

## East Anglia

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### Station threat lifted

The threat to relocate Lowestoft station to make way for new development appears to be lifted, at least in the short term. First East, the company looking at development plans, has told the branch nothing is expected to happen until 2016 and various options for the area are being considered. The branch and rail user group ESTA, are opposed to moving the station further away from the town centre. The ability to handle special trains and freight may also be lost. Surprisingly, Suffolk County Council has no policy on the issue, although officers are now studying the impact of a station move.

### Unacceptable disruption

The branch has written to Network Rail expressing concern over the disruption caused by engineering work. During some weekends, all the main lines from London to the region were affected making train travel very difficult.

### Station counts

The branch is planning to count passengers at stations between Cambridge and Royston. Official figures may be underestimated and there are many local journeys that are not being recorded at these unstaffed stations. Strong demand would help the case for additional services, especially in the peak periods to Cambridge.

### Relief in sight for road and rail

The branch welcomed the announcement by Rail Minister Tom Harris of an extra £132million for upgrading railway freight infrastructure. £80million will go to the upgrade of the Peterborough-Nuneaton railway's infrastructure, including loading gauge clearance of tunnels and over-bridges, signalling and new tracks. This work will enable more frequent, longer, intermodal trains to carry the ever more popular 9'6" high containers. This size of container is currently banned from the route owing to low tunnels and over-bridges. The work, when linked to that planned between Felixstowe and Peterborough through Stowmarket, Bury St Edmunds, Soham, Ely and March, will enable the rail freight companies to operate many more freight trains from East Anglian ports to the West Midlands, the North West, South and West Yorkshire, the North East and Scotland. These trains will cut the need for many lorry movements along the entire length of the heavily congested A14 dual carriageway trunk road and, of course, reduce carbon emissions considerably. Many of the current daily 26 or so intermodal trains to and from Felixstowe that already carry about 30% of the port's throughput, be diverted away from the heavily congested Great Eastern main line through Colchester, enabling the passenger train service to operate more flexibly and reliably, benefiting rail users throughout eastern East Anglia.

## Yorkshire

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### High speed rail

A high-speed rail link from London to the north of England, together with a fast cross-Pennine route, could boost the British economy by more than £10billion, said the Northern Way report which recommends a high-speed rail line from London via the east of England and East Midlands to Yorkshire. Spokesman Professor David Begg said: "These wider economic benefits come about through reducing travel times in city-to-city and business-to-business access."

# Passengers want

The campaign for South West to North West CrossCountry trains

By Gerard Duddridge  
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All through trains from the South West of England to Glasgow via Crewe, Preston and Carlisle have been diverted to Manchester, following the 9 December 2007 timetable change.

Glasgow passengers now face longer journey times and less convenience, as they are forced to change up to three times, on a route where there have been through trains for years.

Plymouth, for example, has lost five weekday through trains to and from Glasgow which took an average seven hours 53 minutes northbound and seven hours 47 minutes southbound.

Now, the average time of the five fastest connecting services is eight hours 26 minutes northbound and eight hours 38 minutes southbound.

Passengers connecting to the West Highland line now need to leave an hour earlier from the South West at 08.25 from Plymouth instead of 09.25.

Last connections from the South West to Carlisle and Glasgow are also an hour earlier.

When the West Coast main line timetable is finalised trains will run faster north of Birmingham.

However, overall South West to Glasgow via Preston journey times will be similar to those prior to the December 2007 timetable change, as passengers will simply spend the saved time waiting on the platform at Birmingham New Street station.

The former Glasgow trains diverted to Manchester will wait 21 minutes at Birmingham.

The disastrous new timetable has been imposed on the CrossCountry franchise by the Department for Transport.

Further changes are planned for the future. The draft 2009 timetable shows that services to the south west of Birmingham will be little changed, but all the hourly trains leaving Plymouth at xx.25 run to Derby and the East Coast main line.

They will not alternate between East and West Coast lines as was the case until December 2007. This simple change devastates not only

the South West to Glasgow service, but cuts all direct links to Crewe for Holyhead and Dublin, Preston for Blackpool and also Lake District bus and train connections at Lancaster, Oxenholme and Penrith.

The second Department for Transport change will switch the xx.59 Bristol to Birmingham service to run to Manchester instead of Newcastle (retimed to xx.00 and xx.58 in the draft 2009 timetable).

When the new CrossCountry franchise specifications were first announced, it seemed safe to assume that some of these trains would run via Crewe.

This was confirmed in the Department for Transport's response to Passenger Focus: "A small number of trains in this service group will serve Crewe and Wilmslow as an alternative to Stoke on Trent."

However, the 2009 draft shows only one southbound train from Manchester via Crewe and Stoke on Trent.

By removing Crewe from the CrossCountry network it will be necessary to change both at Birmingham and Crewe to reach the North Wales line from Plymouth and Exeter.

The first flow map plots the number of trains that ran from the South West to Birmingham, before the December 2007 timetable change and which of these that continued north of Birmingham.

The second flow map shows the situation planned for 2009.

It is clear that Manchester increases its services from the South West from two to 13.

However, overall train mileage of through trains from the South West crossing Birmingham drops by 18% (about 1,190 fewer miles based on northbound services in the draft 2009 timetable).

In a letter to Passenger Focus, Dr Stephen Clark said that the CrossCountry market had changed over the past five years and the priority was to "respond to that change in delivering what rail passengers want and what train operator companies can best deliver".

However, Railfuture Devon and Cornwall cannot believe that demand for through services from the South West to the North West of England and Glasgow completely ceased over the weekend of 8-9 December 2007. As said in our letter of 6 August 2006 to the

# more CrossCountry through trains



Density of all weekday northbound CrossCountry trains up to December 2007 and planned for 2009

Maps: Gerard Duddridge



Department for Transport's consultation, we remain of the view that there should at least be a minimal through service from the South West to Glasgow via Preston and Carlisle. Our proposal is that the Penzance to Crewe via Hereford train withdrawn in December 2005 should be reinstated.

This train should then be extended to Preston, Lancaster, Oxenholme, Penrith, Carlisle and Glasgow with an arrival time in Glasgow sometime after 17.00.

This would be a convenient arrival time for visitors and also allow time for to connect with the West Highland line.

The southbound service should be similarly timed to allow connections from the Oban and Fort William direction. The train should have a full buffet and meals ser-

vice available. Once a through service is restored, passengers are less likely to opt for alternative modes of transport, or even stop travelling to Scotland and the South West altogether.

With the through train in place the market can develop and in turn more through services could be run. We suggest a second pair of trains on the Hereford route and extension of some South West to

Manchester services on to Preston and Scotland.

To support our campaign please visit the web page at Railfuture-sw.co.uk/sw-nw.htm and then email your support for inclusion on the website to d&c@railfuture-sw.co.uk. The picture below shows Arriva's new livery for its CrossCountry high speed trains.

Image: CrossCountry

