

## MINUTES OF MARPA AGM HELD ON 15th OCTOBER 2022 at 2.15 pm at FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, ST JOHN'S STREET, BURY ST EDMUNDS

Present: 12 including 6 committee members

### 1. *Welcome, introductions & apologies*

The chairman welcomed members and guests

Apologies: Dick Flower, Peter Hulbert, Keith Jobson, John Matthiesen, Bryan Moss, Roger & Stella Wolfe

### 2. *Presentations by Charles Baker, Senior Public Affairs Manager, Network Rail Anglia Route & Alan Neville, Customer & Community Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia*

The NR presentation focussed on outlining current and planned major infrastructure improvements in the region. It updated the outline NR provided at the 2021 AGM.

The focus was on 3 major schemes:

- Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE)
- Cambridge South station
- Cambridge area re-signalling (C3R)

All three schemes were at very different stages in the planning and approval process, with the re-signalling most advanced.

The GA input began with news of the recent award of “Best Train Operator” for 2022, based on levels of performance, the new train fleet, passenger satisfaction and sustained efforts to upgrade and renew station facilities. On the CRP campaign, there was an appeal to Marpa and its members to act as lobbyists with the various relevant councils in support of a GA bid. Reference was made to the investment in new facilities at Bury St Edmunds, Ely and March. The new lifts and footbridge at Stowmarket planned for autumn 2023 were also highlighted. Another plus was the work of station adopters across the network, where the vast majority of stations now benefit from the input of local volunteers. Less positively, it was clear that the train operator remains cautious – risk averse might be a better term – about introducing any significant changes to current operations on the route. This includes the introduction of an hourly service throughout the day at Kennett, although the possibility of a first move in that direction, starting with weekend schedules, was not ruled out.

Points arising from questions and answers included:

- The C3R scheme will not automatically lead to faster journey times – its principal benefit will be in terms of infrastructure resilience and reliability, notably at Dullingham and Chippenham Junction
- NR’s view was that the benefits of EACE might be achieved whether or not an early start was made on the much smaller but still important proposal to upgrade the junction at Haughley Junction
- GA is still exploring the promised option of an hourly service between Peterborough and Ipswich, focussing on weekend operations in the first instance

- EACE is seen by NR – and, presumably, the DfT – as primarily a freight enhancement scheme; the projected economic benefits, already seen as robust, would triple were the focus to be on freight operations alone
- Re-doubling or new passing loops between Cambridge & Newmarket did not emerge as a current priority for NR
- The twin concerns over Thurston station were raised. NR's main interest is in replacing the increasingly high risk barrow crossing. There was a view that progress on getting an alternative had been slow, but NR is now undertaking (yet another?) options exercise to determine the most cost-effective alternative. No timescale was offered. In terms of the long neglected station building, the efforts of CATs, the local campaign aiming to bring the building back into use, were applauded, but GA's position was that it was only prepared initially to ensure the building was weatherproofed and externally tidied up. Further work would be dependent on securing other sources of finance.
- Regarding the long running issue of establishing step free access to trains at Needham Market, it was suggested that two practical mitigations in the interim would be signage at the station highlighting the lack of a step free route to & from the Ipswich-bound platform coupled with train announcements advising travellers on east-bound services about the lack of a step free exit. GA would take both suggestions away and consider feasibility.
- A suggestion was made – perhaps in the spirit of entrepreneurial lateral thinking – that consideration be given to extending the terminus of some weekend services beyond either Ipswich or Norwich to popular coastal stations such as Sheringham and Lowestoft.

### 3. *Minutes of 2021 AGM (25/10/21)*

Approved without further discussion (Proposed B. Walsh, seconded L. Butler)

### 4. *Chairman's Report 2021/22*

The report was tabled at the meeting. Opportunity was also taken to introduce proposed amendments to the existing constitution, which were approved by the meeting. Proposed B. Walsh, seconded P. Rutt.

### 5. *Treasurer's Report*

The report was tabled at the meeting. Finances were sound and members were already using the new bank payment system to renew subscriptions. The report was approved. Proposed by R. Ellis and seconded by J. Overett.

### 6. *Election of chair*

J. Drake was re-elected unopposed. Proposed and seconded by R. Ellis and P. Wakefield respectively. All in favour.

### 7. *Election of officers & committee 2022/23*

Current committee re-elected unopposed. Proposed and seconded by R. Ellis and P. Wakefield respectively. The meeting agreed to the suggestion that Lloyd Butler take on the responsibilities of Membership Secretary from Peter Rutt with immediate effect.

8. *Any other business*

There was discussion of how best to act on GA's suggestion about CRP lobbying with the relevant councils. It was agreed that it would be further discussed at the next committee meeting.

Meeting closed at 4.10 pm