

MINUTES OF MARPA AGM HELD ON 29th MARCH 2025 at 2pm at FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, ST JOHN'S STREET, BURY ST EDMUNDS

Present: 12 including 4 committee members

1. *Welcome, introductions & apologies*

Apologies: Peter Hulbert, Jen Overett, Peter Rutt, Peter Wakefield, Lloyd Butler, Robert Stripe, David Blackburn (Stowmarket TC)

2. *Presentations by (1) Alan Neville, Customer & Community Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia & (2) Sarah Grove from the Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton CRP*

Alan drew attention to the high level of passenger satisfaction associated with GA services. He asked his audience to suggest some of the reasons for increasing passenger footfall, not least on our Mid Anglia route. Good trains, decent reliability, welcoming train staff and a regular all day schedule were highlighted “pull factors”. The cost of daily parking and increasing congestion on the A14 were also identified as “push factors”. Given the ongoing growth in house building in communities all along the Mid Anglia route, the likelihood was that these factors would only increase, particularly now government policy is so strongly focused on house building - strengthening the case for additional services and/or bigger trains.

Alan also highlighted the activity of the several hundred adopters working voluntarily on stations across the GA network, helping to create a welcoming and environmentally attractive impression for travellers. In addition, he mentioned the recent appointment of Scott Dolling as Partnerships Manager, tasked with developing integrated transport across the Greater Anglia network in partnership with local authorities and other transport providers. The aim is to establish better connectivity between train and bus services, including expanding the PlusBus offer from its current base - all designed to make using public transport as convenient as possible in the region.

Finally, Alan referenced the substantial progress that had been made towards making the Mid Anglia CRP operational. An appointment to the critical post of officer was expected in the coming weeks. And thereafter a formal launch was intended. MARPA would naturally be represented.

Following on seamlessly from this input, **Sarah** outlined the history of the MSF CRP, its current organisational structure and how it relates to its key stakeholders (train operator, Network Rail, Community Rail Network, local councils & communities etc) before turning to the practical ways she as officer engages with communities. She illustrated this with a range of current and potential projects, from improved lighting and murals in a station “wonderpass” to a Rail & Ale trail and the possibility of an eco tourism bus service linking south Cambridgeshire tourist attractions to local rail stations. She emphasised that whilst all CRPs operate in a framework established nationally by CRN and the DfT, there was no question of one size fitting all - the needs and interests of the communities served were paramount. She made clear through her presentation that the ultimate test of any CRP was increasing passenger footfall, as over a period of time people's awareness of the train as a pleasant, safe and convenient way of travelling became more widely established. In this context, working with schools and youth groups such as cubs/scouts was seen as critical.

Following on from the two inputs, points arising from the audience included:

- On service matters, can thought be given to including intermediate stations in the Ipswich - Peterborough schedule, as is already the case with one service daily (1750 ex-Ipswich)?
- Discussion about mitigations on the Coldham Lane - Chippenham Junction section to allow greater service frequency to & from Cambridge pending some future double tracking; the focus was on introducing at least one further loop in addition to the existing loop at Dullingham station.

3. *Minutes of 2023 AGM (23/03/24)*

Approved without further discussion; no matters arising. (Proposed B. Walsh, seconded D. Webb)

4. *Chairman's Report 2023/24*

The report was tabled at the meeting. Positive features from the past year included the impressive increase in passenger footfall at all stations along the route. A range of issues relating to both service and station facilities was highlighted in terms of our ongoing dialogue with GA. The report was approved.

5. *Treasurer's Report*

The report was tabled at the meeting. Finances were sound, with the current balance in the region of £1200. A question linked to expenditure was asked about the number of members currently who requested a hard copy of the Newsletter - the answer was one, which is dealt with locally by the chair. This fact meant that having differential subscription rates was not particularly relevant for MARPA. After further discussion it was agreed that the committee should consider committing some of the available budget to publicity aimed at raising membership & raising MARPA's profile.

The report was approved. (Proposed by J. Mathiesson and seconded by J. Ford.)

6. *Election of chair*

R. Taylor agreed to continue as chair. There were no other candidates for the post. Proposed and seconded by J.Ford and D. Webb respectively.

7. *Election of officers & committee 2025/26*

The chair noted that two members of the committee - B. Moss & K. Jobson - had stood down earlier this year. The remainder of the current committee (seven members not including the chair) was re-elected unopposed.

8. *Any other business*

The meeting agreed that further thought should be given to opportunities via the Railway 200 project to promote MARPA's work as the local rail user group. This was something best left to the committee, who could report back to members via the Newsletter. There was also discussion of where the eastern turnaround facility for EWR might be located. It was agreed that more precise information on that key issue would most likely be available when the statutory consultation from EWR was published later in 2025.

Meeting closed at 4.15 pm