

Marpa

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

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Autumn 2023 Newsletter

Dear MARPA member.

There has only been one hot topic during the summer, the government led proposal that the train operating companies close their station ticket offices. You will no doubt all be aware of the furore that resulted, with the proposals being vociferously objected to by many people and the clear view that the proposals discriminated against the less able, poorer and less tech savvy members of society, who are often frequent railway travellers. The response of nearly three quarters of a million objections was, I believe, one of the biggest levels of objection ever seen to a government proposal. We shall no doubt see soon what revised proposals are put forward. As I live in Elmswell with no ticket office and I'm fairly clear in my head about routes and times I do tend to use 'Apps' to purchase tickets because I have to. However, when it is a complex journey, the routine has always to go to Stowmarket to consult with the ticket office staff and book in advance. My elderly mother-in-law and her friends have all but given up on the railway saying that it does not welcome old people. I find this sad; the railway should be equally welcoming to everyone.

I believe that performance along our route has generally been good this summer. There are always operational incidents from time to time (See Allan Gould's item below); but it is the response to these incidents that the railways should be judged. In Allan's case it appears that the railway industry behaved well and the staff were open and friendly.

A Community Rail Partnership for Mid Anglia looks some steps nearer...

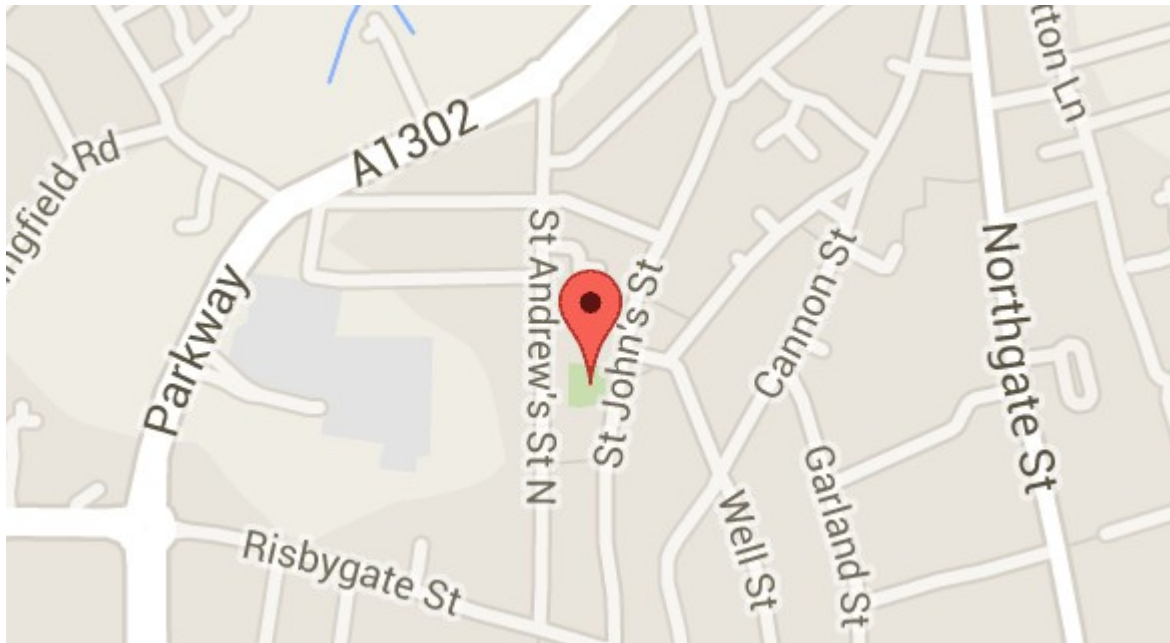
Light at the end of the tunnel? As a result of efforts by Marpa, discussions have taken place recently involving the relevant local authorities along the Mid Anglia route and Greater Anglia. Prospects now look better than ever for the establishment of a Community Rail Partnership - meaning more co-ordinated community engagement with the railway and the development of projects encouraging greater take-up of rail travel, especially among groups who might never have considered rail as a viable and environmentally superior alternative to road. East Anglia can boast a number of highly effective CRPs which have worked with diverse community groups to raise the profile of rail travel, demonstrating how rail and communities can work for mutual benefit. Let's hope that a new addition to that group is not far away. Helping establish a CRP has been a Marpa ambition now for some years - the AGM on Saturday 21 October in Bury (Friends Meeting House, St John's Street 2 p.m.) will be a good opportunity to find out more about this exciting development & catch up on the latest news. Our guest speaker will be Paul Webster from the Community Rail Network - apt, because his talk at the 2018 AGM was instrumental in motivating Marpa to pursue this goal for rail users. Come along to hear more about what the future might offer for rail travel on our route!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

The MARPA AGM takes place at 2pm in the Friends Meeting House in St Johns Street Bury St Edmunds on **Saturday 21stth October**. Please do come and meet other people with an interest in our line.

There will be a talk from Paul Webster on Community Rail Partnerships.

Do come along, all are welcome and it is good to put faces to names and to meet new people. There is usually an attendance of over 20 and FREE refreshments are available.



Broken-down freight at Bury St Edmunds Thurs 13 July 2023 – MARPA member Allan Gould reports: -

I got caught in the mayhem following the brakes/wheels issue with an eastbound freight train, stuck at Bury station on Thurs morning 13 July 2023. Problems occur. This spiel is about how things can get worked out when things go wrong.

I must have arrived (booked on the 10:30 from Bury to Peterborough) at Bury station just after the incident occurred as the train was on the eastbound platform and they were just beginning to investigate, and the item had not appeared on National Rail Enquiries quite yet, but did shortly after.

The 10:30 Peterborough train arrived into Bury station on time, but got held there, presumably because of all the trains backed up behind the broken down freight, and potentially blocking our path going forward (there is some single-line working in the area)

The two-person train crew were amazing. Lots of announcements and lots of helpful suggestions for alternatives, and as much in the way of updates as they were able to give us. I was on the train, I had a laptop, a phone, onboard Wi-Fi (and fortuitously) a coffee from the van on Station Hill. All good. Happily, I did not have an appointment to reach, nor onward connections that would be problematic if I missed them, others were maybe not so fortunate.

We left Bury after being held for 45 minutes, and picked up east-bound passengers at Kennett (who were effectively on a stranded train, and allegedly reversed back into Kennett). We continued to Ely (arriving about 60 minutes after we should have done) where the train terminated, but there are plenty of other onward connections from Ely. There was plenty of

assistance and information at Ely.

I got an onward connection from Ely to Peterborough to my further destination. I arrived into Leeds an hour late. I arrived home about when I expected due to various other factors. Further, I put in an online claim to Greater Anglia for Delay Repay when I got home that evening. The next morning (Friday) I got an e-mail confirming the claim in full, and the money was in my bank account by lunchtime, i.e. within 24 hours of the delay happening: it would be hard to beat that.

So problems happen, and I'm sure there were many people who had more problems than I did, but the on-board crew were amazing and helpful, and Delay Repay refunded in full within 24 hours....



(Editor's note: Allan lives in an area of England that has hills and sheep but is a frequent traveller to our area. I appreciate his taking the time to comment on this incident)

MARPA Membership

The membership of MARPA runs from 1st January to 31st December each year. If you have **NOT** renewed for the year **2023** please do so now! Reminders have been sent by email to current members . . . **so** please renew, as your membership is valued by us and the 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 - PayPal provide all the information needed to identify you. And the facility to renew using PayPal will be added to the website shortly.

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.

Lloyd Butler

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Annual Membership Subscription Rates:

Adult - £5.00

Family/Joint - £6.00

Concession - £4.00

(Student / Senior / Unwaged / Disabled)

Please renew your 2023 subscription by getting in touch with Membership Secretary Lloyd Butler. Email membership@marpa.org.uk or write to him at the above address.

WEB SITE REMINDER

Please visit/use our website www.marpa.org.uk

Finally a couple of shots by member Ben Walsh, these show the 'orange army' working on infrastructure improvements for Cambridge South and a train for Ipswich arriving at Elmswell. Ben cropped the Ipswich Town supporters off the photo in case we have any Norwich City readers of the newsletter...

