

East Anglia

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Passenger survey

Railfuture and East Suffolk Travellers' Association members spent a week in mid-August and another in September surveying passengers on the Norwich-Lowestoft and Lowestoft-London trains. Among questions asked were where passengers started and finished their journeys and whether they would be inconvenienced if Lowestoft station were moved 450 metres inland. The vast majority of passengers were only too keen to complete our questionnaire and other helpful comments about local services and facilities were also received. The survey was partly funded by Railfuture's Rail Defence Fund. A report is being compiled and should be sent to decision-makers in November. Copies will also be available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.

Timetable changes

Railfuture East Anglia also responded to National Express East Anglia's proposed timetable changes which were outlined by Jonathan Denby of NXEA at our June meeting in Ipswich.

All members were sent a summary of the changes and asked to comment. Railfuture members generally welcomed the changes, but had a number of observations on particular issues as detailed below.

Mainline services

The additional seating capacity during the peak period is welcomed. Class 360 units should not be used on London to Norwich services. All stations between Chelmsford and Colchester should have a half-hourly off-peak service. Peak through services should be provided on the Harwich line. Units could be added/detached at Colchester from other services. Half-hourly service to all Clacton line stations is an aspiration.

Branchline services

The withdrawal of through services between London and Lowestoft/Peterborough is acceptable on condition that an hourly service is provided between Ipswich and Lowestoft. Members expressed concern about the interchange arrangements at Ipswich. Cross-platform interchange would be the ideal.

A lift and additional/ improved waiting facilities are needed. Platform arrangements at Ipswich need to be reviewed. Multiple trains on a single platform are to be avoided if possible. Extending the proposed Peterborough-Ipswich service to Colchester would improve the number of places served with a single change of train and may help to reduce platform congestion at Ipswich.

Connections to the Bury St Edmunds line may be better at Stowmarket, although staffing and waiting facilities would need to be reviewed. The additional coaches proposed for the Cambridge to Ipswich and Cambridge to Norwich service by redeploying rolling stock are welcomed.

Connections at Stowmarket to improve Bury St Edmunds to Norwich journey opportunities need to be considered. NXEA should, in conjunction with the Government, investigate if any additional diesel units would be available in a few years time following the completion of the recently announced electrification schemes.

An hourly Peterborough to Ipswich service is a future aspiration including additional stops at Manea. A half-hourly Great Yarmouth to Norwich service with trains extending to Cambridge is a future aspiration.



The blunder of privatisation

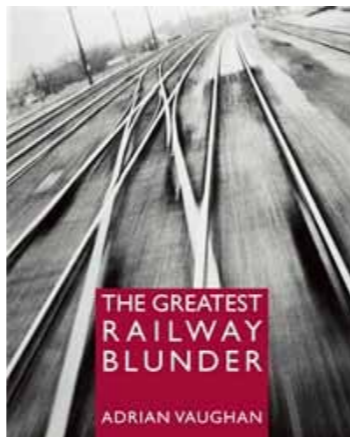
Book review by Clara Zilahi

Author Adrian Vaughan has lived and worked with and on the railways all his life, and knows what he is talking about.

His 2003 book was entitled *Railway Blunders*. His latest offering covers the history of railways in Britain from their beginnings in the early 19th century as independent companies, which often contracted out work.

Deficiencies of such a system soon became apparent, and eventually the four great railway companies came into being, functioning in what is now known as vertical integration. Who would have thought that the initial mistakes would be repeated over a hundred years later?

Though in private ownership, the companies were run by railwaymen with an ethos of public service. Emergencies were dealt with quickly by a dedicated work force, overseen by those on the spot. Numerous examples are quoted, mostly from Great Western, which the author knows well. During a breakdown in 1946, one 62-year-old ganger was called out



at 23.30. He worked until 06.00 the next day when the line reopened. He received a bonus of one guinea! During the Second World War, government control became necessary, but there was inadequate funding.

Nationalisation was not accompanied by adequate investment, but the commitment of the workforce remained, and local people were still making local decisions. The financial situation worsened, exacerbated worse by governments of both persuasions who regarded

Political background

Selling off the railways was the last significant privatisation carried out by the Conservatives – under the then prime minister John Major.

The Adam Smith Institute and the Centre for Policy Studies (then headed by David Willetts who is now in David Cameron's shadow cabinet) had floated ideas for rail privatisation.

Transport Secretary John MacGregor published the then Government's White Paper on rail privatisation in July 1992 and pushed it through Parliament. His adviser was MP Eleanor Laing, now Mr Cameron's shadow justice minister.

Learning with Railfuture

The Mayor of Northallerton welcomed Railfuture members to our conference at Northallerton on 4 July which concentrated on the role of the independent sector on Britain's railway.

People who went to the superb venue at County Hall, Northallerton, pictured below, heard excellent and stimulating presentations from a range of speakers.

One of the important lessons was that volunteer efforts always have

a big payback in the form of social and financial benefits for other members of society, particularly local businesses – even, for example, a barber in the small market town of Leyburn.

A 16-page all-colour report will be sent to all attendees in early October. Copies can also be purchased from Trevor Jones, 67 Guildford Park Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7NH. Please send a cheque for £2 payable to Railfuture.

Pictures: JERRY ALDERSON



the car industry as the salvation of the country's financial crisis.

Many political decision makers had financial interest in road building, like the Tory Ernest Marples, the motorway czar, though he transferred his road company to his wife.

BR continued to run the railway as well as finances allowed, but became the media's target when anything went wrong. Detailed figures show the rarity of serious accidents.

Still the cost of government support was deemed too high to continue and Beeching was appointed – though some closures had already started.

Few people foresaw that replacing rail with road transport would cause gridlock despite continued (and expensive) road building.

The seeds of privatisation (the "Greatest Blunder") were sown in the 1980s but there was disagreement about the method. Sectorisation was part of the run-up.

The author condemns this, especially regarding Regional Railways, necessarily a loss-maker. Sectors disputed responsibility and no longer shared stock, which reduced passenger facilities.

I feel however that some credit could have been given for the passenger-friendly innovations introduced in Network SouthEast by Chris Green.

When privatisation finally took place it involved a break-up comparable to the early 19th century state of affairs with passengers' convenience taking second place to profit, though the cost of the

process itself was greater than major improvements would have cost.

Delay in carrying out "uneconomical" improvement would also involve safety risks. Those who, like Peter Rayner, spoke out, were eased out if they could not be silenced. The book takes us up to the demise of Railtrack. Will there be a sequel?

The text is full of carefully researched facts, making it invaluable for reference.

The author looks in detail at the franchisees, the contracts, the costs, the successes and more prevalent failures, the comparison with railways abroad, and in the final chapter he poses the question "Has privatisation achieved anything that could not have been achieved by BR?"

Even the non-technically minded can understand the explanations of major changes and events, such as those of the likely causes of the Clapham and Ladbroke Grove accidents. The book is illustrated with numerous excellent photographs, mostly taken by the author, though some have little relevance to the text.

The book should be of interest even to those who are in favour of private ownership, as what is at stake is essentially the fragmentation of the railways and their control by business interests without railway expertise.

The Greatest Railway Blunder
 By Adrian Vaughan
 Ian Allan Publishing, 2009
 Hardback £20. 160 pages.
 ISBN: 9780711032743

in North Yorkshire



Stephen Walker said the Emsay railway wants to re-connect with Skipton and has a vision for a link to Colne, Lancashire.



Tony Smare said the Welsh Highland Line has provided massive economic and social benefits and now generates £9m annually.



Ruth Anison of the Wensleydale Railway revealed that a £20 donation from Railfuture was crucial in getting their project going.



Andy Coward of the East Lancashire Railway predicted that commuter traffic could return to Rawtenstall via Rochdale.

October 2009 Railwatch

A rail service has opened from Moscow Belorussky station to Sheremetyevo airport

Wessex

By John Friedberger
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Eastleigh 100

We were pleased to welcome members and potential members to the small stand which branch volunteers manned over the late May bank holiday weekend in conjunction with the centenary celebrations of the Eastleigh Railway Works. Events such as this are a fertile recruiting ground and we recommend that some form of easily portable pictorial display stand should be procured by Railfuture for use by branches.

National Passenger Survey

Passenger Focus produces comprehensive passenger surveys each spring and autumn. Although all statistical opinion surveys need to be interpreted with caution, it is fair to report that South West Trains compares favourably with other London and South East operators in most categories. The high score for punctuality and reliability is welcome and at a recent meeting with the company, we were briefed on measures being taken to improve one notable low score, namely "Dealing with Delay". A national task force – Passenger Information During Disruption – is also working on the issue and so we can hope for better information about alternative routes in future. Less good is the score of 35% satisfaction under value for money and 37% for toilet facilities.

Accessibility improvements at four Hampshire stations



Southampton Airport station

Picture: Wikipedia

Some progress is being made over the difficult and costly problem of providing step-free access to stations. Lifts at Fareham and Fratton were opened for use in August, Havant was commissioned earlier and work is proceeding at Southampton Airport. Brockenhurst remains a priority.

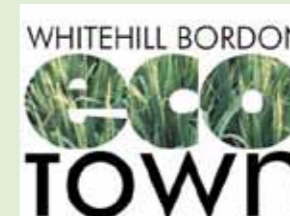
Fratton freight

After a successful initial operation of the Fratton freight depot in 2008 current market conditions have made it impossible to compete with discounted road transport. However Gerry Clarke, project officer for the Port of Portsmouth, is hopeful that new market opportunities will arise.

Southern to Southampton on Sunday

The December 2009 timetable under Southern's renewed franchise will bring a welcome introduction of services on a Sunday to and from Southampton along the south coast. The company has also stated a wish to serve Southampton Airport at some future date.

Good rail connections are needed for eco town



The Government has shortlisted Whitehill-Bordon as one of four eco towns with funding support for a feasibility study to determine whether a rail link can be built. Railfuture Wessex proposes that both the Alton line (at Bentley) and the Portsmouth line (at Liphook) should be linked, so giving residents excellent choices for sustainable travel.