

ESTA



News

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Spring 2018

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COME TO WOODBRIDGE ON SATURDAY MAY 12TH!

This is the date of ESTA's 2018 Annual General Meeting. We have managed to avoid a clash with the Cup Final and the Royal Wedding. The meeting will start at 14:00 (2.00 pm) and the venue will be a new one for us - Quay Street Church, just 3 minutes' walk up Quay Street from the railway station and not far from the Turban Centre Bus Station.

The AGM is when we take stock of the past year's actions and developments and plan for the future. Non-members are also welcome to attend but of course cannot vote.

Our agenda will be:

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of 2017 AGM and Matters Arising.
3. Annual Report for 2017/18
4. Financial and Membership Report.
5. Report of Hon. Auditor
6. Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee. (Other officers, such as Press Officer, Archivist and Webmaster, are usually appointed by the Committee from among its members)
7. Appointment of Hon. Auditor
8. Appointment of President
9. Notices of Motions (if any)
10. Future Activities.

Nominations for all the above posts should be made in writing, with proposer's and seconder's signatures and sent to the Secretary by May 1st.

ROD LOCK will be standing down as Secretary after 21 years during which his knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment have been invaluable to our association. He is willing to accept nomination as President - a post which has been vacant since 2015. Rod will be guest of honour at our event on June 1st (see diary).

Our guest speaker will be Mr Brendan Fox, who was for many years Editor of the Thomas Cook European Rail Timetable. He is coming from his home in Peterborough to our meeting and will talk about rail travel in the rest of Europe and about the challenges of producing an international timetable. It is some ten years since international travel was the theme of an ESTA meeting and we very much look forward to hearing Mr Fox. After all, East Suffolk is not that far from the Continent.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR JOURNEY REPORTS

We received 138 responses from members to our October survey on local train and bus journeys. Our Secretary was kept busy analysing all the completed questionnaires (after he had finished analysing our Halesworth station foot crossing survey also done in the autumn), and an 11-page report was issued and distributed in January. A single sheet summary has also been posted on our station boards.

Useful feedback has been received, particularly on bus stops, where we look forward to Suffolk County Council making improvements in the near future.

Key findings were:

38% of buses arrived on time and 87% within 5 minutes.

58% of trains arrived on time or early and 40% were at least a minute late. One train was cancelled.

Nearly all respondents commented that the trains were clean and comfortable while 90% found the bus drivers helpful and courteous.

17% reported that fares were not collected or tickets checked on train journeys - a higher figure than last year - but this included some days when conductor-guards were on strike.

Almost half of journeys made on the East Suffolk Line were to destinations beyond Ipswich and over half of these were for business. On the other hand, only 30% of bus journeys were for business purposes, with 59% for leisure or shopping.

41% of bus stops used lacked one or more of four basic amenities - a sign, timetable, seat or shelter.

We have not yet fixed a month or questionnaire for our next survey. At this stage, members' suggestions about the sort of questions we should ask will be welcome. There are some - such as on punctuality - which we always ask, and which help us to compare the situation from year to year. There may be others - such as on ticketing - which can change over time. Please contact our Chairman with your suggestions.

ESTA DIARY

We have put together what we hope will be an interesting, enjoyable and productive programme for the coming months.

FRIDAY JUNE 1ST This will be the 159th birthday of the East Suffolk Line and we shall mark it with a celebration buffet at the Lady of the Lake, Bridge Road, Oulton Broad, between 18:00 and 20:30. There will be a charge of £8 for the de luxe buffet. Drinks will be extra. Please send your payment to Geoffrey Lilley with the enclosed form. His address is 43 The Glebes, Snape, Saxmundham, IP17 1QF. A booking form is enclosed.

SUNDAY JUNE 17TH Woodbridge Regatta. The ESTA stall and gazebo at this popular event is an excellent way to engage with people and promote public transport. Already three members have offered to help. If you can help, please contact Trevor Garrod.

SATURDAY JULY 7TH. - ESTA cruise down the River Orwell From Ipswich to Harwich, departing at 14:00. The trip takes three and a half hours, from the Wet Dock, within walking distance of the Old Cattle Market bus station and the railway station. Please use the enclosed form to book.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 8TH ESTA rail trip to Sheringham, by scheduled trains, for which we recommend that you purchase an Anglia Plus day ranger ticket. We shall endeavour to make a group booking on the North Norfolk Railway.

SEPTEMBER 22ND - 23RD ESTA stall at the East Anglia Transport Museum's annual Trolleybus Event.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 6TH ESTA Autumn Meeting in Halesworth. It is hoped to have a bus speaker and a train speaker.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 15TH ESTA Christmas Lunch at the Lady of the Lake, Oulton Broad.

Also of interest to ESTA members: May 8th - Felixstowe Travelwatch Annual General Meeting, at 19:30 in the Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Road (www.ftw.onesuffolk.net).

June 16th - Railfuture East Anglia meeting, 14:00 in St Mary's-at-Stoke Church Hall, Ipswich. (www.railfuture.org.uk)

REPORT OF ESTA'S SPRING MEETING

Despite having to cope with replacement buses because of engineering work, 40 people attended our Spring public meeting in St Marks Church Centre, next to Oulton Broad South station.

We were pleased to welcome as guest speaker Councillor Jane Storey, Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council, who also holds the transport portfolio.

Ms Storey began by stating that the County Council had had a cut in its support from central Government which meant "We have less money and have to make more efficient use of what we have."

As an example she cited the Connecting Communities bus services where, following reorganisation in 2016, the contractors could now plan on a more long-term basis and were providing "more journeys with less grant." The County Council also impressed on central Government the role of volunteer and charity work in community bus operations. She also explained that, with community and demand responsive services the Department for Transport set out very strict rules about what could and could not be done.

Suffolk County Council could not prevent commercial operators from cutting services, but was informed in advance about these. Our speaker said that it was important for people not to lose the habit of going by public transport. In some cases they could be encouraged to use demand-responsive transport.

On rail, the County Council encouraged Greater Anglia to provide at least basic facilities at all stations and gave financial support to the Community Rail Partnership. They had responded to all relevant consultations, including on the improvement of Ely North Junction, which would benefit the network in Suffolk, and would soon be responding to a timetable consultation as well..

Councillor Storey dealt with a wide range of questions, such as hold-ups to buses because of the unsynchronised traffic lights in central Lowestoft; the provision of digital and paper timetables and other information; whether bus stops were too far apart in some areas and what could be done to improve existing stops and bus stations. She promised to take back a number of issues to County Council officers for them to investigate further.

In the second half of the meeting, Martin Halliday Partnership Officer, gave an update on the work of the Community Rail Partnership, including the news that 10,000 copies of the 2018 edition of the popular "East Suffolk Line Walks" were being printed and should be available by the end of April. He also referred to the fire at Saxmundham station a few days earlier and said that, following a survey, a decision would have to be taken as to whether the rest could be made safe or would have to be demolished.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STATIONS

WOODBIDGE - One of our members drew attention to the dirty state of the seat under the canopy on the northbound platform. It was ultimately cleaned.

MELTON - The forecourt received a welcome coat of tarmac in mid January, but unfortunately it has not covered all the area. The workmen were not instructed to do the 20 metres at the northern end including the walkway to the northern end of the platform. Passengers using this entrance had to negotiate deep puddles. Network Rail were informed.

SAXMUNDHAM - A fire destroyed part of the station building on February 12th and at present its future is uncertain. Passengers can still use the platform and stand in front of the fence erected to protect the remains of the building. The canopy is still there, but all of the upper floor has had to be demolished.

BECCLES - The overgrown area at the Ipswich end of the southbound platform has been cut down and extra fencing provided. There are reports that a replacement shelter will be erected by the end of March on the other platform; and that a pedestrian crossing will at last be provided at the busy crossroads on the approach to the station.

LOWESTOFT - It is reported that work will start "within weeks" on renovating the former Parcels Office, to create a large room for meetings, exhibitions and other events. The station is also about to be repainted and the lighting modernised.

CONSULTATION SOON ON DECEMBER 2019 RAIL TIMETABLE

There will be a 3-month consultation period this year on the proposed timetable from December 2019, when the new trains should be in service. The consultation is due to start some time between April and June. This was promised at the Greater Anglia Rail Passengers' Forum in London on January 31st, attended by two ESTA representatives. We shall announce on the ESTA website when the consultation starts.

Meanwhile, our committee member Peter Cogar has received a reply from Mr Michael Kean, Deputy Managing Director of Greater Anglia concerning the path reserved for a possible Sizewell freight train. Mr Kean states that, if the path for the Sizewell train is indeed no longer required, " we will be seeking to take advantage of the change and run a consistent train pattern all day. The opportunity to make alterations, if practical, is most likely to arise with the new timetable we plan to put in place following the introduction of our new trains in 2019/20."

BUS SERVICES

ESTA's Chairman was interviewed on BBC Radio Suffolk on February 16th. He pointed out that inter-urban routes (such as Ipswich - Saxmundham - Aldeburgh or Southwold - Norwich - now have attractive services, but more rural areas need improvement, as do evening and Sunday services.

Mr Garrod also had a letter in the Lowestoft Journal on February 9th, putting the case for through buses along the coast from Southwold to Gt Yarmouth, at least in readiness for the holiday season.

High Suffolk Community Bus - Two ESTA members have met Mr Gerry Garwood, Chairman of High Suffolk Community Transport, which serves seven villages to the north west of Framlingham, centred on Monk Soham. HSCT was established in 1982 as a mutual society. It operates scheduled services into Framlingham and to places such as Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Norwich aimed mainly at shoppers, and includes three trips a year in the summer to Lowestoft. The Parish Councils contributed to the cost of the services and some money also came from local Townsland Trusts. 10% of passengers did not hold concessionary passes. HSCT does not plan to extend its area and any changes to its routes have to be agreed by the Traffic Commissioners, at a small cost. The society is willing to advise other people wanting to set up a Community Bus - for which the initiative should ideally come from Parish Councils.

"SEAMLESS PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN EAST ANGLIA"

Halesworth is featured in the front cover of this new 13-page report by the East Anglia Branch of Railfuture. It is highlighted as a good example of bus/train integration. The recent provision of a bus timetable outside the station at Wickham Market is also cited as a step in the right direction. On the other hand, the Stansted Airport coach service is not allowed to use the station forecourt at Ipswich - which itself is user-friendly.

Among the recommendations of the report are real-time information screens for both trains and local buses at key stations such as Ipswich or Lowestoft and improved awareness of PlusBus.

Indeed, "PlusBus" needs to be better promoted. Did you know, for example, that you can buy a train ticket from Woodbridge to Bury St Edmunds Buses or to Cambridge Buses? It includes your urban bus fare from the station to anywhere in the town or city?

The report can be viewed on www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Seamless+Public+Transport or ordered direct from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ (trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk)

Meanwhile, ESTA will again be promoting seamless public transport as we publish the 2018 edition of the leaflet "Discover the Blyth Valley" in April. The cover is being redesigned to show a train and a bus and we shall again use it to promote the service (X)88 bus along the valley as well as the way in which, six days a week, you can interchange between train and bus at Halesworth. You can order the new leaflet from Trevor Garrod.

BUS STATIONS

ESTA has been provided with its own display boards at Woodbridge Turban Centre, Beccles Old Market and Lowestoft Bus Station. Thank you to Suffolk County Council and also for a generous gift from the now-disbanded National Council on Inland Transport. The boards will complement the ones we have at each of the railway stations, informing people about services and about ESTA's work. Lowestoft bus station also now has an attractive user-friendly map of bus routes in the town, thanks to the County Council.

MAIN LINE MATTERS by Simon Barrow

ESTA's recent survey indicated nearly 50% of members' journeys on the East Suffolk Line were to places beyond Ipswich - and so Simon's reports are very relevant. Here is his latest one:

ANOTHER PERSONAL TRAGEDY ON THE MAINLINE

Oh dear, here we go again. In order to attend an event in West London starting at 19:00 on Monday 22nd January, I caught the 16:13 train from Melton connecting with the 16:43 from Ipswich to arrive in Liverpool Street at 17:55.

Soon after Ipswich we knew it was not going to be like this. "An incident at Chelmsford" was how it started, then "Somebody under a train at Chelmsford" No certainty or any further news until we were told that our service would terminate at Colchester. No news re: any services on to London.

We all got out at Colchester. We were told that the train would shortly be returning to Norwich. Some people gave up and got back on, including a man in a dinner jacket with a pink bow tie. He told us all that he's been here before, we were in for a wait and he'd be so late it wasn't worth proceeding.

A Greater Anglia man was doing his best on a crowded platform. I salute him and his colleagues struggling on the front line between customers, the train operator and Network Rail. Delays are not their fault and they often do not know any more than the rest of us. However, when I had a quiet word on this particular incident he volunteered an unusual aspect of the case. It was the news that the person hit by the train was still alive. It was this that, understandably, was delaying the return to normal service given the extra care required.

I started thinking that the man in the pink bow tie, now well on his way home, had taken the right decision. But, ten minutes later, the crowd on Platform 4 began to move and started rushing through the subway to Platform 3. There was a train and it was going to Liverpool Street! We left at 18:00 and got in at 18:45, thanks to the Underground I was there only 25 minutes late and the main speaker was not yet on.

So, at the end of the day, from a traveller's point of view, it was not as great a delay as we feared. But what about the casualty? What terrible burden or lack of hope and care caused him or her to do this? Did he or she survive and if so in what shape? What about the people in the emergency services who have to face such a ghastly incident and all the friends and family of the deceased or injured person?

In 2016 I understand there were 32 suicides on the London /Norwich main line down from 47 in 2015, which hopefully reflects the railway's work done with those responsible for mental health. It would be good to know what that work consisted of. When will we know the figure for 2017? How can travellers help? Of all the ways to end one's life, what is it about a railway that attracts the suicidal and what do we know about where they were and what they are doing in those last desperate hours? For the rest of us, it's the tragedy itself, not the delay, that prompts thought, questions, action and prayer.

NOTE: We welcome members' comments on these matters and how the railways handle them. Contact ESTA's Chairman.

STATION WALKS

On the Saturday after Christmas, 35 people joined the walk organised by David Bayes and Maureen Colledge from Woodbridge and Melton to Wickham Market station. Most of the route was above the flood plain, but in the dip near Ash Abbey we encountered a flooded road and most of us had to clamber along the wooden fence - see the result at the end of the News. The refreshments at Station House were very welcome at the end!

On Saturday February 10th, eleven of us took part on an 8-mile walk from Halesworth station in the hill country north west of the town, organised by Mary Moore - ending with welcome refreshments at The Cut, close to the station.

Shorter walks are on offer from and between stations on the Lowestoft - Norwich line, including a 3-mile stroll from Buckenham to Brundall on Sunday April 8th. Details are on the Wherry Lines website (www.wherrylines.com) or contact Trevor Garrod for a leaflet.

OVER THE BORDER

Several bus routes cross the Suffolk/Norfolk border and before Christmas Norfolk County Council was threatening to cut funding for those services which it sponsors. ESTA was one of many organisations (and individuals) protesting to the County Council and we are pleased to report that in January the proposals were withdrawn.

Our sister organisation the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association (www.entua.org) also protested. You can find out more about their activities via their website. ENTUA and ESTA, plus Railfuture East Anglia, have also submitted comments on the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan, which covers the wider journey-to-work area of the city, as far out as Lowestoft, Beccles and Bungay. In our comments we stressed the importance of the Norwich - Lowestoft rail service and the case for doubling its frequency - especially as it serves Brundall, one of the settlements earmarked for expansion. Growth is also proposed for the village (or should it be town?) of Loddon, on the A146 between Beccles and Norwich. Two bus operators currently run along this major road between city and coast and so some growth at Loddon makes sense - but at present about half the buses avoid it by using the bypass.

DID YOU KNOW..

* The Anglia Plus day ranger has increased slightly in price but at £19 still provides good value for money. It is under-publicised, but Mike Farahar has produced up to date posters about it for the ESTA station boards.

* The East Anglia Transport Museum at Carlton Colville has at least three buses an hour (X22 and 146) running past it - not quite so many on Sundays - and on March 29th will open for its new season. Are you one of the many people who has been "always meaning to visit but never quite got around to it?" Log on to www.eatransportmuseum.co.uk and find out more.

* ESTA's anniversary book is still available from our Chairman at a reduced price of £3 including postage. It is the "must have" guide to what has happened since our foundation in 1965

* Other local museums easily accessible by public transport will also soon be reopening - Ipswich Transport Museum on March 18th (www.ipswichtransportmuseum.co.uk); Long Shop Museum, Leiston on March 20th (www.longshopmuseum.co.uk); Saxmundham Museum and Halesworth & District Museum are due to reopen in April.

STATION AUDIT

Peter Pennington and his team of Wendy Robinson, John Thompson, Peter Cannon and Chris Wheeler have been working on this project and plan to produce their report later this spring. This will be five years since ESTA last did such an exercise and it will be interesting to note the progress in some areas but lack of progress in others.

AND SO TO BED...This edition is being put to bed on February 27th, when there are no trains on the East Suffolk Line or on other secondary routes in East Anglia. Any reasonable person understands that train services can be affected by exceptionally bad weather, but was it an over-reaction by Greater Anglia to cancel all local services? ESTA's Chairman was interviewed about this on BBC Radio Suffolk's breakfast programme.

Breaking news - Continued snow and wind meant that there were no local trains for the rest of the week.

NEXT ESTA NEWS - the final date for material for our summer issue will be June 4th.



These and other walkers were so keen to reach the Station House cafe at Campsea Ash that they braved floodwaters...

We are fortunate to have friendly station cafes at both Wickham Market (Campsea Ash) and Beccles stations, as well as the long-established cafe/restaurant at Woodbridge station. A "lease agreed" sign has now appeared in the window of the former shop at Lowestoft station. Will this be the next cafe?

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

BOOKING FORMS

To Mr Geoffrey Lilley, 43 The Glebes, Snape, Saxmundham, IP17 1QF

I wish to book for person(s) to attend the celebratory buffet at the Lady of the Lake, Oulton Broad on June 1st. (Charge £8 each)

I enclose a cheque for £ (payable to ESTA)

Name:

Address:

To Mr Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ

I wish to book for person(s) for the Orwell cruise from Ipswich to Harwich on Saturday July 7th.

I enclose a cheque for £ payable to ESTA.
(Fare is £26 per person or £23 for concessions)

Name:

Address:

E-mail :

Only provide your email address if you give permission to ESTA to communicate with you via this method.