



Reproduced With Permission Frinton Station Mural Illustrating Tendring Districts Diverse Coastal Legacy

## **"ONTRACK" TENDRING DISTRICT'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT VOICE -ANNUAL REPORT 2015**

**Walton On Naze, Frinton On Sea, Kirby Cross, & Thorpe Le Soken Rail Users Association**

*Representing Clacton & Walton Lines Rail Users for over 20 years*

**ONTRACK** is Tendring District's leading rail passenger user group based in Frinton and Walton but catering for the needs and well treatment of all the districts rail users and oversight of other public transport users. It is an officially recognised transport stakeholder body. We work closely with Tendring District Council on planning transport needs and since last year been part of Tendring District's Transport Liaison Group and also work Essex County Council, Rail Industry, Passenger Focus, RAIL FUTURE (Railway Development Society), Essex Rail users Federation and local Stakeholders. We have had conferences with the all three rail companies bidding to run our railway from October 2016 and it now seems that the decision and announcement of the successful bidder for the new greater Anglia Rail Franchise will now only be delayed until after the European Referendum has been held and the "Purdah Period" has also ended.

**"ONTRACK" officers together with leading Tendring District Council (TDC) Councillors such as Councillor Mark Platt, met each of the rail franchise bidding teams.** Together, we were able to put together a substantive case for improvements to Tendring and North East Essex rail services and infrastructure, in submissions to the Dept., for Transport, and Network Rail. Although bound by confidentiality as to the actual detail of the deliberations, we can say in general terms that all the bidders were very genuinely interested in the research, reports and information that we have produced including the passenger headcount censuses. In addition material was specifically prepared for these meetings viz. "A geographic route diagram of facts and figures" and a related slide show of useful photographs clearly illustrating the points made. Potential bidders also found the "ONTRACK" website resources useful – have you visited our revamped website? "ONTRACK" have also presented and briefed senior Tendring District Council Officers.

**The Dept. for Transport (DfT) in the Autumn of last year issued to the three shortlisted bidders a detailed franchise tender specifications. The three bidders are FIRST GROUP, NATIONAL EXPRESS and ABELLIO (Stagecoach ultimately did not consummate a planned partnership with ABELLIO).** If the DfT have not been paying lip service to the consultation process we should expect some of the requests made by County Councils, District Councils (such as TDC), Parish and Town Councils, East Anglian MPs, the stakeholder groups such as ourselves. The evaluation process is supposed to take account of "qualitative" and value for money and the financial methodology as set out by the HM Treasury Green Book, endorsed by Parliament. However, we suspect this will depend on how it is scored and weighted in the DfT's considerations. The new successful operator takes control late 2016. Clearly with mounting expectations that Tendring helps with the South East's Housing crisis, mounting fatal road accidents, improvements to road and rail are sorely needed

### **Airshow Days train Services and Seaside Special Trains:**

There were two special trains on the Thorpe to Walton line in the summer of 2015. The first ran on July 12th 2015 and was a charity charter in aid of Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research, operated by GB Railfreight from Ipswich to Eastleigh. This comprised 12 coaches with two engines of classes 47 and 66, one at each end. A photograph of the train at Frinton station appeared in the July 22nd edition of Rail Magazine. The second special was a "bucket and spade" train run by the Community Rail Partnership and which used the regular 09.56 departure from Colchester North on 5th August. The front coach was highly decorated with fishing nets, balloons and streamers and with all seats taken – mostly by young children – the noise was deafening! A most successful trip, thanks to organiser, Jayne Sumner, of Essex County Council. The 2015 AIRSHOW DAYS again saw extra trains run from London and Colchester supplementing the basic off peak hourly service, with the local Colchester – Walton Service diverted to Clacton and a direct Walton – Clacton – Walton shuttle



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operating, to provide trains virtually half hourly mid morning. With some smart marketing last year, and the Tendring District Council understanding the opportunities created by rail for tourism, 2014 broke all Airshow records and showed how improved rail services can boost the economy and reduce road congestion. The combination of good weather and the news media focus on Clacton following the Shoreham tragedy meant the traffic generated by the 2015 Airshow was also above expectations

**London Mainline (AKA Metro Services).** These services are now controlled and run by Transport for London (TfL)

**2015 AGM:** Well attended with a lively debate, one councillor present had retired from the railways and it is useful to have the benefit of serving and retired rail industry people working with our committee. As one of these would say Network Rail should be subservient to the needs of the train operator

**Our Chairman John Smock took an award for our TEAM at Tendring District Council's Pride of Tendring event Feb 5 2016 for community groups.** We have a base of experience within the group including, a retired senior rail manager. Also championing our work is Cllr. Mark Platt who chairs Tendring District's Transport Liaison Group. We have now got people across the social, professional and political spectrum making up the TEAM including Chartered Engineers. All are working for you towards the overall aim of improved transportation delivering economic growth, regeneration, tourists, access to employment and educational opportunities.

**Whilst we await with interest the Dept., For Transport announcement about which Train company gets to run our services, ONTRACK along with all other Councils, Stakeholders, has not stopped lobbying** - Nor cease to make Tendring District's voice heard and so continue to build the case for improved transport at e.g. the Suffolk Transport Conference December 2015, Railway Development Society (East Anglia AGM) February 2016 and at meetings with NETWORK RAIL in 2015 and 2016 Network Rail. Network Rail it seems has been planning to spend 1% of its Capital Budget on East Anglian Railways over next 10 years – in a region where big increases in housing and population are planned.

**ENGINEERING WORKS:** Network Rail has at last started to consult with Tendring district Council on forward notice of engineering works,. ONTRACK have recently raised the issued about the shortcomings of the bus replacement services not adhering to planned arrival times for first trains of day. The RAIL INDUSTRY has recently announced advance bookings up to 6 months are to be enabled so it can compete with the AIRLINES – but this with further drive the agenda for better management and advance notice of engineering disruption. Some works our now carried out late nights mid week. – although this has cause issues with modified timings of alternative arrangements

**E-TICKETING:** After trials around Norwich ABELLIO GRA recently announced the launch of SMART CARD season monthly and longer tickets for the London Cambridge and London Southend Victoria Routes, to be followed by introduction on the London Norwich Line, and to eventually include weekly tickets. Unlike the TfL OYSTER card this will rely on blue Tooth technology to scan the tickets. A virtual Tele-Sale Ticket Booth has been set up at Stansted Airport Station.

**Remember TEAM also stands for TOGETHER EVERYONE ACHIEVES MORE, and You are all welcome to come on board, and join THE TEAM and make a difference! 2016 (see our website) <http://www.ontrackrailusers.org.uk/> and FACEBOOK page**