

## "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 Way, Frinton On Sea, Essex. CO13 9JQ**

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

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Marie Finbow Strategy Manager

**NORWICH IN NINETY/ NEW ANGLIA**

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

**IPSWICH OFFICE: Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Felaw Maltings, South Kiln, 42 Felaw Street, Ipswich, IP2 8SQ**

Dear Marie Finbow

### **RE EAST ANGLIA RAIL PROSPECTUS (NEW ANGLIA) & NORWICH IN NINETY PROJECT – IMPACT ON TENDRING PENINSULAR SERVICES**

We respond to this in the light of being invited by our MP Douglas Carswell to participate in the **NORWICH IN NINETY FORUM** and also with the knowledge gained from an ongoing series of **Passenger Headcount Censuses** which counted all passengers boarding, alighting or changing trains. We were also attending the **Norwich In Ninety Forum** with the blessing of the **Councillors and Officers of Tendring District Council**, with whom we have been collaborating on the various headcount exercises and also sharing the findings.

- It is clear from the Rail Passenger Headcount exercises that current passenger rail services to / from the Tendring Peninsular are not fit for purpose, in respect of frequency, type of rolling stock (type of train used Intercity type stock was supplanted by outer suburban trains with no facilities for tourist's luggage or facilities for the long distance traveller enduring a 90 minutes or 100 minutes journey to/ from London) and journey times to/ from London.
- 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 (preliminary findings) – which makes that station's island platform the busiest interchange point outside of Norwich and/ or Colchester in East Anglia with the equivalent of circa 500,000 per annum changing trains
- No railway passenger should be faced with changing trains five or so miles into or towards the end of their journey whether it is 15 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 10 miles and have a 10 minute wait at Wivenhoe to change to fast train – which again is 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. This happens quite regularly in the evenings when the local train connection leaves without connecting with the main train from London and a 40 minute delay ensues
- 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

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services that provided journey times to/-from London of 75 minutes were cut as cost saving measures by British Rail.

#### **Therefore capacity enhancements should reflect the need to increase the frequency and scope of services to and from the Tendring Peninsular so that**

- The rail services reflect the increase of population and the high density of the urbanised coastal belt on the Tendring peninsular and also
- Reflects actual usage which is far higher than ORR estimates credit the Clacton & Walton Lines and allows the potential patronage to develop once service frequency and hours of operation extended which meet travel to work demands and requires at least
- A half hourly direct through regular interval service to from London/-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
- Accelerated journey times of Clacton, Walton or Harwich to/-from London in circa 60 – 65 minutes and
- London Services and Local services to be rearranged so that all local stations are served with half hourly stopping services to/from Colchester Stations-/-London throughout the day.
- 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: 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.
- The success of the August 2014 CLACTON AIRSHOW demonstrated that where extra trains are run increasing short term frequency, allied to advance marketing and publicity, that over 100,000 visitors arrived in CLACTON: it is understood the Tendring District Council were able to use software apps allied to CCTV to gauge the number of visitors
- **The appalling rail services now feature in one candidate's October 2014 Parliamentary By-election literature!**

#### **THEREFORE we make the following comments on the proposed infrastructure upgrades**

- With the increases in house building being planned for Essex and indeed even just for the Tendring District, where another 12,000 dwellings are required to be built – the equivalent to small town - demand for rail transport will continue to grow.
- Some specific operational/ infrastructure improvements to Clacton/Walton/Harwich services are now urgently needed and required,
- 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*), Walton line - a long dynamic loop, if not double tracking and/-or second platform Walton On The Naze (*to facilitate operational flexibility where services frequencies of half hourly and above were to be implemented*) and mid Tendring Stations platforms changes (*lengthening/ or equipping for selective door opening on air-door trains*) allied to The Gt Eastern mainline upgrade of capacity.
- 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 GT EASTERN MAIN LINE**

- Engineering earthworks and preparations are a major part of the upgrade planned works and it may be far cheaper in the long term for everything to prepare in readiness for four tracks throughout. The earthworks for four tracks are only marginally more costly than preparing for just three tracks,

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and further enhancements if undertaken piecemeal may be expected to be far more expensive in the long run than if those were all done together in one "hit". Indeed a few two to six week shutdowns might be preferable and cheaper than endless weekend engineering works, with the potential to overrun over many weekends over many years. The IPSWICH TUNNEL BLOCKADE during the summer holidays several years ago showed how a project might be managed,

- However, having considered the costs of the crossing-point work, switches and signalling works for these stretches of long dynamic loops installed to allow the flexibility of trains passing each other on the move, by not blocking trains being held at signals, which would still require extra points, signalling and switching in and out of those loops, would it alternatively be better value for money to build a second pair of parallel tracks first as part of a move to four tracking the whole stretch of line?
- Then subsequently switch the train operation to those new tracks whilst the original tracks are replaced from the trackbed up and upgraded so that a total rebuild of the Gt Eastern mainline (overdue) is achieved quickly and
- The capacity enhancement can also achieve with the minimum of disruption to current operations and in a far more cost effective manner. Overall there may not be greater costs given the potential to cut delays and disruption arising through a piecemeal approach spread over many years?
- The discussion has centred on specific pinch points instead of the overall long term picture and ignores or does not demonstrate awareness of the time cost of finance exemplified by the comment made on the Anglia local TV news, 6<sup>th</sup>/ 7<sup>th</sup> September about delays to the building of a road bypass to avoid the ELY Station level crossing that every year this is delayed the cost increase by £3millions – and this for barely a mile of road.
- This is not an appropriate place to discuss the impact of Net present Value using Discounted Cash Flow and the Capital Asset Pricing model, but we should consider whether 18 -24 months of "pain" and costs delivering benefits over 40-60 years are to be preferred to months of weekend disruptions and short term benefits which may require another upgrade in 15 years' time. One should reflect that the Central Government new works programme money enabled the LNER to four track the mainline from Chadwell Heath through to Shenfield at the start of the 1930's.
- In respect of track capacity between Chelmsford and Witham a very good reason for having the extra tracks is that the slower Braintree and Witham stopping services add to the traffic on that stretch of line, along with the prospect of ever lengthening freight trains (The old New Hall Loops eventually proved to be too short for the modern longer freight container trains – and the mistake of underestimating future freight train developments should not be repeated).
- We may consider providing some simulated NET PRESENT VALUE scenarios using synthetic "Ball Park" costings but note HM Treasury has deviated from the accepted Cost of Capital (NOBEL PRIZE territory) figure of 6% once used for Discounted Cash Flow to a Social Time Preference Rate issued under the last Administration of 3.5%.
- The Atkins study funded by Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk proposed long passing loops at Beaulieu Park, which minor works in respect of embankments and culverts and protective fences in proximity to the A12 etc. -might be an extra expense – and more than would be encountered north of Witham. However, the relevance of locational priorities should not be ignored.

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- It is understood that the original intention was for the Beaulieu Park to Witham loops to be completed in the 2019-2024 and that such work would be then linked to the new Beaulieu Park/ New Hall park & ride station development, which was part of the planning gain from permitted new housing development planned in that area.
- However, it should be noted that a study of the current timetable shows that to address the problem of lack of capacity; it is necessary for fast trains to overtake slower trains north of Chelmsford.
- If we are not careful, there will be trains timetabled to be looped solely in the short platform loops of a new Beaulieu Park station causing increased journey times, as this will require precise synchronisation of train movements which is so often inflexible in facilitating speedy movement of trains at maximum line speed.
- There used to be up and down loops at New Hall so there must be room for quadruple track at that point - but is this where Beaulieu Park is to be EXACTLY located? Perhaps there is a big hint from the past that New Hall is the right place for EXTENDED DYNAMIC loops. In any case, in the Down direction, by the time one has passed Witham, it's then not too far to Colchester where the BIG capacity problem disappears. But there is still a need to remove slower moving freight trains out of the way between Witham and Colchester.
- Under Long-term Key Priorities (assuming the completion of short-term priorities and planned projects) beyond 2024, under Infrastructure Projects the draft states "Additional capacity between Witham and Colchester" (Page 12): The new over-bridges north of Witham and beyond should leave enough space for more four tracks sections (albeit dynamic loops), but these may not be in the best place to relieve pressure from slow stopping Witham & Braintree services. It will may well prove desirable to replace and upgrade others and replace other level crossings.
- The extra dynamic loops north of Witham should however be viewed as additional or supplementary to the Chelmsford/Witham four tracking, as there will still be long slower moving freight trains to be looped into these sections out of the way of the faster InterCity and fast Ipswich, Harwich and Clacton/Walton line services.
- Also consideration should be given to potential/future/new London-facing connections off the Sudbury line near Marks Tey Station.
- Therefore would four tracking throughout be far better than two tracking and looplines / sidings?
- There is a need to enable the growth of traffic to/ from London to not only the Clacton, Walton and Harwich lines but also the East Suffolk Line ( We have been in contact w3ith ESTA) allied to planned population and housing growth.

Yours sincerely

John Smock  
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