

Marpa

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

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Spring 2017 Newsletter

Welcome to the spring newsletter. Firstly I would like to thank all the members who made contact with me after the last newsletter and those who allow me to email their newsletter rather than printing and posting. I am very happy to print and post the newsletter to those who would prefer it that way (I know not all our members have email) but email does save MARPA valuable funds.

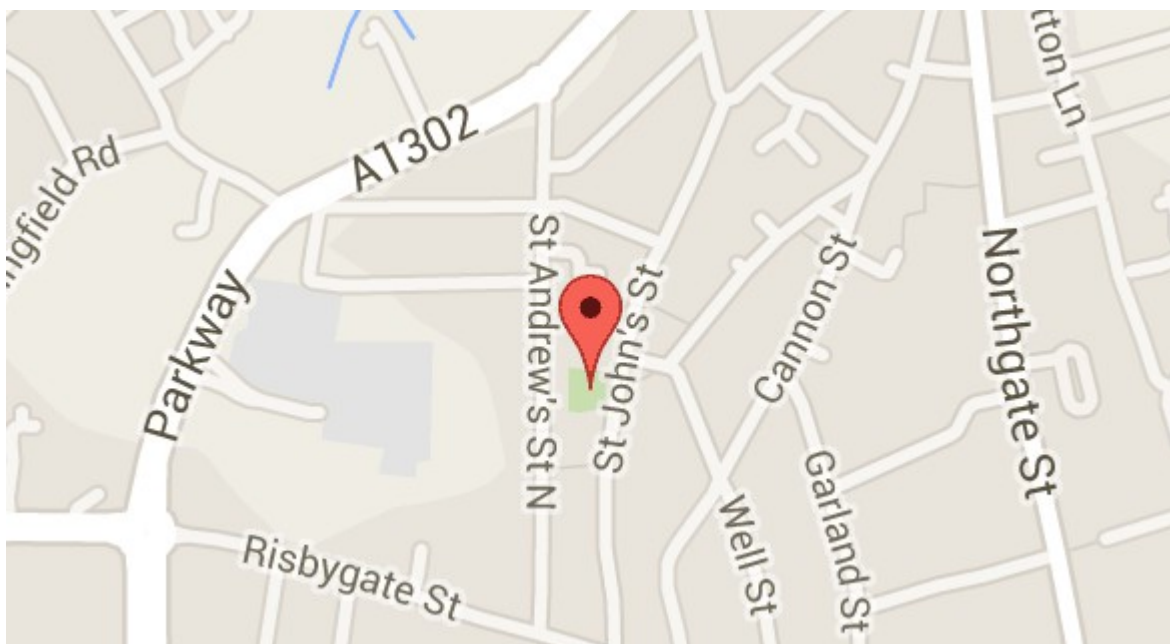
I think it has been 'generally OK' out on the Ipswich – Cambridge line over the winter. Since I became self-employed I have lost touch a bit with everyday performance of the railway, sometimes I can hear the 170s starting away from Elmswell and a glance at my watch usually shows them at the expected time. Storm Doris caused some disruption I know, so how did the railway cope? Were passengers kept informed? Please let us know as we can feed back this information into our meetings with Abellio Greater Anglia.

AGM

The AGM takes place at 2.00pm in the Friends Meeting House in St Johns Street Bury St Edmunds on Saturday 22nd April. Please do come and meet other people with an interest in our line. Refreshments will be available.

There will be a talk from two Greater Anglia representatives, James Steward, Area Customer Service Manager and Alan Neville, Customer Engagement Manager

Do come along, all are welcome and it is good to put faces to names and to meet new people. I will take payments for those that wish to join or renew. There is usually an attendance of over 20 and FREE refreshments are available.



Bury Station Work completed

Last October Greater Anglia completed works on Bury St Edmunds station. They have cleaned, repaired and repainted 500 metres of canopies and roof glazing, resurfaced 500 metres of platform, improved platform drainage and levelled up where the platforms were uneven. Brick repairs have included cleaning and re-tanking, re-rendering and redecoration. The works included 'behind the scenes' repairs to all windows and sandstone parapets, so not only has the immediate customer facing environment been improved and smartened, longer term works are preventing the further decay of the property. This is warmly welcomed by all passengers at the station and if I think back to how the station was in the early 2000s the difference is subtle but no longer do you sit on a platform and think 'what a state'. During the day at least the station has a feel of 'hustle and bustle' and no longer feels neglected.

Are We Commuters or Passengers at the Train Station?

At the age of 57 I don't feel I have quite entered the age of being a 'grumpy old man', however I'm increasingly irked by the use in the media of 'Commuters' to describe 'travellers' on trains whom I think are properly called passengers. Commuters in my mind travel to and from home and work/school daily and therefore is a specific group of passengers. Passengers are all those on the train, commuters, leisure travellers, those on a journey for work and is a much better word.

My second annoyance is 'train station', when did railway station cease to exist as a word in common parlance? I can't even blame the influence of the US led internet for this as the American for station is 'depot'!

Abellio sells 40% share in Greater Anglia to Mitsui

I reproduce below the press release from Greater Anglia about Mitsui joining Abellio as a long term partner in the franchise. I admit I wasn't sure how to edit down the press release without losing detail. To me this partnership is a surprise but we will see how it works out. The new trains 'FLIRTS' or **F**ast **L**ight **I**nnovative **R**egional **T**rains will be with us from around 2020 and will be 'bi-mode' (what I think used to be called Electro-diesels) so they can run anywhere on the network using diesel power on rural non-electrified routes.

Japanese company identified as the best partner to support Abellio in delivering ambitious programme of improvements

Abellio UK ("Abellio") has signed an agreement to sell 40% of the Greater Anglia rail franchise to Mitsui & Co., Ltd. ("Mitsui"), pending final regulatory approvals. This fulfils Abellio's long-standing objective of finding a suitable partner to run Greater Anglia in a 60:40 joint venture.

Abellio and Mitsui have a proven track record of working together, having first entered into a joint venture to bid for the West Midlands rail franchise in 2016. Following this process, Abellio felt that Mitsui would be the best partner to help it deliver its ambitious programme to transform the Greater Anglia franchise.

Mitsui is a global conglomerate with business interests in numerous different sectors, including infrastructure, integrated transportation systems, energy, and IT and communications. The deal is also notable for marking the first time a Japanese company has become a shareholder of a British train operating company.

Abellio re-won the Greater Anglia franchise in August 2016, having first operated it from February 2012. It will continue to have a majority stake in the business and be in overall control. The franchise agreement will see £1.4bn in investment over the next nine years, with the introduction of a completely new fleet and a commitment to cut average journey times by 10%.

Dominic Booth, Managing Director of Abellio said:

“We are delighted to have reached agreement with Mitsui, fulfilling our long standing objective of running the franchise as a 60:40 joint venture. With the introduction of Mitsui’s knowledge and experience, we look forward to delivering significant improvements for Greater Anglia’s customers, including through the introduction of a brand new fleet.”

What MARPA Does

It is clear from conversations and correspondence that have been reported to RailFuture that some people think railway campaign groups such as MARPA are fairly ineffective and are often a bunch of retirees cosying up to the train operators to get free days out. Commuter organisations such as those that have sprung up in the lengthy Southern Rail-ASLEF dispute have been powered by young professionals using Facebook and Twitter to gain support from a deeply fed up travelling public.

Whilst MARPA committee members are all male (and we would love to change this) and a fair few of us have grey hair (if any) we are still committed to campaigning for improvement on our route. We try to be realistic, there is no point in bleating on about a half hourly service (*until growth requires this!*) or wanting extensive station facilities at rural stations. However we like to hold Greater Anglia to account for their promises, to ensure that they are being delivered and to point out incremental improvements that can be made. It is still a source of great annoyance to Elmswell’s travellers that the information point is out of use and that there is only one. It is of no use to anyone travelling Ipswich bound as it is the wrong side of the level crossing. No-one will go and check and risk being marooned for a late running train. Likewise the reliability of the Newmarket station ticket machine has being a long running saga. I think it is now working but why risk getting tickets there for a long journey if it can’t print them?

We do meet with Greater Anglia, usually around two times a year and a report on our discussions is below.

Report on MARPA Meeting with Greater Anglia

The meeting started with an update from the train operating company, to brief the MARPA members present on the new franchise and describe the works successfully carried out since we last met.

The meeting is two way and we take the opportunity to discuss problems. In November these included:

Facilities at Newmarket station

Inadequate bus services in Newmarket area including no Sunday service (not a direct GA issue, but one of integrated public transport which if resolved, would help GA)

Failures of train conductors ticket machines

Not enough cycle parking stands at Newmarket station

Information display at Newmarket shows trains only 40 minutes before departure – needs to show at least next one in each direction – Needham Market shows for next 3 hours.

Car parking at Bury St Edmunds station – Greater Anglia have no land available for parking – Jo Churchill is talking to Network Rail about the problem.

MARPA notice board at Newmarket – this has not been replaced as previously promised.

Class 170 Units to be refurbished.

I reproduce the Greater Anglia press release below – these are the trains that we use daily on our line

‘Rail passengers in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire are to benefit from cleaner, smarter trains with more seats and plug points, as Greater Anglia’s first refurbished Class 170 trains re-enters passenger service.

170 270 is the first train to receive a complete overhaul and now features plug sockets, refurbished seats with new cushions, backs and covers, new carpets, new flooring in the toilets, refurbished heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, new wall panels, repainted vestibules, grab handles and grab rails, a deep clean throughout and a new livery in Greater Anglia colours.



The work was carried out by Arriva Traincare at their facility in Crewe under contract to Porterbrook Leasing who are investing £5 million into the upgrade of Greater Anglia’s eight three-carriage and four two-carriage trains which operate on routes including the Norwich to Cambridge, Ipswich to Cambridge, Ipswich to Lowestoft and Norwich to Lowestoft lines. Every three-carriage train will also have six more seats installed.

The project is expected to be completed in early 2018.

Greater Anglia’s Customer Service Director, Andrew Goodrum, commented: “As part of the new nine year franchise we will replace our entire fleet of trains with 1,043 brand new carriages, but in the meantime, I’m delighted that the refurbishment of our fleet of Class 170 trains will provide improved comfort and a better travelling experience for our customers.”

Bury St Edmunds Masterplan

MARPA would still love to see a properly mapped and pedestrian friendly walking route between Bury town centre and the station. The station is not central, not visible from the centre and the ‘wrong side’ of the increasingly busy Tayfen Road. Traffic islands are provided to aid pedestrian crossing, however the visually impaired and less agile find this intimidating and the traffic islands don’t accommodate a push chair or mobility scooter very easily.

The Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan is a project to shape the future of the town centre so that it works for people. It is not just about ensuring that it continues to attract shoppers and visitors for decades to come, but also that it is accessible, and a place where people can live and work happily. That includes looking at how the town continues to cope with growth and other future pressures such as technological changes, and responds sensitively to a larger number of people and cars.

A huge part of the town centre masterplan will be to look at those elements of the town centre that don't really work and what can be done about them

Over the next eight weeks until 21 April, there will be a public engagement campaign to get views on what the Issues and Options are for Bury St Edmunds Town Centre.

Events include:

- 24 March, 10am to 5pm at Waitrose, Robert Boby Way, Bury St Edmunds
- 7 April, 10am to 5pm at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre
- 8 April, 8am to 3pm at Bury St Edmunds market

Other events are in the pipeline – more information will be posted throughout the consultation at www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/bsemasterplan on Twitter @StEdsBC and on the Facebook page /StEdmundsburynews.

The Issues and Options report and associated documents are available online at www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/bsemasterplan

Hard copies will also be available at:

- West Suffolk House
- The Apex
- Bury St Edmunds Library
- West Suffolk College
- Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre

Information leaflets will be available at:

- The Athenaeum
- The Citizen's Advice Bureau in Risbygate Street
- Skyliner Leisure Centre
- Moyse's Hall Museum

MARPA Membership

The membership of MARPA is from **1st January to 31st December** each year. If you have **NOT** renewed for the year 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)

Our Membership Secretary is Peter Rutt. 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

An ongoing reminder to visit/use our website www.marpa.org.uk

Parting Shot

2 Class 170 units pass at Bury St Edmunds in October 2016, photo by member Ben Walsh

