you to all officers and committee members for their input and to all members for their support.

Trevor Garrod

Chairman