

“ONTRACK”

WALTON-ON-NAZE, FRINTON-ON-SEA, KIRBY X & THORPE-LE-SOKEN RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2010 – 2011

GENERAL MATTERS

- **Refranchising:** The NXEA franchise was due to end on 31st March 2011 and the Greater Anglia Franchise Consultation document was issued by the Department for Transport in January 2010. However, following a change in Government, the re-franchising process was abandoned pending the McNulty Review into the value for money of the railways. It was subsequently announced that the current franchise would be extended until 4th February 2012. The re-franchising process has now re-commenced for a short franchise running from 5th February 2012 and will run for 17 months with an option to extend for up to one year. Following this a longer-term franchise is expected to be awarded.

The companies short-listed for the 17-month franchise are

Abellio Greater Anglia Ltd (NV Nederlandse Spoorwegen)

Eastern Railway Ltd. (Go-Ahead Group PLC)

Stagecoach Anglia Trains Ltd. (Stagecoach Group plc)

- **Rolling Stock:** National Express is currently implementing a £185 million Service Improvement Plan which involves the purchase of 30 4-car electric multiple units of class 379 for the Stansted Express service with 17 4-car class 321 units cascaded from London Midland. In connection with this, the Great Eastern main line timetable was recast with effect from 12th December 2010 (see below).
- **National Stations Improvement Programme:** Colchester North is one of five stations on the NXEA network to benefit from this scheme. While some improvements will take place on the down platforms, the major work will take place on the south (town) side of the station with reinstatement of the main entrance and ticket office and with improved facilities on platforms 3 and 6.
- **Clacton Train Maintenance Depot:** The Depot re-opened on 2nd July 2010 following a £1.5m refurbishment programme. Additional maintenance facilities are required following acquisition of additional emu's and, although a small depot with four roads, some facilities are in fact now superior to those at the main depot at Ilford.
- **Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership:** The CRP has been re-launched with a completely revised website (<http://esscrp.org.uk/>). However, rail user groups were not involved in any way and the website does need some improvement with regard to the description of many parts of the Sunshine Coast Line.
- **Roger Rose:** The Association was represented at the funeral of Roger Rose on 12th April, 2011. Roger transferred from Downham Market to Frinton station as crossing keeper in 1973, later moving to the booking office at Frinton and later to Thorpe-le-Soken prior to his retirement in 2001. A life-long railway enthusiast (and railway modeller), Roger will be remembered by regular passengers for the huge fires he used to build in the waiting room at Frinton station on cold winter mornings, and for his announcements “London train” to those in the waiting room as their train approached from Walton.

TIMETABLES

General: A new Great Eastern main line timetable came into force on 12th December 2010. The timetable was recast to allow for the additional emu's which had become available, thus providing extra peak-hour seats to/from Liverpool Street. It also resulted in the loss of through services between Liverpool Street and Peterborough, Lowestoft and Harwich; however, Colchester Town gained an hourly through service.

With regard to the Clacton and Walton lines, the main improvements comprise:

- A fast through service from Walton-on-the-Naze to Liverpool Street departing at 08.00 (instead of a shuttle service to Thorpe-le-Soken connecting into the 08.15 departure from Clacton).
- The 22.58 local service from Colchester North to Clacton was retimed to 22.56 and diverted to

run from Thorpe-le-Soken to Walton-on-the-Naze, connecting out of the 22.18 Liverpool Street to Clacton service.

However there are a number of disadvantages to the new timetable, including:

- Longer trains cannot call at the intermediate stations between Wivenhoe and Thorpe-le-Soken resulting in additional changes on certain journeys and extended gaps between services.
- No down Clacton services call at Shenfield (for Romford, etc. connections) in the evening peak.
- Some unreliable connections for the Walton line at Thorpe-le-Soken in the evening peaks
- Extended waits at Thorpe-le-Soken on certain local services
- Loss of one of the morning peak hour services from Walton-on-the-Naze to Colchester Town.
- Journey times for the main peak-hour service from Clacton and Walton to Colchester Town (provided by the 07.40 departure from Walton-on-the-Naze) considerably longer.
- Gaps of more than an hour in up departures from Weeley and Hythe in the morning late peak/early off-peak

It is hoped that most, if not all of these matters will be addressed by changes contained in the May 2011 timetable.

- **Short-Term Timetable Alterations:** We were very pleased that, once again, NXEA operated through trains from Walton-on-the-Naze to Clacton for the airshow last August. NXEA also operated trains between Walton-on-the-Naze and Colchester Town on Sundays prior to Christmas and over the following Bank Holiday weekend.

STUDIES & REPORTS

The Association has responded to the following:

- Tendring District Council Local Development Framework, October 2010.

ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATION AT MEETINGS, ETC.

- Passenger Focus Rail User Groups Conference, 10th June 2010.
- NXEA Rail User Group Forum, Liverpool Street, 15th June, 2010.
- NXEA Review Meeting with Jackie Gibbs, Colchester North, 7th July 2010.
- Visit to Clacton Maintenance Depot, 3rd September 2010. We are very grateful to Iain Warner for taking the time to show us the facilities at the Depot.
- Launch of NXEA Service Improvement Plan, Liverpool Street, 13th December, 2010.
- NXEA Review Meeting with Jackie Gibbs, Colchester North, 9th March 2011.
- NXEA Rail User Group Forum, Liverpool Street, 22nd March, 2011.
- Re-franchising meeting with Samantha Hodder, Go-Ahead, Colchester, 27th April, 2011.
- Meetings with Clacton MP, Douglas Carswell, who has taken up some timetable problems with NXEA.
- The regular quarterly meetings of Tendring District Council Transport Forum have not been taking place.
- Meetings of the Sunshine Coast Line Action Group similarly have not been taking place.
- Ontrack has been represented at meetings of the Essex Rail Users Forum.

MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

- **Website:** The Association's website has been found to help rail users contact officers with problems experienced with their rail journeys and has raised the profile of the Association. The URL is www.ontrackrailusers.org.uk and continues to result in favourable comments.
- **Newspapers:** There has been regular coverage by the local Gazette/ regional newspapers (file copies available on table for inspection).
- **LIFE:** The Association is included in the Essex Library 'Local Information for Essex' databases.

SPONSORSHIP AND SUPPORT

- **Frinton Property & Finance (FPC) and Chamber of Commerce and Trade have also printed copies of Newsletter in the past and provide reprographic facilities.** We are very grateful to David Foster of FPC for co-ordinating this and providing support.
- **We are also grateful for ROL Ltd for printing of newsletters and their ongoing support of future projects.**
- **We are very grateful to the large number of shops, libraries and other organisations** throughout the area served by the Colchester to Clacton and Walton railway line for continuing to provide facilities, at no cost, for publicising altered services in connection with the Clacton Airshow and the Sunday services to Colchester Town.

A. C. Baxter, Acting Hon. Sec.