



## "ONTRACK"

**Walton On Naze, Frinton On Sea, Kirby Cross, & Thorpe Le Soken Rail Users Association**  
*Representing Clacton & Walton Lines Rail Users for over 20 years*

**Chairman: J K Smock, 3 Orwell House, 48 Waltham Wav, Frinton On Sea, Essex. CO13 9JQ**

**Secretary: D.J Bolton Snr. 71 Park Road, Clacton n Sea CO15 1HQ**

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**Mr Peter Wilkinson,**

**Director of Franchising**

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Dear Peter Wilkinson

### **RE SUBMISSION IN RESPECT OF THE PROPOSED GREATER ANGLIA FRANCHISE BID SPECIFICATION TENDRING PENINSULAR RAILWAYS SERVICES**

**We submit this in the light of consultations with cabinet Members of Tendring District Council and local stakeholder groups.**

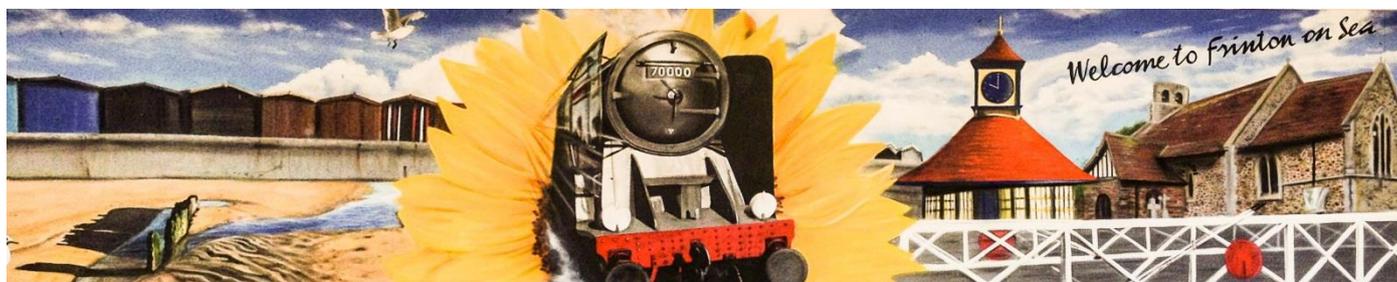
1.1 What many consider to be the appalling nature of Tendring coastal rail services featured in more than one candidate's October 2014 Parliamentary By-election literature, including that of UKIP! The result might be considered by some of the voter's verdict on the other incumbent parties, but nearly all candidates except niche independent contenders dealt with local issues and desired to improve railway services and transport infrastructure.

1.2 **TRANSPORT V POVERTY:** Indeed there is conflict in coastal areas of the comfortable retired and those of working age not in work or on low income. There are studies such as that in the USA after the LA WATTS DISTRICT RIOTS and by the WORLD BANK that make the link between Poverty and inadequate Transport. The Times 29<sup>th</sup> October carried a report on a O.N.S study of impoverished coastal towns which included the comment << *The plight of seaside towns has become an increasing concern for politicians, who fear that they are being left behind in the recovery and becoming hotbeds of political discontent ....Ukip's first parliamentary victory was in Clacton-on-Sea, which has one of the lowest employment rates in the country at 62 per cent, compared with 71 per cent nationwide.*

*The Office for National Statistics said that coastal towns were "rising up the political agenda" and pointed out that Penny Mordaunt, the Conservative MP for Portsmouth North, had recently been appointed as the country's first minister for coastal communities.*

*"Coastal communities are also seen as a key political battleground ahead of the 2015 general election," it said.>>.*

In a region which along with the Greater London Area is one of only two making a net positive contribution to the UK Gross Domestic there is a signally a long history of underfunding of rail infrastructure enhancements which might address such issues.



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- 1.3 NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE: It is clear from the recent Rail Passenger Headcount exercises undertaken by "ONTRACK" RUA at Frinton Station (November 2013) and Thorpe Le Soken (junction) Station (June 2014), in conjunction with other stakeholders and local Tendring District councillors, Parish Councillors and Tendring District council apprentices that current passenger rail services to / from the Tendring Peninsular are not fit for purpose, in respect of service pattern, or the service frequency.
- 1.4 PASSENGER COMMENT: Allied to the November 2013 Headcount census undertaken at Frinton station was a passenger survey questionnaire in respect of services and facilities at originating and destination stations. Almost all respondents chose to use the online option and although the survey was based on the format used by a Northern PTE with selection and ranking options where a comment box was provided for any other comment, the remarks made were in many cases a damning indictment of current services and facilities.
- 1.5 DISABLED: The Tendring area has one of the highest concentrations over 55 s in the country many of whom are retired professional people having independent means over and above state provision and desire to travel if the facilities were more suitable e.g.
- level platform / wheel chair access,
  - station toilet facilities, manned stations for assistance,
  - on board disable toilet and
  - Other facilities (handrails/ induction loops) to support the senior and disabled citizen.
- 1.6 ISOLATED: For example, Thorpe Le Soken Station (Junction) has an isolated island platform only reachable by a footbridge which creates problems for wheelchair bound travellers wishing to use basically a "turn up and go" service or those using electric buggies. Once on that island platform, the width between the station offices and platform edge is too narrow in many places to allow ramps to be used to load wheelchair passengers onto or off trains and this can also cause delays even if they are changing trains. Many stations are staffed only in the mornings and once the railway staff have left mid-day all facilities are shut up, even if there concessionaires operating on the premises.
- 1.7 SENIOR MOMENT: The older population are a significant sector of the active electorate and some are also significant wealth holders who can choose where and how and on what they spend their money on and that includes Rail Travel. If seniors are not in the best of health then the issue of accessibility, toilets at stations or on train and comfort and ease of interchange and journey become increasingly important factors.
- 1.8 SUB SUBURBAN STOCK: The type of rolling stock formerly used was of Intercity type viz., Clacton Express EMU Class 309's which were of Mk I type (not Mk II). This Intercity stock was supplanted by outer suburban Class 321 Airdoor trains with no facilities for tourist's luggage or indeed any of the facilities required for the longer distance traveller enduring a 90 minute or 100 minute journey to/ from London) in the way of on board refreshment, and also lacked through the cab inter unit connections. There are not only visitors to Clacton, but also to Harwich and that includes Dovercourt since Harwich itself is not a seaside destination and Brightlingsea. On any fine summer day for example around 15,000 to 20,000 people who can be found on the beaches of Frinton and Walton.
- 1.9 MISSED NUMBERS: The Rail Passenger Headcounts undertaken in November 2013 at Frinton On Sea and at the junction station of Thorpe Le Soken in June 2014 indicate respectively that the usage at Frinton is 25% over that estimated by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and that the numbers of passengers changing trains at the village junction station of Thorpe le Soken is at least two to three times the official ORR estimates. That makes Thorpe Le Soken station's island platform the busiest interchange point outside of Norwich and/ or Colchester



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in East Anglia with the equivalent of circa 500,000 per annum changing trains. In all around 50% of passengers from Clacton-on-Sea, Walton-on-the Naze, Frinton-on-Sea and Kirby Cross change trains at Thorpe-le-Soken: up to 75% of those from Walton on Naze Line stations and at least 35% of those from Clacton on Sea.

- 1.10 UNACCEPTABLE JOURNEY SCENARIO: It is our opinion no long distance railway passenger should be faced with the scenario of changing trains five or so miles into or towards the end of their journey whether it is fifteen miles or seventy-five miles.
- The passengers to/ from London and the smaller intermediate stations, e.g. Alresford and Great Bentley, also have to change trains within ten miles and have a 10 minute wait at Wivenhoe to change to the fast trains to Colchester North and London – which again appears to be a ridiculous state of affairs.
  - Especially where an hourly interval service applies, which means that a late train may mean a missed connection and another 60 minute wait on the isolated Thorpe le Soken platform or at other Tendring stations.
  - This happens quite regularly in the evenings when the local train connection leaves without connecting with the main train from London and at least 40 minute delay ensues. This is unacceptable for such expensive season ticket holder equivalent to and not value for money compared to other areas.
- 1.11 SHAMBOLIC SERVICE PATTERN: The shambolic nature of the passenger service pattern is also illustrated by the arrangement whereby two trains an hour are actually run up or down the line, to or from Colchester and the coast on the Clacton and Walton Lines, but they are not half an hour apart, and meet up as a “fast” and “local” at Thorpe le Soken and therefore are not co-ordinated to run as a half hourly all stations service to/-from London / Colchester and the Coast. Custom has been lost because the Clacton and Walton rail services are now slower than twenty years ago and many of the direct fast services that provided journey times to/-from London of 75 minutes were cut as cost saving measures by British Rail.
- 1.12 POOR SUBSTITUTE: The fast services to Clacton/Walton were cut post-privatisation as a result of competition between First GT. Eastern and Anglia Railways which resulted in the fast trains running to Ipswich instead. Clacton and Walton were left with substituted the slower London - Colchester train paths extended to the coast.
- 1.13 CONNECTING TOURISTS & EMPLOYMENT: The two main employment options for the financially depressed North East Essex Tendring Peninsular along the urbanised Coastal belt (population of circa 100,000) are Tourism and the support services that feed off that, the office work and service industries in Central and Greater London, Chelmsford and Colchester: both require good rail connectivity to make these succeed as viable employment options, in respect of making it easy for visitors to travel into the area or commuters to travel out of it.
- 1.14 SOLD OUT: The success of the August 2014 CLACTON AIRSHOW demonstrated that where extra trains are run increasing the short term frequency over a morning, allied to advance marketing and publicity, that for the first time over 100,000 visitors arrived in CLACTON: It is ALSO understood THAT the Tendring District Council for the first time EVER sold out of AIRSHOW on the first day. And had to arrange overnight printing for the second day. This was demonstrates what can be achieved when more services are run and the right marketing applied. Please note the prospect of extra development in the area. TDC were ALSO able to use software apps allied to CCTV to accurately gauge the number of visitors arriving in Clacton on Sea.
- 1.15 FUTURE DEMAND: The current trains as already indicated lack luggage facilities for visitors travelling to / from a tourist area, and also the trains, except for the German built DESIROs, will not comply with Disability requirements applying from 2020. The Class 360s do not provide enough Toilet facilities and the lack of inter



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unit through the cab connection means alternative facilities cannot be accessed in other parts of the train if one toilet is out of action or in use. The current Class 321 trains also do not provide Disabled toilet facilities nor any on board refreshment facilities and nor will they be able to meet future increases in future Gt Eastern Mainline line speeds, nor will the Class 321s meet the increased demands for more rapid acceleration and de-acceleration which will be required to meet increasingly tough tight timetabling needs of a busy route.

- 1.16 **FLAWED SYSTEMS:** The apparent mismatch between recorded fare revenue from the ticketing system can be in part explained by the following flaws in the ORR data collection and the computerised ticketing system accounting.
- Ticketing systems errors is not always crediting the correct travel points with fare revenue – it is not uncommon for many accounting systems to suffer from wrongly set configurations or defaults or even input errors which point transaction to the wrong sales /cost centres
  - London employers loaning employees the money for annual season tickets may purchase these directly on behalf of the employee through corporate travel agents, which sale is not immediately or if ever correctly attributed to the originating station the employee travels into London from.
  - The current EMU trains lack through the cab corridor connections which hinder policing of a whole 8 or 12 car train by conductor guards who cannot easily move up and down the train between units whilst it is in motion between stations
  - The Headcount Census at Thorpe Le Soken indicated the actual usage at Thorpe le Soken was 50% or more below the official ORR estimates – and
  - It has been observed that there are those travels in the leading cars of a Walton to Colchester train who never get to see the Conductor/ Guard on the local service, but purchase a ticket at Thorpe Le Soken or on the train from the Conductor Guard if available or pay on arrival at destination.
  - *It should be noted that the appalling or non-existent broadband means that for many people living beyond the reach of reasonable internet access in central Frinton it is just not able to buy on line even if they have the inclination*
- 1.17 **EXTRA 30,000 POPULATION:** Central Government desires the development of over 12,000 homes across the Tendring Peninsular and this based on average household of circa 2.4 persons is likely to produce and increase in population of around 30,000 or more in a matter of years - the equivalent of a small town.
- 1.18 **PLANNING TARGETS:** Tendring District Council has apparently already bowed to current political pressure from Westminster to include in their revision of Local Development Plan, the development of 12,120 new homes. Many times that originally set in the first draft... The plan is to go for public consultation in 2015. The 12,120 home targets that have provisionally been set are for those to be built in the Tendring Peninsular by 2031.
- 1.19 **HOT POTATOE:** This has become a political “Hot Potato” and is gathering much opposition e.g. to the draft plan statement that; <A One Thousand home site to be known as “The Weeley Garden Village” be developed on a Green Field Site, currently A1 class Agricultural land>. Note should be made that Liz Truss MP, the current (Oct 2014) DEFRA Minister has stated that she opposes the non-agriculture use of such land for Solar Panels. She wants the UK to grow more of its own food. There are those who on the same grounds oppose its use for housing. However, it is recognised there is a shortage of affordable housing in the Home Counties, and expansion around the smaller towns and villages is one option or an alternative to complete new towns.
- 1.20 **DESIGNATED GROWTH:** Already sites scheduled for the construction of 1,000 houses in a development include Weeley, Great Clacton, Holland on Sea, Gt. Holland and Brightlingsea which will require enhanced transport infrastructure and new transport hubs. Without that investment in transport infrastructure the main



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attraction of cheaper housing will be nullified by over long journey times, low frequency of service, lack of very early morning and late, late night trains, and a poor standard of rolling stock.

- 1.21 PAUCITY OF TRANSPORT: However, currently like many Tendring stations Weeley suffers from a limited hourly rail service and has a rather more limited service late at night or during certain peak travel to work or travel to home hours. This is unsatisfactory and may deter new home owners.
- 1.22 RAIL is also an essential link for non car users to get to Colchester Hospital. The direct bus connexion from here other than from Clacton being very poor, being infrequent and a long circuitous and therefore very time consuming route. Not suitable for early morning appointments.
- 1.23 SPEEDY, FREQUENT 24/7: A high frequency, speedy rail service of at least half hourly from early morning to late at night, with accelerated timings to/ from London and the economic hub of London and secondary centres around Chelmsford, Colchester is seen as prerequisite in making such housing development and expansion possible, economically sustainable and indeed socially viable in a coastal area which transport links are inferior already to those serving Colchester, Ipswich and Norwich.
- 1.24 MEETING DEMAND: With the increases in house building being planned for Essex and indeed even just for the Tendring District, where another 12,000 plus dwellings are required to be built – the equivalent to small town – the demand for rail transport should continue to grow subject to the specific operational/ infrastructure improvements to Clacton/Walton/Harwich services are now urgently needed and these will be required sooner rather than later.
- 1.25 FUTURE NEEDS: Future service patterns - given the housing developments envisaged by central planners - will now to need to include a direct Clacton to Walton service, given that the local coastal road links between the urban coastal centres are inadequate and liable to flooding especially during winter which makes the main road between Walton, Frinton and Clacton impassable. Totally brand new coastal road links face the geological problems of low lying water logged coastal marshland and lack of a suitable corridor in which to build an alternative routes.
- 1.26 COSTLY ROAD OPTIONS
- An avoiding road (bypass) into Walton On Naze from Thorpe le Soken into Walton, was once proposed via the back ways of Lower Kirby/ Kirby le Soken which would be required to pass over the Backwaters flood plain and rough pasture, liable to flood from certain adjacent creeks at high tide, which geology will prove challenging and expensive for any road building because of the high water table.
  - Indeed even if the coastal winding “B” link road from Kirby Cross through to Holland on Sea and Clacton is upgraded it will barely address the issues of access and traffic congestion.
  - At a minimum the low thirteen foot high single track rail over bridge adjacent Kirby Cross Station and the cemetery will need to be replaced (and needs to) by one that increases road width to allow proper two way traffic flow and also provide sorely needed safe pedestrian right of way and also enable high sided vehicles to pass under a bridge without risk of the regular bridge strikes that currently occur at that location. *At the same time a two track bridge will allow future track capacity enhancements this can only be a stop gap solution.*
- 1.27 BRIGHTLINGEA PENINSULAR: Likewise the campaign to restore the railway route into Brightlingsea now has to be considered as a serious option given there is one single road that provides access to that community and has been the location of a number of serious road traffic accidents. In such circumstances reinstatement of the rail



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line from Wivenhoe should prove more cost effective than several miles of brand new high quality "A" class road which will be required by large scale housing developments. Already 600 new houses are proposed for Brightlingsea. And an accident on the sole access road could have dire consequences if a serious emergency elsewhere required external services to obtain speedy access.

- 1.28 PLANNING AHEAD:** Planning for such developments under current arrangements may allow buildings to be erected long before the essential infrastructure improvements will be made. Homes can be erected in a few months but railway (and road) upgrades take many years. This will only aggravate the current social, economic and political problems that beset Tendring now. Housing without good transport links has in the past become a virtual asylum for the economically inactive decanted from and by London Boroughs and nearby authorities like Colchester Borough Council. The Local authority is now struggling to fund the consequences of those decisions made by those other authorities.
- 1.29 DO NOTHING & MORE BENEFIT DEPENDENCY**
- If nothing is done the likely occupants of new housing could be more families decanted by London and other Boroughs such as Colchester who in many cases are unemployed and not economically active and become a drain on the over stretched finances of the District Council because they contribute nothing into the local economy and make demands on services and benefits support systems.
  - The Tendring District Council to stop this benefit migration introduced a five year qualifying rule for council benefits. Improved rail transport will help Tourism, access to employment and education outside of the immediate area and encourage the economically active to settle and new businesses to set up in Tendring District Council area.
  - There is clear link between Transport and Poverty or should we say poverty of transport and poverty. (c.f. USA NATIONAL AFFAIR ARCHIVE Transport and POVERTY 1971 – written after the LA WATTS Riots) and other studies by World Bank and UK academia
- 2.1 A NEW FRANCHISE – A NEW RAILWAY AND NEW SERVICES Therefore a new franchise must support enhanced infrastructure capacity to reflect the need to increase the frequency, pattern (profile) and scope of services to and from the Tendring Peninsular so that:**
- 2.1.1 The London and Local rail services to call at all stations from Colchester to the destinations on the coast reflect the increase of population and the high density of the urbanised coastal belt on the Tendring peninsular, with the Tendring trains operating a limited stop service between London and Colchester services to/ from London calling at key junction/ interchange stations only.
- 2.1.2 A half hourly direct through regular interval service to from London/ or Colchester and the coast (which should be achieved with capacity on Gt Eastern Mainline and some tweaks on the Clacton & Walton Lines and still may require some trains to be split up at Colchester) and serving all stations to Harwich, Clacton or Walton, plus
- 2.1.3 Accelerated journey times of Clacton, Walton or Harwich to/-from London in circa 60 – 65 minutes should be achievable if infrastructure is improved.
- 2.1.4 London Services and Local services to be rearranged so that all local stations are served with half hourly stopping services to/from Colchester Stations-/- or -London throughout the day.
- 2.1.5 Infrastructure such as the curves between Eastgate Junction and Colne Junction and between Hythe Junction and Colne Junction, and the banked curved platforms at Wivenhoe Station are likely because of the tight curves,



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overall clearances and speed restrictions impede modernisation of Clacton and Walton Line Services, and the use of modern longer, faster intercity style rolling stock

- 2.1.6 The Harwich Line is run as effectively as a single track branch line from Harwich International Station through to Harwich Town. The second track needs to be brought back into use and facilities, including stabling facilities ramped up at Harwich Town Dove court and Harwich International so that high frequency services can be run. The establishment of future secondary, satellite rail freight terminal facilities at Harwich need to be considered.

### 3.1 RECOMMENDED INFRASTRUCTURE: We make the following recommendations on the proposed infrastructure upgrades allied to The Gt Eastern mainline upgrade that will enable the planned housing developments to be viable

- Infrastructure tweaks at Colchester Town, with the addition of a Second Platform (*to facilitate operational flexibility where half hourly and above service frequencies are required*). Colchester Borough Council collected money from the Developers of the old military barracks site ostensibly for a second platform and they need to be directed to use the money for its intended purpose,
- On the Walton On Naze line - a long dynamic loop, if not double tracking and/or second platform Walton On The Naze will be needed *to facilitate operational flexibility where services frequencies of half hourly and above need to be implemented as the sole remaining short passing loop at Kirby Cross does not allow rains to pass exactly at half way or on the move*
- Clacton, Walton Line & Mid Tendring Stations platforms changes: the choice is either the *lengthening of all platforms versus the equipping for selective door opening on air-door trains* to cope with 12 car trains running through to London and improving disabled access – preferably with platforms level with carriage floors.
- A new Gt Clacton Gorse Lane Station to act as transport hub for the proposed new housing development, industrial and retail parks
- A connecting curve Clacton Line – Walton Line of about three quarters of a mile in length to enable triangulation of service and direct Clacton – Walton Trains to service the coastal inter urban traffic and enable triangulation of Walton and Clacton services in the timetabling
- Thorpe Le Soken Station rebuild to enable three platform flexible operational working on a high frequency service, enable proper disabled access, and park and ride facilities
- Improvements to platforms and track alignment at Wivenhoe to allow the new longer faster modern trains to regularly work the Clacton & Walton Lines
- Improvements on the curved links into / out of Colchester Town to allow the new longer faster modern trains to regularly work the Clacton & Walton Lines
- Reinstate Brightlingsea line to Wivenhoe as part of a Park & Ride package serving Colchester and University of Essex Wivenhoe, which has long requested its own dedicated station.
- Modern trains with luggage facilities, through the cab corridor connections between units and Acceleration. Deceleration and speed more than adequate that such trains can cover some of the InterCity paths to/ from Colchester from London and also fulfil local stopping duties on up country sections without blocking other trains. Such trains to have Conductor Guard controls in each carriage to enable door Closing/ Opening/ Right Away Signal/ Passenger PA Announcement functions
- Line speed enhancements on the lines to Clacton and Walton or Harwich so trains can travel at more than 50 or even 75 miles per hour (the Clacton Express EMUs of the 1960s managed 90 mph) Note that the former Class 309's ran at up to 90 mph between Wivenhoe and Thorpe (*don't let anyone misunderstand that the maximum speed of these units was 90 mph: it was 100 mph max although higher speeds were achieved on the West Coast main line by these trains*).

- 4.1 We will be pleased to discuss further: Infrastructure improvements to enable housing, economic regeneration, access to employment outside the area are now urgently needed. The ferment created by the



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By Election and issues behind it, is being harvested right now in Clacton's economically depressed back streets and elsewhere by extreme elements such as English Defence League, which make the BNP look like moderates and UKIP look more like liberals! Do nothing is now no longer an option.

4.2 We understand that Tendring District Council chief Officer and Cabinet Members desire to meet directly with the Dept. For Transport to discuss Tendring Districts special needs. The contacts are Mr Ian Davidson Chief Executive TDC and Cllr. Mark Platt, Cabinet Member Tourism & Leisure.

Yours sincerely

John Smock

\*P.S - Header shows mural painted on wall of disused platform of Frinton Station