

ESTA



NEWS

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ENJOY AN EARLY AUTUMN DAY IN HALESWORTH - SATURDAY OCTOBER 6TH

The East Suffolk Travellers' Association is holding its autumn public meeting at 14:00 in the URC Church, Quay Street, Halesworth, on Saturday October 6th.

From the rail station, the church is just a few minutes' walk down the hill and turning right into Quay Street, It is even closer to the bus stops in Saxons Way. Please use the side entrance to the church.

We are very pleased to welcome as guest speaker Greater Anglia's Customer Engagement Manager, Mr Alan Neville, to give us an update on developments and a look into the future. He will be travelling over from his home in Cambridge to be with us.

The meeting will also hear and discuss reports on local bus services, our station audit and proposals for a Blyth Valley River & Rail Trail; and it is your chance to raise other public transport matters. Tea and coffee will be served.

Halesworth & District Museum, at the railway station, will also be open from 10.00 till 12.30. It has some new displays this year and is well worth a visit.

The pedestrianised Thoroughfare contains at least seven pubs, cafes and restaurants where you can lunch.

MAKING PROGRESS...

1. BUS/TRAIN TICKETS FOR LEISTON AND ALDEBURGH

ESTA and the Community Rail Partnership have long pressed for through ticketing to these towns, similar to the scheme already in existence for Southwold.

We are therefore pleased that tickets including the bus fare from Saxmundham to Leiston and Aldeburgh can now be purchased from any Greater Anglia booking office, on the train company's website or app or from the train conductor. They are not yet available from ticket vending machines.

An adult return from Ipswich to Aldeburgh costs £14.30, for example, and from Colchester £21.60 and Liverpool Street £51.90

It would be good to hear members' experiences of using these tickets.

2. LOWESTOFT STATION CLOCK

This was repaired and reinstated on the concourse in July, after a lengthy absence. It is especially useful for passengers waiting for a train and when the booking office is closed.

3. BUS TIMETABLE ON DISPLAY - Successive ESTA surveys have drawn attention to the lack of timetables, shelters and seats at the busy Carlton Crown bus stop on the A146 between Lowestoft and Beccles. We are pleased to report that a timetable in a case has now been put up at the stop for westbound buses and look forward to further improvements.

4. ANGLIA PLUS LEAFLET

"One day, One ticket, Unlimited travel, Just £19."

This is the message on a new leaflet produced by Greater Anglia in August.

It is over two decades since this ticket was first introduced by the then Anglia Railways, but it has not always been well promoted. Often the only publicity on stations has been the poster produced by ESTA.

We therefore welcome this attractive and informative new leaflet.

EXPECTING PROGRESS?

1. A TIMETABLE CONSULTATION for 2019 was promised by Greater Anglia for this summer. We now learn that it will take place later in the autumn. ESTA is ready to respond when the consultation is announced and we also urge individual members to do so. The delay is understandable if it avoids some of the problems that have occurred in recent months when new timetables have been introduced by at least two other Train Operating Companies elsewhere.

2. SAXMUNDHAM STATION STRUCTURAL SURVEY

We learned in July that Greater Anglia's asset management team had received the consultants' report on options for the building, which had to be partly demolished following the fire in February. We look forward to hearing what these options are and to commenting on them. As autumn draws on, can we at least expect some seating under cover as an interim measure?

3. "THE BEAST FROM THE EAST"

In the last ESTA NEWS we reported on ESTA's submission to Network Rail for their review of procedures if and when there is another spell of severe winter weather.

Their initial response to us was not very encouraging, but then on July 31st we heard from Mr Matt Brennan, their Public Affairs Manager Anglia, saying, "I am pleased to confirm that there will now be a series of key route strategies which will enable us to open more of the unaffected network during future forecast events, and the criteria for implementation of these strategies have been modified."

We were told that Network Rail are also working closely with the Train Operating Companies to develop "off the shelf timetables" based on the revised key route strategies and to provide better information for passengers.

It is good to be assured that lessons have been learned and that Network Rail will take "a different approach going forward."

4. NEW TRAINS

On or about October 25th, the first of our new trains, being built by Stadler in Switzerland, is due to be hauled through the Channel Tunnel on its way to East Anglia. The company's staff will then test it in our area before handing it over to Greater Anglia.

5. TICKET VENDING MACHINES

Work started in mid July on preparing the ground for new ticket machines to be installed at our local stations which do not already have them. They should all receive one except for Brampton and Somerleyton.

However, it will still be possible to buy a ticket from a conductor on the train.

Once the new machines are all up and running, we hope that Greater Anglia will undertake an educational campaign to tell passengers about them. It will also be useful for ESTA's officers to hear of any problems that you may have with the new machines.

ESTA PEOPLE

Two more members have been co-opted on to the committee - Colin Butler from Lowestoft and James Hewett from Southwold. There is still room for one more.

The committee is next due to meet on the morning of October 6th in Halesworth and on the evening of November 21st in Saxmundham.

David Smith has agreed to compile the quarterly Headline News for our notice boards.

Stephen David has joined our Bus Group.

Peter Pennington has unfortunately had to stand down from the committee, but hopes to be able to resume some work for ESTA in October.

Five ESTA members have won prizes in our 100 Club Draw. They are (no.14) E J Smith of Halesworth; (No.40) J Whittenbury of Walberswick; (no.27) Mrs Pinkney of Gunton; (no.17) D Bayes and M Colledge of Woodbridge; and (no. 5) Elaine Nason of Laxfield.

The next draw will take place on October 6th. To enter the 100 Club, please send £12 (payable to ESTA) for one year to Alan Williams, our Secretary.

ESTA BUS GROUP

This small group of members is particularly concerned with services in the central and southern parts of our area. They plan to meet again in September to discuss, among other things, services 64, 65 and 800; and the options for improving the meagre services to Snape and Tunstall. Other local issues include the lack of information about diversions when there are roadworks - such as recently occurred in Leiston - and whether service 64 could be diverted to serve Ipswich Hospital more conveniently or alternative measures adopted.

The group welcomes experiences and suggestions from members. You can email Peter Cogar (peter.cogar@btinternet.com) or Peter Cannon (maryandpetercannon@hotmail.co.uk).

ESTA SOCIAL EVENTS

14 members enjoyed a river cruise from Ipswich to Harwich on Saturday July 7th in perfect summer weather. The captain not only gave a commentary but also kept passengers up to date with the World Cup match going on at the same time.

Our next social event will be the CHRISTMAS LUNCH on Saturday December 15th at 13.00 in the Lady of the Lake, Oulton Broad. Thank you to Geoffrey Lilley for organising this.

The Lady of the Lake is halfway between Oulton Broad South station (train arriving 12.35) and Oulton Broad North (train arriving 12.43). Trains return from Oulton Broad South at 13 minutes past the hour and from Oulton Broad North at 15.02 (Norwich only) and 15.53. Both stations are, of course, also served by trains to and from Lowestoft. A menu and booking form is at the end of this ESTA NEWS.

BLYTH VALLEY RIVER AND RAIL TRAIL

ESTA's Chairman took part in a meeting on July 24th to learn about and discuss a proposed walkers' trail which will include many places of interest relating to the former Southwold Railway or the Blyth Navigation, both of which played an important role in the 19th and early 20th century development of the area.

People do not need to drive there. They will be able to access the trail via the East Suffolk Line and the (x)88 bus service, and of course also be guided by our leaflet "Discover the Blyth Valley" (of which a few copies of the 2018 edition are still available from Trevor Garrod). The Halesworth Tourist Group leaflet "Halesworth & Blyth Valley Experience" is also a good source of information. We hope to report more on this project in future issues of ESTA NEWS.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONNAIRE - AND WHY WE HAVE PRODUCED IT

Enclosed with this ESTA NEWS is a questionnaire for all our members. It is the first such questionnaire that we have produced for 17 years and it is designed to help us plan and prioritise what the association does, and to recruit more new members, over the coming year. The results will be given to the committee and summarised in a future edition of ESTA NEWS.

The questionnaire has been compiled in consultation with our member Simon Barrow, who is also willing to lead a focus group on the issues, at Station House, Campsea Ash (Wickham Market). He is also keen to have the experiences of members using the main line trains between Ipswich and London.

In particular he would appreciate answers to three questions -

1. When you make a journey beyond Ipswich, where in your experience are the principle problems - on the East Suffolk line or the main line?
 2. What specific problems have delayed your journey(s) recently? - signalling; track; lack of personnel; malfunction of rolling stock; slow-moving train in front; fatality on the line; others - please state.
 3. What do you think are the likely root causes of these problems? - senior management failures - in Train Operating Company / Network Rail; failure to work closely together; age of infrastructure and equipment; failure to replace old rolling stock; overcrowding of track compared to elsewhere in Europe
- Please contact Trevor Garrod in the first instance.

Meanwhile, as part of the same area of work, four ESTA members have recently undertaken short face-to-face interviews with passengers waiting for trains at Halesworth and Oulton Broad South stations. This has revealed helpful data about their concerns. A typical answer was "The train frequency is OK. It's the reliability that concerns me"

OCTOBER TRAIN & BUS SURVEY - AND WHY WE DO IT

Our survey of specific local train or bus journeys made by members always yields useful data for our dialogue with the operators and decision-makers.

This year's form (enclosed) is especially geared to establishing what would encourage people to use the trains and buses more often.

We are also keen to find out how many of our members continue their journeys on the main line south of Ipswich and how often they do it.

Survey forms will also be on our website. Completed ones can be brought to our meeting in Halesworth on October 6th, of course, as well as posted to us.

MEETING WITH LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

On July 23rd three members of Railfuture (to which ESTA is affiliated) met Ms Ellen Goodwin, Infrastructure Manager of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, which recently produced a report on integrated transport and is able to give capital grants (but not operating subsidies) for transport and other suitable projects. This could include measures to create jobs and housing in a locality.

It would be up to local councils or other bodies to apply for grants, but we in the voluntary sector could write letters of support and provide back-up evidence.

Could measures to improve rail or bus station accessibility and easy onward travel fall into this category? One could think of some examples in our own area - such as for visitors arriving in Lowestoft by train and wanting to continue to their final destination in or near the town by local bus. Members may be able to give similar examples.

MEETING WITH GREATER ANGLIA'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER

On June 27th, ESTA's Chairman and Secretary met Greater Anglia's Public Affairs Manager Paul Oxley to discuss issues ranging from station facilities to connection policy, ticket machines to on-train announcements - many of which are covered elsewhere in this ESTA NEWS.

We were assured that rural service connections (such as on the East Suffolk and Norwich - Lowestoft services) would be held if the train was pulling into the station and there was time to connect, but not if it was a short while away. The last train of the day would be protected, unless engineering possession were due; and Greater Anglia's contract with operators of rail replacement buses set out clearly what was expected of them.

We raised the problem of passengers waiting for lifts when crossing the lines at Ipswich, if the late running of an Inter City train meant a very tight connection at Ipswich, if staff did not realise passengers are in lifts. Paul assured us that staff are aware of this but would raise it again with the manager concerned.

The question of on-train ticket checks was also raised, as these were inconsistent. It was appreciated that there would sometimes be technical difficulties with ticket machines, meaning that tickets could not be issued, but conductor-guards then needed to make regular announcements in such cases and tell passengers how to get tickets at places such as Ipswich, Lowestoft and Norwich, or if connecting into mainline services.

Paul would raise this with the manager concerned; in which case we asked that he also be informed that we recognise the excellent service provided by many of the conductor-guards, but were disappointed with those who made no appearances except when standing on platforms after opening doors.

PRESIDENTIAL PONDERING

Our President, Rod Lock, has submitted a report to the committee, stating "It is not apparent if Greater Anglia has a strategy to increase car parking capacity stations on the East Suffolk Line to meet the increased ridership which will be generated by the increased train provision. There will be an increase in capacity of 240% when the new bimodal trains are in operation."

The 300-space car park at Lowestoft is "substantially under used" and the ten intermediate stations have a total of 189 spaces between them. Rod points out the scope for increasing spaces at certain stations, but also draws attention to the problem at some stations when people park there but are not using the trains. Who would like to join a working party to study this matter? It can, of course, be linked to our ongoing station audit.

Other issues which our President urges members to consider include usage of the ticket vending machines and the scope for lengthening platforms. It has been reported that platform 1 at Ipswich is to be lengthened, for example.

NEWS FROM NORTH OF THE BORDER

Our sister organisation the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association (www.entua.org.uk) held a well attended AGM in Gt Yarmouth on August 17th. Speakers from Greater Anglia gave an update on the new trains due to be delivered later this autumn and ongoing work to install ticket vending machines at unstaffed stations. Speakers from First Eastern Counties announced re-routing of some buses to Broadland Business Park and Caister; new ticket machines in buses that enabled passengers to "go contactless" and the start of a new driver training scheme.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA is holding its autumn meeting in the Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, Norwich at 14.00 on Saturday September 29th. The theme will be easy rail travel and there will be reports and discussion of issues in Norfolk and Suffolk. www.railfuture.org.uk

REMINDERS

1. Our 50th anniversary book, ESTA THE FIRST 50 YEARS is still available from Trevor Garrod at £3.00 (post free).
2. Our website contains a Feedback page on which you can report good and bad experiences when making a local train or bus journey.
3. We are lucky to have two very welcoming station cafes - at Beccles and Wickham Market - open seven days a week. Beccles cafe is open from 07:00 to 14:30 Mon-Fri, 09:00 to 14:30 Saturday and 10:00 to 14:00 Sundays. Station House Campsea Ash (Wickham Market |) is open in time for the first Ipswich - bound train and closes at 18:30. Meeting rooms are available for hire at both of these stations.

NEXT ESTA NEWS - Deadline for the winter issue is November 30th. Material should be sent to Trevor Garrod.

LATE NEWS

The monthly bus service 121 from Stradbroke to Ipswich is likely to be withdrawn. However, a meeting was held in Sweffling on August 16th and a further one will be held in Great Glemham on October 9th at 10.00 am to consider a community transport alternative. Thanks go to our member Mr Creed for this item.



A Steam-up Day at the Long Shop Museum in Leiston, which can be travelled to by train / bus through-ticketing.