

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVEL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR AGM ON MAY 20TH 2023

This was our first complete post-pandemic year and we kicked off with a full house at the AGM in Beccles and launched a record number of five new or updated “Discover” leaflets encouraging local people and visitors to explore the area by train and bus.

This included the Katch demand responsive service to Framlingham and Snape, on which we organised two group trips. We were disappointed that Suffolk County Council decided not to continue funding it after December, but have welcomed the initiative of East Suffolk Council in arranging a replacement from April this year.

We appreciated having a meeting with relevant County Councillors and their officers, participating in their “Public Transport Conversation” in Kesgrave and then having a representative on their Passenger Interest Group. It has been frustrating dealing with local bus issues, however, and not knowing what if anything the future holds for certain services.

In October we invited members to take part in our first survey of local train and bus journeys since 2019 and at the end of the year we published the results. Lack of paper timetables remains an issue on both modes, but at least we were grateful that the two Community Rail Partnerships covering our area responded by publishing their own. It is also possible to find out times via the ESTA website, as well as information on what the association is doing.

We held very well attended public meetings at Saxmundham and Halesworth, a summer buffet at Campsea Ashe and a stand at the East Anglia Transport Museum; while our ESTA NEWS continued to appear every quarter and members can receive it electronically or by post. 2022 ended with a well-supported Christmas Lunch at Melton.

In the knowledge that December would see the 10th anniversary of Beccles loop, we decided that the best way to mark this was to look ahead to the improvements we should like to see on our local train services over the next ten years. We set up a working group of members to consider this and the result was a 38-page discussion paper, launched at Lowestoft station on 6th December, entitled A Line for all Purposes. This has been followed up by further initiatives by the working group – prioritising our suggestions and preparing for a survey at Westerfield.

A meeting has been held with Peter Aldous MP and regular meetings have also resumed with Alan Neville, Customer & Community Engagement Manager of Greater Anglia. It is two years since we met local bus operators, however, and we must seek to resume that. Following local council elections on May 4th, there have been some changes and we must seek dialogue with new councillors as well as with those whom we already know.

Thanks are due to all members – on and outside the committee – who have contributed to our work this year. I hope we can go forward with a good blend of experience and new ideas.

Trevor Garrod

Chairman