

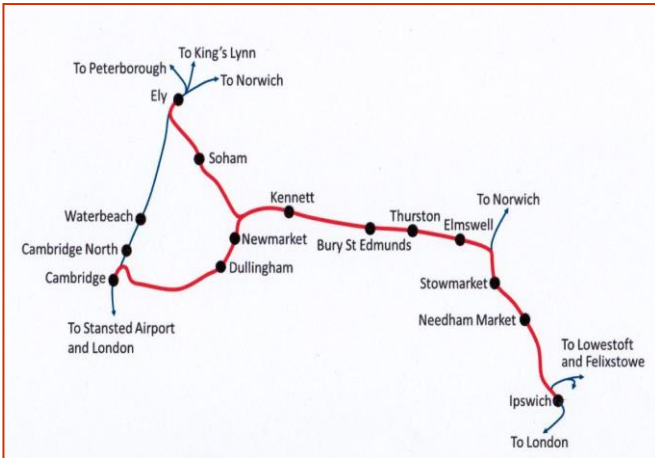
# MARPA

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association



## NEWSLETTER June 2024

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### Dear MARPA member

Welcome to our June newsletter. As you will immediately see, we have amended the format and refreshed the layout for the first time in about ten years. We on the committee hope you like it and whilst pleased with the effect we do invite comments, whether you love it or hate it. We hope to have the following cycle of meetings and newsletters:

#### Committee Meetings (4 per year)

End July; October; January; April (AGM late March/early April)

#### Newsletter (4 per year)

End August; November; February; May. The idea is that we can bring you up to date news on our campaigns and matters affecting our route.

### Thoughts from the Chair

#### Back Again!

Where did that time go? I cannot believe that it has been twelve years since I had to leave the MARPA committee, upon joining Greater Anglia as Supervisor at Bury St Edmunds Railway Station, and so faced a conflict of interest. At that time I was Secretary and, with others, supported John Drake as Chair.

At this point I just want to pay tribute to John and all of the tireless work he did over the years in furthering the MARPA cause. It was such a shock when John left us in



December last year after a short illness. We will miss him.

I now return to the fold as John's successor and I know that he will be a tough act to follow...but I will do my best! I (re)join MARPA at an exciting time; the existing committee is experienced, knowledgeable and energetic and we are enjoying links and dialogue with many rail related (and some not directly related but supportive) organisations. As I know, looking out from within the railway industry, an awful lot has changed over the past twelve years; mostly good, but not all, so there is still a lot of work for us to do.

### **MARPA is growing!**

And as new Chair I am especially pleased to welcome new members to MARPA – town and parish councils from along the route who have chosen to add their weight to our ongoing campaigns for better services and facilities. The seven councils now joining our pioneer council, Elmswell, are Bury St Edmunds, Needham Market, Newmarket,

### **EXCURSION TRAINS USING THE MID ANGLIA ROUTE**

Our route saw a steam hauled excursion train from Colchester to Derbyshire earlier in May. A Royal Scot class locomotive is seen hauling the luxury train past Elmswell in the drizzle of an early May morning.



The Midland Pullman set of a refurbished HST will use the Mid Anglia line on 16<sup>th</sup> August, it picks up from Stowmarket and Bury St Edmunds so if you fancy a 'voyage' over several days to the west coast of Scotland this is the link [midlandpullman.com/trips-tours/](http://midlandpullman.com/trips-tours/)

Soham, Stowmarket, Thurston and Woolpit. I am confident that input from our council partners will help inform our dialogue with both Greater Anglia and Network Rail. Having councils on board can only help our engagement with the rail industry, so I welcome this really positive development and look forward to a productive working relationship.

### **Mid Anglia route – how things stand**

Whilst there is much to celebrate in terms of the service currently available on the route, there remains much to do in terms of enhancing both services and facilities for travellers. Yes, we benefit from a regular service, seven days a week, on state-of-the-art trains that have impressively high rates of reliability. The Greater Anglia staff we encounter are almost invariably helpful and professional. And we are aware that travellers elsewhere in the country have to tolerate poorer quality services – things could be very much worse! All this is supported by the official statistics about rail use that were summarised in our last newsletter – numbers travelling on our route continue to grow post-Covid. But as other items in this newsletter remind us, progress that builds on these strong foundations seems very limited. In common with other rail user groups working with GA, we are frustrated by what feels like a lack of ambition – for more and faster services, improved connections and better station facilities, including better access for all rail users. We hope GA agrees there is absolutely no room for complacency, particularly when considering the huge benefits of people shifting from cars to trains in terms of decarbonisation and a cleaner environment for all.

### **MARPA catch up with Greater Anglia – Newmarket 21 May 2024**

This is a summarised version of a discussion involving Alan Neville,

Stakeholder & Partnerships Manager at GA, and members of the committee.

### ***New Timetable December 2025 – any revisions possible earlier?***

AN was more confident about the likelihood that the new timetable will be available from end of 2025. He was however clear that no changes would be possible prior to that. He also indicated that with the Cambridge Resignalling programme running late, Network Rail's embargo on introducing a later final train from Cambridge could conceivably extend into 2026. More positively, he suggested that he bring a planning/timetabling colleague from GA with him to our next catch up to allow a wider discussion around the range of factors involved in introducing timetable enhancements.

### ***Progress towards establishing a Mid Anglia Community Rail Partnership***

We were assured that it is still a question of when rather than if; it is possible that formal announcements may be made in the next few months, subject to final funding commitments from partner local authorities.

### ***Kennett bus replacement – revisit existing arrangements***

The sticking point appears to be that travellers from Kennett using a bus replacement service still need to have access to a ticket machine, so the concerns over pedestrians using the narrow and unlit road to/from Kentford remain. AN promised to pursue the matter further, given recent complaints made to MARPA about lack of a bus service when the line is blockaded for engineering works at weekends.

### ***GA view – feasibility of Newmarket Rd Park & Ride bus using rail interchange at Cambridge station***

A matter for the bus operator, Stagecoach. AN would provide MARPA with contact details.

### ***Bury – Cambridge platform waiting room***

The scheme remains on GA's "asset wish list", and would be subject to available funding.

### ***Service capacity for Ipswich Town FC home games 2024/5***

AN assured us that the issue of rail service capacity for home games now that the team would be playing in the Premier League was on GA's radar.

### ***John Drake plaque at Ely station***

GA is happy to facilitate; practical details to be finalised outside the meeting.

### ***Latest news re. Stowmarket/Needham access enhancements***

We were informed that the Stowmarket scheme is on track for later this year; Needham as part of the Access for All bid in new control period is due for (delayed) announcement, possibly June 2024? Since the meeting MARPA has been informed that the installation of lifts in the new bridge at Stowmarket is now subject to delay. MARPA is seeking clarification from Network Rail.

### ***Progress over securing Thurston station building tenant***

Responsibility for securing tenants for redundant GA station buildings is now in the hands of GA's parent company, UK Transport Holdings; AN confident that a more hands on approach to finding a tenant was now apparent. CATS, the campaign group at Thurston, was aware.

## ***Mid-Anglia Community Rail Partnership – almost there!***

With the likelihood that a Community Rail Partnership will be announced for the Mid Anglia route in the coming months, you might reasonably ask – what is a CRP and what benefits can it provide for the communities it covers?

Originally created to help strengthen the economic case for rail lines considered at risk of closure or "rationalisation", the CRP concept has since evolved to incorporate the wider social and environmental benefits of rail travel – and the many opportunities for social involvement and engagement

provided by the existence of a regular passenger service.

First and foremost, a CRP brings together the towns and villages served by the rail service with the passenger train operator, local authorities and others, including local businesses and charities. The four strategic “pillars” common to each CRP involve

- providing a voice for the community (e.g. by advocating for service improvements and acting as a critical friend to the train operator)
- promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel (e.g. by publicising

- active travel opportunities and public transport links to rail services)
- bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion (e.g. through station adoption, other volunteering opportunities and removing barriers to rail travel, especially by groups not currently accessing rail services)
- supporting social and economic development (e.g. by encouraging take up of rail for both work and leisure, and developing links with local tourism)

Funding for a partnership officer, who coordinates activities that help address these four pillars, is provided by the train operator and the participating local authorities. These funders establish a board tasked with setting strategic priorities and overseeing the work of the partnership officer. As the rail user group, MARPA would help inform these priorities and assist the CRP board in identifying key areas for attention.

Working with schools, colleges, youth groups and local volunteers, the CRP can really promote social engagement, enhance station environments, expand the range of people using trains and help publicise and encourage local tourism. The CRP will build on existing strengths – including the network of adopters already working to enhance station environments along the route and the well-used schedule of walks linked to stations published on the MARPA website.

On our route, travelling west from Ipswich towards Ely and Cambridge, and serving all the communities along the way, the opportunities provided by the CRP will be huge. Existing CRPs serving routes in the south and east of Suffolk already do outstanding work and will serve as valuable models from which the Mid Anglia CRP can definitely learn.

This is an initiative MARPA has supported and campaigned for over many years. We

### NON PASSENGER TRAINS OVER THE MID-ANGLIA ROUTE

Whilst we focus on the passenger service at MARPA, our line is used for one of the most intensive freight services in the country, mainly the movement of shipping containers ‘boxes’ to and from the port of Felixstowe.



A train from Doncaster to Felixstowe passing Stowmarket earlier this year.



The track inspection saloon and a garishly painted Class 37 arrives at Elmswell. This train allows track and signal engineers a ‘drivers’ eye view of the track.

look ahead positively to some good news in the near future – and of course will ensure all members are kept up to date about progress.

## **Mid Anglia services: key asks in a revised timetable**

Members may already be aware that a significant timetable revision for Mid Anglia services, together with the rest of Greater Anglia's regional network, is on the horizon. Originally scheduled for introduction from December 2025, it now looks as if that timeline may be moved back, due to a delay in finalising the new timetable on the East Coast Mainline. Despite this, MARPA in collaboration with Railfuture has presented Greater Anglia (GA) with a number of proposals which we believe will enhance the offer to travellers, with more and faster services increasing passenger numbers and leading progressively to more modal shift from road to rail. The proposals are summarised below.

### **Later services Cambridge-Newmarket-Bury St Edmunds**

Cambridge, with its wealth of restaurants, clubs and cultural attractions, boasts the major night economy for a very wide area. But for many travelling by rail from the east, one current drawback is that the last departure from Cambridge on the Mid Anglia service is at 22.47.

On Friday and Saturday nights we are asking GA to consider operating the last Ipswich to Bury St Edmunds service of the weekday (departing Ipswich 22.21) through to Cambridge, with return from Cambridge at 23.47 all stations to Stowmarket at least (where it could form an additional Norwich service if ultimately the unit is stabled there.)

A 23.47 departure from Cambridge would also allow an hour later in London for Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds users than is currently possible... leaving King's Cross at 22.39 in the current timetable.

Such a change will enable a much larger swathe of East Anglia away from the radial mainlines to enjoy a later departure from London.

### **Extend the Cambridge-Ipswich service to incorporate the Ipswich-Felixstowe service – “Cambridge-Felixstowe”.**

Currently the two services connect poorly at Ipswich – a 59 minute wait eastbound offers little incentive for through travel. And the 25 minute wait at Ipswich on the return leg means that travellers from Mid Anglia stations wanting a day out at the seaside can spend nearly 90 minutes in total at Ipswich station. Not a great incentive for sustainable travel.

An hourly “Cambridge to the seaside” through service would encourage leisure traffic from the A14 corridor towns and villages – enabling economic growth by supporting the seaside town’s tourist economy.

A valuable social service will also be created by enabling car-less families to access the seaside directly from inland – aside from assisting modal shift by offering a convenient car-free travel option to the seaside. A convenient and comfortable single rail journey in modern trains versus the jeopardy of an increasingly busy A14...

For GA, an operational plus is that platform occupancy at Ipswich would be lessened – the “turnback” time for the Cambridge to Ipswich service would be transferred to Felixstowe.

No change is necessary to the timings of the current Cambridge-Ipswich service. Currently good connections at Cambridge are available much of the day onto direct Cambridge-Stansted Airport services. No extra rolling stock or staff would be required.

### **Stopping patterns and improved journey times**

Data consistently shows ever increasing numbers travelling towards Cambridge.

Whilst understanding the capacity constraints caused by single line sections, we are urging GA to explore ways of running extra services Monday to Friday, at least in the peaks. Alongside this, we are asking GA to build on the additional stops recently introduced at Kennett – 10 services a day still don't stop there. We also want GA to examine seriously the case for introducing a two hourly Ipswich-Ely service, giving Ely an hourly Ipswich link alongside the existing Peterborough service. Within this proposal we are also asking GA to consider introducing stops on all Peterborough services at Needham Market, Elmswell and Thurston, as already happens on the 17.42 Peterborough service from Ipswich. The superior performance of the new bi-mode fleet should mean these additional stops could be introduced without significantly impacting on overall journey times. We are also asking GA to look for ways of improving overall journey times between Ipswich and Cambridge.

Via the MARPA newsletter we will ensure members are kept up to date about all developments regarding the new timetable. Please contact the editor if you have any thoughts or further suggestions about the timetable.

## **IMPORTANT - Timetable changes to be aware of**

Members should be aware of the June 2nd timetable changes. We attempt to summarise them below following scrutiny. There is the regular addition of an early Peterborough service on Sundays for the summer, but Dullingham gets an extra early station call Mon-Fri, otherwise there are just lots of one- two- and, occasionally six-minute adjustments. Members may already be aware that a significant timetable revision for Mid Anglia affects travellers from Mid Anglia stations wanting morning travel to Norwich. Timings of northbound Norwich

## **MARPA Membership**

Your subscription will run to the end of the month a year after your joining date. Your membership is valued by us and your subscription is vital if we are to continue to campaign in support of issues on our local rail routes that members feel strongly about.

Our bank account will allow direct payment of subscriptions via BACS. In order to pay direct into our account please use Sort Code 52-30-31. Our bank is Nat West, account name MARPA, Account number 49892002

PLEASE, PLEASE give your name and add 'SUBS' when you make any online payment, that will really help us to identify your payment on an internet-based account!

You can pay using PayPal by sending your payment to [membership@marpa.org.uk](mailto:membership@marpa.org.uk) - PayPal provide all the information needed to identify you.

Finally, you can still send cheques if you prefer. Please make your cheque payable to 'Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association' and post to the address below.

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trains have been adjusted, there is no listed connection for the 0844 service from Cambridge and for the 0742 from Cambridge the connection involves a wait of almost an hour at Stowmarket! So anyone travelling from Newmarket, Kennett, Bury, Thurston or Elmswell has exactly the same issue.

MARPA will take this up with GA. On the plus side, service connections south from Norwich appear unaffected.

## **WEBSITE REMINDER**

Much more information available on our website [www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)