

Members' Bulletin



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www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk

COME TO OUR AUTUMN MEETING:

It will be on Saturday October 6th in the Church Hall, Melton, starting at 2pm. The church is in the centre of the village, near the bus stop and only a few minutes walk from the station. After reports and discussion of campaigns and public transport issues, we shall welcome as guest speaker Mr. Clive Morris, Rural Services Manager of the train operator "One".

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RAIL USERS:

This important event is being held on Saturday November 3rd at the Maltings, Ely and is an ideal opportunity to meet rail users from other parts of: the country and hear interesting speakers. It costs £12.50 (£10 for Railfuture members) plus £9.50 for an optional buffet lunch. Send bookings to Peter Wakefield, 7 Hollymount, Cambridge, CB1 1QD. , cheques payable to Railfuture. For more information visit the website www.railfuture.org.uk

ESTA CHRISTMAS DINNER:

This is due to be held on Friday December 7th at the Dog & Duck, across the road from Wickham Market station, in Campsea Ash, in the evening. Details should be available by late October. Please send a prepaid envelope to Rod Lock, or visit the [ESTA website](http://www.eastasuffolktravel.org.uk), for full details.

MEETINGS IN 2008:

We hope to hold the spring meeting in late February in Saxmundham, with Peter Iddon, Managing Director of First Eastern Counties as guest speaker.

The Annual General Meeting will take place in May, at Beccles or Oulton Broad and we have invited Bob Blizzard MP to address us.

The autumn meeting will then probably be in Woodbridge.

ESTA PUBLICITY:

Two new A4 posters have been printed: "ESTA needs YOU" and "R U going to join us?" These have already been sent to 14 local secondary schools and colleges and displayed on stations.

If you can use one or more, please contact our Publicity Officer. Meanwhile our Committee Member Margaret Swanenburg has obtained publicity for ESTA in her parish newsletter. Other members may like to do the same. Thank you also to members who manned the ESTA stall at the East Anglian Transport Museum on September 8/9th.

THE WOODBRIDGE OPEN TOP BUS:

which ESTA helped to sponsor, carried 627 passengers during its 16 days of operation. It brought many visitors from Ipswich into Woodbridge and the National Trust report that it brought a considerable number of extra visitors to Sutton Hoo. Thought is now being given to a similar service in summer 2008.

MOVING STATIONS

BECCLES: ESTA was asked at short notice to comment on a proposal to transfer the existing forecourt into ownership of a developer who is building a care home and residential buildings on either side of it. Most of the forecourt would not be redeveloped but would be hard surfaced and planted with trees. The existing pedestrian access to the platform would be retained.

In return, it is proposed to provide land approximately 100m to the north for station car parking (15 vehicles), well lit and secure, plus space for a cycle shed and disabled parking.

Our Secretary commented as follows:

1. Presumably trains will stop adjacent to the relocated passenger facilities and so passengers who walk from the town would have a slightly, but not significantly, longer walk.
2. The new site does not appear to be so suitable for bus services to call compared to the present access.

Without knowing all the details, it is possible to gain the impression that the main purpose of the swap is to enable Network Rail to make some money, rather than to benefit passengers.

3. Under the Beccles Loop scheme, access to the island platform for passengers arriving by car would be less convenient, unless it is proposed to provide another foot crossing adjacent to the new facilities.

4. There must be a bargaining advantage for Network Rail, so it should be possible to obtain better public facilities than we have now, including CCTV surveillance to protect an improved asset.

LOWESTOFT: Our Secretary attended a meeting with the Chief Executive of 1st East, Mr. Philip Watkins, together with representatives of Passenger Focus and the two Community Rail Partnerships. At the meeting, on August 21st, it soon became clear that a developer for the site was unlikely to be appointed for at least five years and so the proposed passenger survey was less urgent than originally envisaged. Mr Watkins said (and promised to confirm in writing) that a developer, when appointed, would carry out such a survey.

Mr. Watkins also said that it was “not definite that the station would have to be relocated” in the “grand plan” and he cited a cost of £9 million for relocation, which might make redevelopment of the station site unviable. In stating that he was “not averse to the station staying where it is”, Mr Watkins also acknowledged that the number of responses on this issue was the highest by far on any issue in last winter’s consultation paper.

WHAT IS SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL’S POSITION on this issue? Our Secretary has posed this question in letters to the local press, especially as it is not mentioned in the Suffolk Rail Strategy.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON OVERCROWDING:

One of our members wrote to “One” complaining about overcrowding on Sunday afternoon trains on the East Suffolk Line. A reply from the Customer Services Department said they could do little about this and referred to the need to accommodate freight trains (sic!). Could there not be extra stock available to attach to a train? It would be useful to hear other members’ views and experiences. Please write to our Secretary.

WHAT IS HS1?:

It stands for High Speed 1, the newly completed high-speed railway from London St Pancras International to the Channel Tunnel.

From November 14th, Eurostar trains from London to Lillie, Paris and Brussels will use this route, passing under our own main line to London at Stratford. The train journey to the Continent will be 20 minutes shorter.

However, Eurostar has been singing the praises of Ebbsfleet International, a park-and-ride station in North West Kent at which about half their trains will call, and suggesting that travellers from our region could drive there.

ESTA's Chairman, wearing another hat, has had letters published in the local press pointing out that it makes more sense for passengers to take the train to Liverpool Street, go four stops along the Circle Line to St Pancras and catch the Eurostar from there. Indeed, when Stratford International opens (in 2009?), it will be even easier.

Mr Garrod has also urged "One" to provide through tickets and promotions from major East Anglian stations to Paris, Lille and Brussels, as will be done by four other Train Operating Companies from November 14th.

Eurostar tickets, and tickets to other Continental destinations, can be bought from Travel Cannon Ltd on Saxmundham station Contact Peter and Mary on 01728 604600 Monday - Friday and on Saturday morning. They also sell rail tickets to all British destinations and all other travel agency services.

"THE GROUP STANDING UP FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT":

That was the headline on a 2-page article about ESTA in the East Anglian Daily Times on August 14th. Writer Steven Russell interviewed Trevor Garrod and David Adams and referred to material provided by ESTA and displayed on our website, in a detailed account of our work and concerns.

As a result we received letters from several readers, some of whom voiced their own concerns as follows:

1. Unreliability of the 64 bus service between Ipswich and Aldeburgh and since the end of May lack of Sunday buses at Benhall.
2. Lowestoft trains are not displayed on the indicator at Liverpool Street until very shortly before departure - as little as six minutes beforehand in some cases. Lack of seats on the concourse and no waiting room.
3. Lack of information at Liverpool Street about where the bus stops are situated.
4. Lack of publicity for the bus link which still operates from Colchester station to Stansted Airport. It is possible to buy a ticket from East Suffolk Line stations to Stansted Airport via London; but much cheaper to buy a ticket to Colchester and use the bus which passes the station.

HAVE YOU VISITED THE ESTA WEBSITE RECENTLY?

Did you know it also has links to train and bus operators' websites? Log on to www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk

BLYTHWEB LTD of Wenhaston maintains the ESTA website and offers IT and printing services, computer building, upgrading and repairing as well as website design and hosting, plus full internet services. Phone Tim and Eileen Heaps on 01502 478712 or visit their website on www.blythweb.net or e-mail them at tim@blythweb.net or eileen@blythweb.net

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S RAIL STRATEGY:

ESTA was given the opportunity to comment on this document during the summer and, following consultation with committee members, our Secretary responded making seven points:

1. ESTA's contribution to the local transport scene is ignored in the document.
2. The freight strategy as published in the Freight Route Utilisation Strategy has been misinterpreted. It is intended to utilise the remaining spare capacity between Ipswich and Stratford but also to absorb growth on an enhanced cross-country route via Ely, Peterborough and Nuneaton.
3. The layout at Bletchley does not allow an East/West service to run to Milton Keynes.
4. The Strategy implies that an option other than the Beccles Loop could be selected to provide additional capacity on the East Suffolk Line. So are we back to the beginning?
5. Reintroduction of a passenger service to Leiston "sounds like a project we should support". However, the issues needing to be addressed are the cost of an additional diesel unit plus crews; and how such a service could be fitted into an hourly service on the East Suffolk.
6. We do not consider that resignalling Lowestoft - Norwich is justified because of the condition of the equipment or for capacity reasons.
Resignalling to reduce delays to road traffic at Oulton Broad North station should not come from scarce rail investment funds.
7. The Strategy wrongly assumes that the mud oil traffic from Aberdeen is still dealt with at Lowestoft.

HOW MANY PASSENGERS?:

The East Suffolk Community Rail Partnership commissioned a census on all trains the East Suffolk Line on six days in March and one day in April this year. The results below indicate the total numbers using each station per day, on average, whether joining or alighting from a train:

1. Ipswich	677	7. Melton	115
2. Lowestoft	366	8. Darsham	107
3. Woodbridge	319	9. Wickham Market	95
4. Saxmundham	280	10. Oulton Broad South	87
5. Beccles	224	11. Westerfield	35
6. Halesworth	188	12. Brampton	6

Figures were also produced to show the highest number of passengers on board a train at some point during the journey on the East Suffolk Line.

The most popular trains in this respect were the 06.44 from Lowestoft (134 passengers), 15.38 from Liverpool St. (111 passengers); while the least popular were the 20.58 from Lowestoft (8 passengers) and 18.43 from Lowestoft (8 passengers). The least popular down train was the 18.55 from Ipswich (36 passengers).

To summarise, the survey showed that 2500 passengers use the line on an average day, with 490 of them (18%) travelling to and from London and intermediate stations south of Ipswich.

WHITE PAPER:"DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE RAILWAY":

This Government paper was published in July and our Secretary has studied it in detail. He lists key points as follows:

1. There will be no line closures in the period 2009 - 2014.
2. Neither will there be any reopening of lines, though London Crossrail is supported.
3. No electrification schemes are proposed for the next 5 years.
4. The Government's main concern is to increase on-train and line capacity. Wherever possible capacity is to be maximised by increasing frequencies.
5. The fortunes of rural lines have improved in recent years. The Government values Community Rail Partnerships, but not all demand growth can be attributed to them. Operating and infrastructure costs on more lightly used lines should be re-assessed and a programme is being developed to replace the Sprinter and Pacer diesel units (trains like the class 158s operating some services on our local lines are Sprinters).
6. A table showing the employment status of passengers on 4 sample routes includes Norwich - Yarmouth/Lowestoft. Here 54% of passengers were in full-time work; 13% in part-time work; 15% were unemployed, 9% were students and 8% were retired.
7. Additional capacity will also be achieved by building more carriages (now 1300), platform lengthening to accommodate longer trains, power supply upgrades and the three much-publicised schemes at Reading, Birmingham New Street and Thameslink.
8. Network Rail's proposed changed approach to engineering possessions, a return to the seven-day-a-week railway, is supported.
9. There is to be a simplified fares structure plus a "Price Promise" - if passengers are pointed to one deal when a better one is available, the difference will be refunded. (But how do you prove this?)
10. Fares information is to be available via National Rail Enquiries (Tel: 08457 48 49 50)
11. Station Travel Plans, giving information on how best to get to a station, are to be tried out as pilot schemes.
12. Fares will be allowed to increase to pay for improvements. The current taxpayer/passenger funding split of the total cost of running the network is to be replaced by a 25/75 funding split.

LOCAL BUS TIMETABLES:

Rob Coxon, Suffolk County Council's Business Manager, has told us that the production of these has strained the Council's resources, but the end result will be "a more accurate and attractive timetable leaflet."

However, this means that parts of the county will not receive a leaflet covering their area until six months after bus services were altered. For example, the leaflet for the Halesworth and Southwold area is scheduled to be available in October.

Were it not for our member Brenda Roberts, the situation in Halesworth would be even more dire, as she frequently obtains photocopies of timetables from the operator in response to passengers' enquiries.

ROADSIDE DISPLAYS OF TIMETABLES:

We have given Mr. Coxon several examples of obsolete timetables still being displayed. Please let our Secretary know of any locations near you where out-of-date timetables are on display. He will forward the details to Mr. Coxon.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP SO FAR?:

Some low-floor buses have started appearing in the Lowestoft area. This may be a result of the Quality Bus Partnership.

A major tourist attraction near Lowestoft had 80,000 publicity leaflets printed for its 2007 season, including details of bus services passing it, or near to it.

At the end of May, a third of the way through the season, this information became out of date because of the service changes and cuts.

A leading District Councillor from an opposition party wrote to the Lowestoft Journal, shortly after the changes, to say he was not told what was going to happen.

ESTA's Press Officer, Helen Armstrong issued news releases on 3.8.07 and 21.8.07, the first of which was given reasonable coverage in the local press; while Rod Lock was interviewed by The Beach Radio and Trevor Garrod had letters published on 20.7.07 and 26.7.07.

ESTA has received a couple of replies from First Eastern Counties' Commercial & Operations Director Philip Seago. The main points that he makes are the changes were necessary "for the commercial wellbeing of the company" and "to exploit the changes in the road infrastructure in the town." He also stated that an audit is being carried out with Suffolk County Council to remove redundant stops. Mr Seago did however add that such stops could be restored in the future.

Mr Seago also wrote that a Quality Bus Partnership in Bury St Edmunds had resulted in a 35% increase in passengers. If such growth levels were replicated in Lowestoft, it would prompt further investment by First and its partners (SCC and WDC). Meanwhile, our Secretary has had further correspondence with Mr Seago and with SCC's Senior Infrastructure Officer, Mr Simon Barnett.

This correspondence has concerned lack of bus shelters, particularly in Gordon Road. Mr Barnett states "the absence of shelter is not an emergency". He states that there is a scheme to renovate the bus station next year and that shelters in Gordon Road could be part of that. The County Council is "not a controlling force" but is in discussion with First, the Britten Centre managers and landowners and wants "the shelters in Gordon Road to match those within the rest of the bus station".

ESTA has also had a reply from Bob Blizzard MP who had offered to contact Mr Peter Iddon, Managing Director of First, about bus issues in and around Lowestoft.

ARE YOU IN THE ESTA 100 CLUB?:

You can join this increasingly popular quarterly draw by sending £12 (payable to ESTA) to our Treasurer.

GRYFF COMPUTING of Saxmundham are responsible for designing this bulletin and sending it electronically to a considerable number of members and outside bodies. They deal with Mac and PC for repairs and upgrades, also full internet and website services. Contact David Adams on 01728 603311 or visit the website www.gryff.biz.

Please send material for our January bulletin by December 10th to Trevor Garrod. You can e-mail it to trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk