

# Marpa

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association  
[www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)

Published by MARPA  
Edited by Peter Rutt  
[peterrutt06@aol.com](mailto:peterrutt06@aol.com)

## Summer 2020 Newsletter – 'CORONAVIRUS EDITION'

Dear MARPA member.

It was an odd feeling to look back over my last newsletter issued in late February in possibly the last week of what we now perceive as 'normal life'. We were looking forward to the AGM and to better performance of Greater Anglia's new train fleet. Well, we had to postpone the AGM, but on the face of it the last few months have seen the train fleet 'bed in' and produce good performance statistics with 'on time' arrivals being over 95%. Now statistics never tell the true story and of course passenger numbers have been so low any passenger delays I'd guess almost eliminated, but it does, I think, show a very good underlying performance of the new trains which bodes well for the return of passengers in the next few weeks and months as the lockdown is eased, and more crucially, leisure and non-essential travel is allowed. Let us hope that the good performance continues into the autumn. Last autumn saw the new trains have 'issues' with the infrastructure that hopefully are well in the past now.

### AGM

We issued a notice postponing the AGM when it became quite clear that normal life was suspended but thought that by July/August we might be able to meet again. As it has become increasingly clear that is not possible in the foreseeable future the decision has been made to CANCEL the AGM and hopefully pick up next year where we left off. Although that is by no means certain. The reports and formal business of the meeting really come down to the Chairman and Treasurer's report. These reports are given below.

If we had a sense of humour (and a great deal of patience) we could have tried a 'Zoom' AGM, but those who have experienced on line meetings of people who don't meet regularly will be aware of the chaos that ensues. I've seen enough of online meetings to think that face to face meetings are still very much required!

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR APRIL 2019 TO JULY 2020

The main news is the coronavirus and the effect it is having on our activities. We have been unable to hold any committee meetings since 14 March, the 2020 AGM has been cancelled. We have not met with railway management since February and notice boards have not been updated. We have, however, been able to raise problems with railway management by email. Email has also been used to pass information and discuss problems between committee members.

The committee has continued to meet at two monthly intervals on Saturday mornings until March 2020, with other members attending some meetings. Meetings are usually held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of odd numbered months (but suspended at present) If you wish to attend please

check in advance as dates, which are shown on our website, sometimes have to be altered due to other events and the locations can vary. Two newsletters are produced each year.

We need more committee members. There is, at present, 1 vacancy. The four main positions are held by two members each doing two tasks. If we do not have more members it is likely that we will be unable to do everything that we need to do. If you want Marpa to continue its work why not consider joining the committee. We would like more members from the eastern end of the route but all are welcome. If you are undecided why not come to a committee meeting and see what we do.

We have met railway managers to discuss problems and concerns. We met Alan Neville in Newmarket on 5 June.

There was a User Group Forum at Greater Anglia's head office in Stratford on 22 January 2020 which 2 committee members attended. Railfuture East Anglia Branch meetings were attended by various members of the committee.

A Great Eastern Main Line conference was held in Chelmsford on 11 July 2019 which was attended by a committee member. On 6 September 2019 an important conference on the future of rail services for Newmarket was held at the Jockey Club Rooms - two members of the committee were present.

Our website and station noticeboards are updated as needed. Opportunities to publicise our existence and aims are taken whenever possible, such as inclusion in websites and publications listing organisations and writing letters to newspapers.

The main change on the railway has been the introduction of the new Stadler bi-mode trains to replace the diesel multiple units. The introduction got off to a poor start with signalling problems and software issues on the trains. These trains with 3 or 4 carriages provide more seats and are capable of maintaining schedules with some time to spare. Hopefully this will lead to some improvement in journey times.

As in previous years we received newsletters from Greater Anglia (about every 2 months), Railfuture (quarterly for both Railwatch and Rail East) and Transport Focus (monthly) giving updates and information. Network Rail now have Public Affairs Managers who provide us with monthly updates on engineering work and plans for improvements to the network. These updates also include statistics on train performance for the previous month.

We continue to deal with complaints and problems passing these to Greater Anglia or other relevant authorities where necessary. One problem was replacement bus services not calling at Elmswell, this has now been resolved.

At last some funding is being provided to improve access to Needham Market station. Funding is also being provided for a Northern entrance to Bury St Edmunds station to link with the new car park.

Our campaign for a Community Rail Partnership for the Ipswich – Cambridge route continues and we will discuss the next step (which includes writing to local authorities) when the committee next meets.

JOHN DRAKE 10 July 2020

## **TREASURER'S REPORT FOR JANUARY 2019 TO DECEMBER 2019**

Income in 2019 was £167, up from £140 in the preceding 12 month period..

Expenditure is really only the items of hall hire for the AGM, website hosting fee and the Railfuture subscription

The total of expenditure in 2019 was £115.30. The 31<sup>st</sup> December closing balance was £578.01

We are therefore 'trading' sustainably.

You will see that there is a healthy balance at the moment and we have no plans to raise the subscriptions this year.

### **Number of members**

At 2019 AGM we had 28 paid up member and finished the year on 26. Today we have 18 paid up members, this has been adversely affected by the cancellation of the AGM in April as many of you press cash and cheques into my hand at that meeting. If you are wondering whether you have paid please check your membership status with me

PLEASE RENEW BY SENDING A CHEQUE IF YOU POSSIBLY CAN. I'm sorry that we cannot handle online/credit payments but we are quite small and such facilities cost (or are impossible to arrange for a small member organisation.)

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

If you have sent me a cheque to renew your membership since March it is likely to still be in my files pending a trip to Stowmarket which coincides with opening times at the bank. I've been a few times and find that the opening times seem to be 'flexible', so please don't think that I've lost your cheque.

### **MARPA Membership**

The membership of MARPA is from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December each year. If you have **NOT** renewed for the year 2020 please do so now! 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 2020 subscription by getting in touch with our Membership Secretary (Peter Rutt 01359 242464). His address is:-

MARPA (Membership)

c/o Well House, The Street, Elmswell, Bury St Edmunds, IP30 9BS

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

### **WEB SITE REMINDER**

Please visit/use our website [www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)



One of the new 'FLIRT' units on our route stopping at Stowmarket



A Network Rail test train checking for track and associated infrastructure defects passes Elmswell late evening in June.