

## East Anglia

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### Station surveys

The branch is helping Norfolk County Council with a passenger survey at North Walsham station. Members will spend four days at the station with a questionnaire asking passengers about their journey and what improvements can be made, especially with regard travelling to the station without using a car.

### More room for bikes please!

The branch has written to Network Rail about cycle facilities at Cambridge station. Although there is a large space allocated to bicycles, there are also many abandoned cycles that need to be removed on a regular basis. We are also concerned that the footbridge and lifts to the proposed new island platform will not be adequate. Many passengers travel with bicycles on the train to Cambridge as many offices and colleges are some way from the station. The current single platform, although it may be inconvenient for railway operations is ideal for bicycles. The lifts to the new platform are just large enough to take bicycles. If large numbers of passengers with bikes arrive on a train, it could take some time for them to make their way out of the station. Cambridge Cycle Campaign has called for a cycle trough to be added to the footbridge to make it easier to take bikes up the stairs.

### Support for new freight curve

The branch has written in support of Network Rail's proposal to build a new freight curve just north of Ipswich. The new track is part of the Felixstowe-Nuneaton freight upgrade and will allow trains to travel directly to and from the port without reversing at Ipswich. Over 300 people attended a local exhibition organised by Network Rail about the scheme and 95% indicated their support. Network Rail has since agreed to the suggestion put forward by local authorities that space should be made for double track to avoid expensive changes later on if freight traffic continues to grow.

### MP raises transport issues

Cambridge's new Lib-Dem MP, Julian Huppert, has given his support for the proposed new station at Chesterton, which he described as a quick win that would relieve both road and rail congestion. He also supports the East-West rail link. He is less impressed by the £1.2 billion plan to upgrade the A14 road. He pointed out that increases in traffic on local roads into Cambridge, up to 60% on some roads, as a result of the work would simply move the congestion elsewhere, so there was little benefit to the public. He also noted that the predicted increase in traffic would mean that congestion on the A14 would return to current levels soon after the new road opened. This point, was recognised by the Highways Agency in its input to the Regional Spatial Strategy in 2005.

### Extra passengers expected at Ipswich

We are delighted work started in July on passenger lifts and an additional footbridge at Ipswich station. For many years the East Suffolk Travellers' Association and Railfuture have pressed for this project. Work will not be finished until March or May 2011 and this raises the question of how train operator National Express East Anglia will handle the extra passengers who will be changing trains at Ipswich from 12 December when through trains to London from the East Suffolk and Bury St Edmunds lines are to be withdrawn. This is one of the issues which ESTA has also raised with local MPs. Some MPs have suggested that NXEA reduces its fares if journey times are being increased by the extra change and inconvenience.



# Eurostar's future

By Trevor Garrod

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Eurostar is an undoubted success story, capturing two thirds of the air-rail market between London, Lille, Paris and Brussels.

Concerns have remained, however, about how well it copes when things go wrong.

Representatives of the European Passengers' Federation had an in-depth meeting with Eurostar managers in Brussels in June.

They learned that, following last winter's problems, the company had spent £20 million on compensating passengers and £10 million on additional engineering work to cope with the problems which arose then.

The company is being restructured so all employees come under one management which should cure some communication, training and customer care problems. A service continuity unit has been set up and is drawing up contingency plans in case things go wrong in the future.

### Railteam

Eurostar is part of a grouping of seven high-speed operators working together to compete with air on journeys such as London-Frankfurt or Paris-Vienna.

Five EPF representatives met Railteam directors in Amsterdam in May and agreed to co-operate on customer care issues. In the meantime, Railfuture members' experiences – positive and negative – when using a combination of Eurostar and other high speed trains (such as Thalys, TGV or ICE) will be welcome. Please send these to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

### UITP

In July, EPF members met the Union International des Transports Publics (UITP) which represents mainly urban and regional public transport operators.

We raised the problem of ferries which do not take foot passengers. It was however encouraging to note the progress of maritime users' rights, which is expected to come into force soon in the European Union.

We called again for a Europe-wide journey planner for public transport.

There was also discussion of EU proposals to give freight trains priority over passenger trains on certain routes. Both sides agreed that more investment to relieve bottlenecks is required.

HERITAGE RAIL LINKS	Now linked to National Rail infrastructure with scheduled through trains	Now linked to National Rail infrastructure but with no regular through services	Interchange station	Plans to link to National Rail infrastructure	Plans for interchange station	No rail connection planned
England	2	8	14	9	3	26
Wales	nil	1	3	nil	nil	10
Scotland	nil	1	1	2	nil	4
Total GB	2	10	18	11	3	40

## More main line links

How are we doing in terms of restoring lines that once formed part of the British Rail network? The table above shows how many preserved railways are now connected to the national network.

While 64% have no connection at the moment, 52% will be linked once present plans are implemented.

### Network news from heritage railways

**Swanage:** The good news is that Dorset County Council and Purbeck District Council have pledged £3 million to meet the cost of providing the connection to the Swanage Railway at Worgret Junction as part of Network Rail's Dorset coast resignalling.

This paves the way for running a regular service between Swanage and Wareham in the future, and all credit is due to the local authorities for earmarking this money from "section 106" planning agreements around the county.

**Llangollen:** More good news! After months of delay, Welsh Assembly ministers approved the Transport & Works Act Order to extend the Llangollen Railway from Carrog to Corwen. This allows work to start on the extension, with funding support from Welsh Assembly Government.

**Weardale:** Trains are now running regularly between Bishop Auckland and Stanhope. Just 400 yards separates the two stations at Bishop Auckland and lower community fares are offered for most trains. Planning consent has also been given for loading coal trains at Wolsingham, destined for power stations in Yorkshire and the Midlands.

**Bluebell Railway:** The Bluebell is celebrating its half century by opening its own platform at East Grinstead and it held an open day in September. Meanwhile, removal of 300,000 cubic



Swanage Railway's first through steam train to Waterloo

metres of domestic refuse from Imberthorne cutting by rail to Stewartby has begun.

When this is complete, the last obstacle will have been removed and track can be reinstated to link the two halves of the line and the national network. The project will have cost £5 million, and will be a major boost for the town and the railway.

**Churnet Valley:** The line has been reconnected with Moorland & City Railways at Leek Brook Junction, and CVR is planning to run through passenger trains from Kingsley & Froghall to Caldon Low in November.

**Tunbridge Wells West to Eridge:** Work is well advanced on the £500,000 project to extend the Spa Valley Railway to link with Southern trains at Eridge, with an official opening expected next Easter.

Apart from work on the disused section of line, and upgrading of Forge Farm level crossing, a signal box has now been built at Groombridge to control the crossing loop which will provide capacity for the new service.

### Recent setbacks

Running heritage railways has all the problems of main

line operation, and then some! Apart from the recession, very dry weather earlier this summer led to restricted use of steam locos on some lines.

More seriously, the Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway suffered a major landslide at Gotherington in April which curtailed service in the summer, preventing them from reaching Cheltenham racecourse.

On the Mid Hants, fire swept through a recently completed workshop in July, destroying rolling stock under restoration. The full train service is in operation, however. Restoring railways is hard work by dedicated volunteers and takes many years for each project to be painstakingly completed.

Landslips and fires are frustrating and disheartening. Nothing daunted, the G&WR is rebuilding its embankment and taking time to ensure that similar problems are avoided in future, while the Watercress Line will rebuild its workshop.

The same dogged spirit drove staff and supporters on the Severn Valley when their railway was damaged at 45 locations in the devastating floods of 2007. We can only sympathise with them – and make sure we support them by travelling on their lines this year.

Picture: ANDREW P M WRIGHT

## Wessex

By John Friedberger

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### Rail deserves recognition

No doubt in common with other English branches, Wessex is busy responding to the next round of local transport plans (LTP 3). The startling fact is that under the heading "Public Transport" there is scant recognition of rail as a means of transport. Shire counties seem riveted on roads and parking, with some space for buses, cycles and pedestrians, but little for rail. Wiltshire, with three important rail lines running through the county, has none. So we have much work to do.

### Swanage and the Isle of Purbeck – 40 years on

There is some bright news from Dorset where the county council and Purbeck District Council have given financial backing to the plan to re-connect the Swanage line to the Weymouth main line at Worgret junction, near Wareham. The necessary signalling work is scheduled by Network Rail for 2012. The branch line closed in 1972.

### Gosport to Fareham 'bus rapid transit'



Another rail line is wrecked to make way for buses

Sadly it seems that another important South Coast town, which once enjoyed good rail links to the rest of the country, is destined to be connected only by bus. Legal challenges have held up the bus rapid transit scheme but it is now "back on track" (pun intended).

The route runs from Gosport Ferry to Fareham mainly along the line of the old railway. The Wessex branch preferred a light rail or tram system but initial estimates were inflated due to the inclusion of a tunnel under the harbour to Portsmouth. However the scheme does not preclude future extensions or a fixed rail system to other parts of south Hampshire. The current bus plan will be open to emergency vehicles and there will be a separate cycle track. Wildlife campaigners have appealed against the decision to build the £20 million route but, pending a decision from the Supreme Court, work on the route is continuing. For more information about the scheme, see [www3.hants.gov.uk/tfsh/bus-rapid-transit.htm](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/tfsh/bus-rapid-transit.htm)

### New timetables are not very user-friendly

It is frustrating for passengers that there is no single rail timetable to cover all trains in this region. Southern has withdrawn its comprehensive booklet covering the West Coastway line and replaced it with a plethora of pocket sheets based on specific towns and lines. But none of the 33 listed timetables has either Portsmouth or Southampton in the title. The three trains an hour to Fratton are not shown anywhere and only one table lists the intermediate stations between Havant and Southampton. Southern has assured us that amendments are planned. SWT has a mass of both route timetables and small ones covering times of trains from London Waterloo to just a few stations on a line. This may be useful for commuters or single journeys but is confusing for others. It is possible to buy a full SWT booklet for £4.50 although it is not widely available and does not show some other operators' services. Even the Network Rail timetable covering the whole country, and available on the internet, contains surprising omissions. For example, table 123 "Portsmouth and Weymouth - Bristol and South Wales" does not show the hourly SWT service from Southampton to Salisbury, a key part of this route.

