

Marpa

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association
www.marpa.org.uk

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Autumn 2014 Newsletter

I don't know if many of you share my intense frustration that 20 years after rail privatisation, the general public, media and even MPs can't seem to get their heads around the structure of the privatised rail network. The 'Greater Anglia' part of the railway (as opposed to our lines) has been in the news recently for major disruption caused by overrunning engineering works at Ipswich. The company carrying out the work were Network Rail, yet the then current MP for Clacton called for Greater Anglia to lose their franchise. Plainly absurd and for an MP to not know railways basics was a surprise.

I suppose I should know better than to be surprised by BBC's 'Look East' breakfast bulletin when they tried to explain the effects of a signal failure at Peterborough, apparently East Coast services between Birmingham and Cambridge were badly affected and the Greater Anglia service cross country from Norwich to the midlands were also disrupted. A case of really not knowing anything at all about train operating companies and routes served. It amuses me that Cross Country, a TOC giving valuable cross country connections from our area are never mentioned in any travel news, perhaps they have perfect timekeeping.

What do I read into this general ignorance? I think railways are irrelevant to a vast majority of the public, only rail users really care and know what is happening, yet we are all tax payers and putting money into the system. When the fare rises are heralded by government ministers saying 'the traveller should pay more and reduce the burden on the tax payer' my feeling is that the tax payer should wise up and know what the railway is and demand the government invest more effectively and not waste money on a forced internal market that is inherently more wasteful as many companies need to make a profit out of the fares we pay.

Mobile technology

I'm used to seeing many people on trains rapidly poking the screen of a smart phone or tablet, and I have several apps that will tell me the progress of my train, the speed I'm travelling at (if I'm really bored with nothing else to look at). On my phone 'Live Trains' is the most useful but it is only as good as the 3G signal, which means not a lot when on a country station. I'm not proposing a campaign for Wi-Fi everywhere on trains but 3G signal at stations where there is no train information (like Elmswell) would help.

Great Blakenham Station

After the last newsletter I was contacted by a member who is anxious for a new station at Great Blakenham (between Ipswich and Needham Market) to be on the agenda for the rail companies. A station was proposed as part of the 'Snoasis' development on the site of the demolished Claydon cement works. However the hope for Snoasis seem to be melting away as the economic climate falters and I'm not sure without Snoasis sufficient passenger numbers would be generated. Having said that a new station would undoubtedly bring new passengers, but with increasing freight travelling across country on our route the time for an additional station stop may not be available.

Thurston School Travel

Further to an item in my last newsletter Marpa has received further correspondence. It appears that Abellio Greater Anglia are unable to help Thurston students travel outbound from Stowmarket to Thurston as the trains already run at capacity and a potential further 100 students would cause overcrowding. I've seen the letter from Abellio Greater Anglia to the head of Thurston school and it appears that they did make an effort to help but can't. For the reasons behind the reasons see earlier comments on rail privatisation. The will is probably there in the train operating companies to be flexible but they have to deal with the various Government Departments, Network Rail, the train leasing companies and the contractual relationships between them all.

Committee Members

We desperately need new committee members – I've said this before and now in particular we need a treasurer from next April. One of the existing committee members can move up, but it would be really nice if somebody joined the committee. All that is really needed is a willingness to attend a meeting every other month, close to a mid-anglia line station. Do come along – even for a 'trial' meeting. If you think you might be interested please contact secretary@marpa.org.uk to find the date and time and location of the next meeting. There are coffee and biscuits, what more do you need?

Cancelled Trains

We would be interested in a quick e-mail to secretary@marpa.org.uk giving details of any cancelled trains members might have been inconvenienced by. We are just trying to get a feel of how many trains are cancelled and to see if any patterns emerge.

East Anglian Rail Prospectus

For those interested in future proposals for the railways in this region this is the link that will take you to the document.

<http://www.newanglia.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Rail-Prospectus-for-East-Anglia-consultation-.pdf>

From the Suffolk County Council Rail Newsletter Upgraded toilets and 'Bike and Go'

Smarter toilets and the new 'Bike and go' scheme are two improvements set to benefit passengers at Stowmarket Station. The improvements are part of Abellio Greater Anglia's commitment to upgrades at all 167 stations on its network. The upgraded and refurbished toilets offer a new fully accessible facility for those with mobility impairments, bringing the station up to the standard required by the Disability Discrimination Act. The 'Bike and Go' scheme allows passengers to hire bikes at the station for a £10 annual membership fee and daily hire cost of £3.80. Stowmarket becomes one of the three rail stations in Suffolk, along with Ipswich and Lowestoft, to provide new cycling facilities, including enhanced parking and the 'Bike and Go' initiative.

From 'Passenger Focus' :-

Regulated train fares in England set to rise by an average of 3.5 per cent

Inflation as measured by the Retail Prices Index (RPI) in July 2014 was 2.5 per cent and this figure will determine regulated train fare rises next January.

If it follows some previous years of RPI +1 per cent, this could mean, on average, that fares next January will increase by 3.5 per cent.

We know from our own research that value for money is a key priority for rail passengers. Our most recent [National Rail Passenger Survey](#) put passenger satisfaction on value for money amongst commuters as low as 31 per cent.

Passenger Focus is calling on the government to step in as it did last year and cap train fare rises at the rate of inflation.

Update – since the above was published fares have been capped at inflation with the ability to have some higher increases than the average

Marpa Membership

The membership of Marpa is from 1st August to 31st July each year. So this means all membership subscriptions are now due! Currently Marpa does not have the IT capability to send reminders to each and every member when the subscriptions are due other than to issue reminders in this Newsletter. Your membership is valued by us and the subscription is vital if we are to continue to campaign in support of issues that members feel strongly about in relation to our local rail routes etc.

Annual Membership Subscription Rates:

Adult - £5.00

Family/Joint - £6.00

Concession - £4.00

(Student / Senior / Unwaged / Disabled)

Please renew your 2014/ 2015 subscription by getting in touch with our Membership Secretary (Ann Henderson 01359 230139). Her address is:-

MARPA (Membership)

c/o 48 High Street,

Ixworth, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 2HJ

Please make your cheque payable to 'Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association'.

WEB SITE REMINDER

A further reminder to visit/use our website www.marpa.org.uk

Clara's bench

Some of you will remember that Clara Zilhai, a MARPA committee member passed away last year. As a memorial a bench has been placed on Downham Market station (her home town). It is a replica of Great Eastern Railway bench

