

The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

www.flua.org.uk

fenman@flua.org.uk

Issue 3/2011

We seek the **best for users** from the fast-changing railway scene by **working with all parties in the railway industry and with other relevant bodies in the lead-up to the projected introduction of the Intercity Express Programme and its operation on the Fen Line.**

“My hon. Friend has campaigned strongly to improve services on the Fen Line,” replied Transport Minister **Theresa Villiers** to a Question from MP **Elizabeth Truss** on 23 June. “I pay tribute to her and the other local MPs ... she is absolutely right that passenger numbers have been increasing This has been a real success story.” The Minister went on to encourage liaison with Network Rail to see what infrastructure improvements might be deliverable and affordable. **Double the frequency?**

We already have two trains per hour on the Kings Lynn-Kings Cross route, Mondays-Fridays, at the busiest times of day. They run with the commuter flows southwards in the mornings and return northwards in the evenings.

So, two per hour, reality or illusion? Real enough - from Kings Lynn and all other Fen Line stations, services arrive at Kings Cross every half-hour from 0638 to 1046. Evening departures leave Kings Cross every half hour from 1644 (1615 as far as Ely) and 2115.

But now comes a little bit of illusion. 2 out of 9 of those morning services (and 2 out of 10 of the evening ones to Kings Lynn) rely on *connections* at Cambridge. We applaud the co-operation between FCC and NXEA, but, inevitably, sometimes things go horribly wrong ...

Kings Lynn-Kings Cross Fen Line services are demonstrably “a real success story.” How much more successful would two trains every hour be - without the awful tension of “will they, won’t they” connections?

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CP4 Delivery Plan

June 2011 Update

12.02 IEP East Coast Main Line

Core routes ... London to Cambridge/Kings Lynn

Station capability

(platform extensions/SDO/attaching/detaching)
- chosen option developed by April 2012

Overhead line alterations-

-chosen option developed by August 2012

Gauge clearance

- chosen option developed by October 2013

12.03 IEP East Coast Main Line - Traction power supply upgrade

Classic power system reinforcement, Ardsley Feeder station and Hitchin-Cambridge/Kings Lynn
- chosen option developed by March 2012

All works ready for IEP operation - August 2017.

www.networkrail.co.uk/documents/10755_EnhancementsDocumentJune2011.pdf

THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

Contacting FLUA

Colin Sampson, Chairman

Tel: (01366) 388003

or reach FLUA on:

e-mail: fluasecretary@flua.org.uk

Andy Tyler, Secretary

67 Goodwins Road

KING’S LYNN, Norfolk, PE30 5PE

Tel: 07803 459 043

John Legg, Treasurer

Robert Stripe, Vice-Chairman

Network Rail to report

“DOUBLE the frequency” has been the call from MPs, the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP, Councils, passengers, and, of course, from ourselves!

We don't pretend to know what physical works would be economically justifiable to enable this – there's so much to throw into the equation. Indeed, there's a plethora of options, mixing and matching different track configurations, potential linespeed enhancements (IEPs will not only be capable of 125 mph, they will have superior acceleration), power supply changes, level crossing changes....

Warning – do not try to work all this out at home!

The first task NR has is to establish if there's an outline business case with a view to making a bid for infrastructure funding during CP5 (starts 2014). This would be part of “Periodic Review 2013” - links to NR's “GRIP” process, HM Treasury's Business Case checklist, and the DfT's revised Low Carbon value-for-money assessment are at the bottom of the page.

What might there be for passengers if not 2tph to Kings Cross? Ahead of NR's initial report deadline of 5 September, the box provides a list. **And due on 30 September is NR's Initial Industry Plan, setting out “industry's view of what should be delivered in the next Control Period and at what cost.”**

Potential future service patterns

(a) consistent with government IEP policy:

- 2 tph IEP Kings Lynn-Kings Cross;
- 1 tph IEP Kings Lynn-Kings Cross, *plus*
- 1 tph Kings Lynn-Central London/Thameslink;
- 1 tph IEP Kings Lynn-Kings Cross, *plus*
- 1 tph Kings Lynn-Liverpool Street;
- 1 tph IEP Kings Lynn-Kings Cross, *plus*
- 1 tph Kings Lynn-Stratford;
- 1 tph IEP Kings Lynn-Kings Cross, *plus*
- 1 tph Kings Lynn-Stansted Airport;
- 1 tph IEP Kings Lynn-Kings Cross, *plus*
- 1 tph Kings Lynn-Cambridge.

Note: other variations possible.

(b) inconsistent with government IEP policy:

any service pattern that does NOT have at least 1 tph IEP Kings Lynn-Kings Cross!

**Current off-peak service
1 tph Kings Lynn-Kings Cross**

ORR Periodic Review 2013/HLOS/SOFA/CP5 –
www.rail-reg.gov.uk/pr13

NR GRIP Process -

www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/4171.aspx

HM Treasury Business Case Checklist – [www.](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/greenbook_businesscase_checklist.pdf)

[hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/greenbook_businesscase_checklist.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/greenbook_businesscase_checklist.pdf)

DfT low carbon value-for-money assessment -

www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/hammond-20110427

Fenliner

It seems that more and more of us are travelling by train which is good news, isn't it?

However, a number seem to think that buying a ticket is not necessary, but at least when these criminals are caught and taken to court, the magistrates deal with them fairly well and impose hefty fines, which the rest of us can only hope act as a deterrent to trying “free travel” again. I am all for that and only wish that all fare dodgers could be caught and punished.

My bigger wish is, though, that this crazy franchising system acknowledged the fact that train operators were raking in vast amounts of extra money and that ticket price increases were a bit more in line with wage increases or even inflation.

And don't let anyone even think of saying that a huge price rise is the way to regulate demand! I also wonder if the fines are ever actually paid in full....

While I am on the subject of tickets, whatever happened to the pathetic attempt to simplify the ticketing system and have far fewer types of ticket?

I think the “simple choice” now is far more complicated than it ever was.

I don't want to be too controversial – what, me controversial? –

but does it not seem a bit silly for UK plc to have systematically downgraded our railway manufacturing capability to the point where what little is left of it seems grateful for a few refurbishment contracts?

Surely the whole country would benefit from home-made steel being turned into home-made engines and multiple units and then fitted out by home-made electricians and upholsterers etc in these grim economic times? We still have these clever people but for how much longer will they stay in this country when their prospects are virtually non-existent?

Even in these tough times, people still want to enjoy themselves for an evening in London.

Wouldn't it be good if they were able to leave the capital at 2315 - better still at 2330 - every night of the week bound for the Fen Line?

I do not believe that engineering possessions are required every week of the year thus preventing our trains from running regularly through to King's Lynn up to 0100ish.

How many of you would like that last late-night train?

Happy holidays! Happy travelling!

Fenliner is on the Fen Line most days, and uses Downham Market station.

News and views, please, to:

fenliner@flua.org.uk

The Fenman Interview

David Watkin

Home station: King's Lynn

➤ *How often do you use the Fen Line?*

DW: Very frequently!

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

DW: I am an Emeritus Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge and Emeritus Professor of the History of Architecture. Most weeks during term time, I see students and so commute from King's Lynn. As Vice-Chairman of the Georgian Group, an architectural conservation body which acts as advisor to the government, I also travel to London regularly.

➤ *What's the service's worst aspect?*

DW: I feel rather guilty as I know where to get a seat, whilst others stand! Coming back from London it gets worse from Cambridge towards King's Lynn, just when you think it ought to get better. There is also much engineering work in daylight hours at times, with passengers sometimes being put onto buses. Not only does that add about an hour to the journey, it is a nightmare with all the confusion – people do not know where to go.

➤ *What's its best point?*

DW: The fact that the line exists – I wouldn't be living in King's Lynn if it didn't! I need a house with room for books and there is a shortage of such houses in Cambridge. With the rail service we have, many Cambridge people now live in Ely and I hope others will increasingly see King's Lynn as home. I have been used to trains all my life and I enjoy the ability to read on the journey, as well as the view of Ely cathedral and the water meadows opposite.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

DW: When I lived in Cambridge, I could catch the 2315 train back from King's Cross. Now I live in King's Lynn, there is no 2315 train back, except on Fridays and Saturdays. I cannot dine in London and return home to King's Lynn. This anomaly needs addressing. If there were a 2315 departure for Kings Lynn on just one extra day that would help.

➤ *Anything else you'd like to say?*

DW: Yes, the single line sections seem very non-21st Century! It is a manifest flaw in the system to have these. It doesn't happen all that often, but they can delay journeys. They ought to be looked at and overcome; at the very least there is a need to decrease the time it takes to travel over them.

➤ *Finally, is FLUA worthwhile?*

DW: Fantastically so! FLUA is particularly vigorous and I follow it with great enthusiasm!

Inside story

Michael Hurn and **Stuart Baker** (DfT) and **Alistair Dormer** (Agility Trains) presented an important lecture on the IEP to the *Institution of Mechanical Engineers* on 27 June 2011. FLUA was there.

Stuart Baker: "The DfT now wants to be more actively open about the IEP proposition...The IEP is an output programme, not a train ... [The DfT is] not buying trains, [it is] buying working diagrams ... the [future] TOC is free to do what it wants during the working day ... depot handover [to Agility Trains] at the end of the day... [The IEP has] a significant interface with NR projects, including Thameslink [which] will make a drastic difference to the southern end of the ECML ... IEP is a route solution ... station dwell times and acceleration affect the line capacity ... acceleration will be excellent and consistent ... investment [will be made to] optimise outputs ... power supplies, capacity works ... speed profile ... 26 metre vehicles [already] fit almost everywhere we wish to deploy them. ...the value of route outputs is very strong ... [it] justifies the trains and the route investments ... **[it is] important to flight Cambridge/King's Lynn trains out of King's Cross with the Leeds and Scotland services.**"

Michael Hurn: "An all industry board, including NR, TOCs and ORR is being set up ... [Now] planning for transitional arrangements and working on deployment statement for financial pricing ... 2018 - full deployment on ECML. [DfT] is very focussed on financial close" [expected end 2011].

Alistair Dormer: [The Programme is] "buying a service for 27.5 years ... it changes the way we think as a supplier ... Banks are back and hungry - we are massively oversubscribed with banks wanting to lend. ... [Agility Trains] can put additional vehicles [if ordered and financed] into the train without huge downtime or re-engineering ... [The trains] will have ECTS [Level 2] ... ECTS has been around in Japan for a long time ... [The electric 5-car, as intended for Fen Line services will have] 351 seats ... a real people mover."

In response to a question from **Andy Tyler** as to whether there will be SDO or extended platforms (where existing ones are short) on the Fen Line, **Stuart Baker** replied, [There are] "no plans to use SDO if possible [to avoid it]. All the short platforms will be catered for - we do not want extended dwells on a regular basis ... one Fen Line station is difficult to extend, though."

*The lecture and questions – 90 mins – can be heard and seen at:
www.playitback.org/details.aspx?v=301*

London & South East RUS

PUBLISHED ON 29 July 2011, the finalised RUS states "5.13.6 Following the completion of the Thameslink Programme [there will be] the following morning peak train service ... into London Kings Cross ... Ely/Kings Lynn fast services - two x 10-car new IEP trains." That's two 5-car services, each attaching another 5-car IEP at Cambridge.
www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=\RUS%20Documents\Route%20Utilisation%20Strategies\RUS%20Generation%20London%20and%20South%20East&root=

STOP PRESS

Stock Market Statement 5 August 2011

*The Secretary of State for Transport,
Philip Hammond*

"In light of the likely delivery timescales for Thameslink rolling stock, I judge it right to exercise my contractual entitlement to bring forward the start of a new franchise to September 2013.

"The franchise is likely to be shorter than 15 years, with a focus on managing services through the major Thameslink infrastructure upgrade. It would then be re-let at the end of the project.

[This will replace the current FCC franchise].

"... the new Inter City East Coast franchise will commence in December 2013."

".. I intend to move the start of the long term 15 year Greater Anglia franchise to July 2014."

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/rail-franchise-stock-market-statement/110804-statement.pdf>

The McNulty rail value-for-money studies include an interesting discussion of potential franchise geography at - www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/rvfm-jacobs-franchising-march2011.pdf

On the side of the Angels

by Nigel Sisson

Last week two German friends came to see us on a day visit – one from London, one from Munich. They are among our best long-standing friends, father and daughter, the latter six months pregnant. They travelled to/from King's Cross and both journeys went smoothly and on time. For the return trip, after we had dropped them at King's Lynn station, an official on the platform noticed the pregnant mother, perhaps looking a bit weary after a long day, and suggested she and her father should go and sit in the 1st Class compartment (at no extra charge) which they gratefully did. It was outside peak hours; and has done wonders for Anglo-German relations. They thought it was perhaps a UK regulation for pregnant passengers and hope the *Deutsche Bahn*, which has very high standards, should do likewise! Is this an extra for our Fen Line Wish List?

Motion carried

May I be amongst the many members of FLUA to send congratulations to **Colin Sampson** on being chosen as the new Borough Mayor for Kings Lynn & West Norfolk 2011/2? *writes George Chappell.* The 'ayes' have it!

Rule Britannia!

Amongst the many interested bystanders at Ely on 14 July was regular correspondent **David Bell.** The occasion? Black-liveried 70000 *Britannia* hauling the "Cathedrals Express" steam special charter train from Lewes to Ely.

Join us from only £4.50 a year! FLUA Membership, 67 Goodwins Road, KING'S LYNN, Norfolk, PE30 5PE or **www.flua.org.uk/membership**

Since we have introduced Corporate Membership, our scope now includes commercial and industrial companies, property developers, estate agents and many other bodies and organisations interested in the Fen Line.

Lady in the Luggage Rack

by Mawrenna Gleid

THIS is a tale of two railway companies: *Angelic Rail* and *Demonic Trains*. All roads lead to Rome, and both companies run a service, but their ultimate destinations are quite different.

Demonic Trains ("we take you to Hell and back!") is a big company with big ideas: more passengers mean more profit. The maximum number of trains is restricted by the timetable, so seating is replaced by standing areas. Overcrowding means ticket inspectors cannot force their way onto trains, but CEO Nicholas Lucifer hates fare dodgers.

Passengers are forced through choke points known as "ticket gates," with many trampled to death each day. Still the neatly paved Highway to Hell is broad, so there will always be fresh blood arriving.

Angelic Rail takes a different line. Fewer passengers may chose the narrow way to the station, but the focus is on building a long-term relationship that will keep them coming for life.

Passengers are treated according to their separate needs, with different carriages reserved for commuters and for day-trippers. Access at the station is according to the old Spanish proverb: "Take what you want and pay for it," says God.

Everyone can board the train through lots of wide, wheelchair-friendly arches. Ticket inspectors (known as "Guards") travel on every train, selling tickets, checking fares and providing assistance.

Recently I've heard rumours that constricting ticket gates might be installed at King's Lynn in an effort to duplicate Cambridge's congestion! I hope the rumours are just that – *Angelic Rail* would never treat *their* customers like that!

King's Lynn resident Mawrenna is a regular on the Cambridge Run.

The Gates of Lynn

SORRY to disappoint you, **Mawrenna**, but gates *are* to go in at Lynn! We approve *in principle*, but have made strong representations that there should be **direct access from the platform to the taxi rank** – we remember the farce the last time direct access was bricked up, the taxi drivers' entirely justified reaction to that, and the subsequent knocking through to make what is the current side gate!

Ten Years Ago

The then official strategy for the Fen Line – "Thameslink 2000" - was "still grinding its way through the official procedures." We had asked train company WAGN (as it was then) to look at the big gap in departures from Kings Cross to Kings Lynn which existed between 1945 and 2115.

Will they, won't they?

SO will an outline case to improve line capacity between Kings Lynn and Cambridge make it through to inclusion in that vital NR's *Initial Industry Plan* due for publication on 30 September? Answer in the next issue of *The Fenman*!

**FLUA diary 2011
Saturday 26 November
AGM, King's Lynn.**