

“ONTRACK” RUA SUMMER UPDATE

ONTRACK RUA continues to play a major role and is represented at meeting at District and regional level as recognised stakeholder:

The AGM was well attended – one of the highest turnouts ever: The debate between main political election hopefuls was interesting and reported in the local press. Congratulations to files Watling MP who has since won that election and promised to campaign with us in concert with other NE Essex MPs for improved rail services

The committee have had been working over the summer visiting mock ups of the new trains at Greater Anglia Works at Crown Point Norwich and the Bombardier Factory Derby and providing input as to reefing the final design specification. All trains will be air conditioned and have plug points and USB ports and on board Wi-Fi and be able to operate with selective door controls on short platformed stations However it is clear that the Dept. for transport is behind the scenes calling the shots- so concerns on seating arrangements/ toilet numbers and infrastructure adjustments.

Local politicians have taken up the fight in respect of the proposed ticket office closures. It is understood that the highly critical Transport Focus report was sent to ABELLIO's Greater Anglia railways who passed it on to the Dept. for Transport . It is noted that local communities have taken over the running of ticket offices and stations. In south Essex the Eddie Stobart transport group took over the running of Southend airport rebuilding the terminal facilities and at last building and also successfully operating a Southend Airport Parkway Station (confounding previous negative thinking and forecasts by the DfT, and rail authorities and operators) and subsequently enjoying the 9% commission from ticket sales. This is way forward for Tendring when the Dept. for transport seems so in love with e-ticketing: even though The Times reported a month or so ago that the DfT national e-ticketing initiative had hit the buffers due to cost. Key issue is lack of decent broadband and mobile signal outside of many urban areas – let alone within them . Will Granny buy a £500 Smart phone to get a say half a dozen tickets a year to see the grandchildren? We think not!

Sadly we have to report more ongoing engineering works Are planned trough out the autumn with weekend closures, and late night bus substitution. The Train operator gets compensated by network rail but what about the poor passengers?

“ONTRACK” RUA SUMMER UPDATE 2 – WALTON PIER EXPRESS – THE TORNADO STEAM LOCOMOTIVE DAY CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF WALTON ON NAZE STATION

Our “ONTRACK” team's lips were sealed as to Tendring District Councils Transport Liaison Group's (TDC TLG) plan to bring a well known steam locomotive heading an excursion to/ from London to Walton to commemorate the town rail station's 150th anniversary this August. Silence was needed whilst sensitive negotiations and funding was arranged and involved round table discussions with the Tornado Steam Trust, Greater Anglia Railways, Network Rail and Dept. for Transport, with the Tendring District Council's Chair and officers. Ideally the event should have been held earlier in the May but that was not possible because lines were blocked by the ongoing mainline weekend engineering works.

Tony Baxter our past Hon Secretary suggested the locomotive should be Tornado 60163 – and showed pictures of it to the TDC TLG. Tornado was the first new build Peppercorn class A1 steam locomotive to be made since all of that type were scrapped in 1966. Tornado 60163 is a main line coal-fired steam locomotive built in 2008 at Darlington. It was the first such locomotive to be built in the United Kingdom since Evening Star, the last steam locomotive built by British Railways in 1960. It is the only example of an LNER Peppercorn Class A1 locomotive because none of the originals were preserved. The original Peppercorn A1 series was ordered by the LNER, but the 49 locomotives were built at Doncaster and Darlington for British Railways (BR) in 1948–49, after the nationalisation of the railways The original 49 locomotives were all scrapped by 1966 after an average

service of 14-15 years. Earlier in the year. Tornado had made a very early morning 100 mph plus sprint down the East Coast mainline

So it was Tornado which made it down to Walton with the non-stop Liverpool Street – Walton pier Express on the sunny Saturday 12th August. . Once in Walton, the train ran to and from Colchester Town five times, giving 1,500 visitors an opportunity to enjoy a historic trip, finally returning London on another non stop run. Altogether there were over 2,000 tickets sold with the East Anglia St. Helena Hospice benefiting from the proceeds. An extra coach was added to enable deprived children to enjoy a ride down to the seaside behind a steam locomotive as their great grandparents might have done up to the late 1950's.

Thousands of people spent August 12th at the seaside. A fireworks display rounded off a day's celebration at around 9pm. Visitors were able to ride the attractions at Walton Pier for free having first collected a wristband from various key locations, such as the Naze Tower

ONTRACK on the day manned an information stall in the High street between 9 and 3 pm providing information and history sheets to the visitors .

Mr Platt the Frinton & Walton Gazette reported as saying *"It's an opportunity for Walton to shine and an opportunity to remind people of how Walton used to be a rail destination"*

"Commissioning the locomotive from London to Walton is a major achievement and because it's a non-stop service, rail enthusiasts get very excited, so we've had interest from other countries already, such as Holland.

"The new owners of Walton Pier have been a major player in this and so we're calling the train the Walton Pier Express.

"It's such a unique event I don't know whether it will ever be done again."