

# The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

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## Issue 3/2015

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 development of the Thameslink Southern and Great Northern (TSGN) franchise on the Fen Line.**

**We know what's necessary: more and longer trains!** We've been clear about this ever since the Fen Line started off on its incredible success story of growth, growth and more growth. Services were lengthened south of Cambridge first, then extra services to Lynn, and finally, just over two years ago, the Government specified a "half-hourly" King's Lynn-King's Cross" frequency for its new TSGN franchise. Crowd-shifting, regular through trains throughout the day (obviating tricky peak time connections) were the basis of **the Government's contract with winning bidders GTR.**

That contract noted that the regional bottleneck at Ely North Junction needed upgrading and so the Government made its upgrade a rare "named scheme" in its CP5 settlement with Network Rail. The Office of Rail & Road took on regulating the scheme's 2017 delivery.

Meanwhile, the Fen Line hit the 'four million passengers' mark and the crowding *north of Cambridge* began to be just as bad, if not worse, than that south of it. And, as we remarked in a previous issue about booming London, booming Cambridge, booming Fen Line - "house prices do the rest."

Regular readers will know we started to raise the alarm earlier in the year as delays with the Ely North Junction project started to emerge. By the Summer it became clear to the Government that NR was struggling with a *nation-wide* problem.

**That's why it put in big-hitter Sir Peter Hendy to sort it all. His report is due and it encourages us greatly to read what Patrick McLoughlin has now said. Meanwhile, longer trains north of Cambridge – now, please!**

From the Secretary of State – page 3.

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### Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 21 November 2015  
at the Good News Centre, St. John's Church,  
King's Lynn at 2 p.m.**

*Turn left outside station – the church is in front of you  
(please use main entrance facing the parking area).*

**Our Guest Speaker is Keith Jipps,  
Passenger Service Director,  
Great Northern, GTR**

**Find out the Fen Line future – first-hand**

**Non-members welcome – join on the day!**

**As usual, we have invited rail management  
to answer members' questions.**

***The meeting will finish by 4.30 p.m.  
Light refreshments will be available.***

**Andy Tyler, Secretary**

30 October 2015

### STOP PRESS

[www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/cost\\_of\\_extending\\_platform\\_at\\_wa](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/cost_of_extending_platform_at_wa)  
Waterbeach resident **Christine Taylor** has submitted a  
Freedom of Information request to Network Rail, asking  
them to confirm the cost of longer Waterbeach platforms.  
**Sorry, we're full up!** – page 4

THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

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Mondays-Fridays Fen Line timetable metrics December 2015

To King's Cross	King's Lynn KLN	Watlington WTG	Downham Mkt DOW	Littleport LTP	Ely ELY	Waterbeach WBC
First arrival at King's Cross	0637	0637	0637	0637	0637	0637
No of arrivals at King's Cross <b>0700-0959</b>	6(1)	6(2)	6(1)	6(2)	7(2)	6(2)
No of arrivals at Cambridge <b>0700-0959</b>	8	6	8	6	15	7
No of departures towards London	25(2)	23(2)	26(2)	23(2)	44(16)	25(2)
No of departures towards London <b>1600-1859</b>	3	4	5	4	9	4
Last southbound departure	2232	2239	2246	2255	2303	2313
Average journey times to King's Cross. <b>a.m. peak</b> (mins)	109	104	95	88	80	69
Specimen journey time to King's Cross <b>off-peak</b> (mins)	101	94	87	78	70	60

  

From King's Cross	King's Lynn KLN	Watlington WTG	Downham Mkt DOW	Littleport LTP	Ely ELY	Waterbeach WBC
No of departures from King's Cross <b>1600-1859</b>	5(1)	5(2)	5(1)	5(2)	6(1)	6(3)
Last departure from King's Cross	2314	2314	2314	2314	2314	2314
No of departures from Cambridge <b>1600-1859</b>	4	4	5	4	14	7
No of northbound arrivals	26(3)	25(3)	27(4)	25(3)	42(15)	31(7)
First northbound arrival	0707	0658	0650	0640	0529	0623
No of northbound arrivals <b>0700-0959</b>	5	4	4	5	13	4
Average journey time from Kings Cross <b>p.m. peak</b> (mins)	104	98	89	82	70	67
Specimen journey time from King's Cross <b>off-peak</b> (mins)	97	89	83	74	67	57

**Notes** - 1 - Fen Line Timetable Metrics should be used for broad comparison purposes only. 2 - Minor changes may not always be significant for individual passengers. 3 - Brackets show number of journey opportunities where a change of trains is required, usually from/to King's Lynn-Liverpool Street route trains. 4 - Except where the context requires it, not all services included are to/from London, e.g. early morning Cambridge-King's Lynn services. 5 - Not all services included. Note that the Ely data now shows all journey opportunities to/from King's Cross where a single change (at Cambridge) is required. 6 - Caution should be exercised in using time-band counts; a change of plus or minus one minute between timetables can modify the counts without significant change having taken place. 7 - Timetable metrics from August 1992 (Fen Line electrification) to date are available on request.

Mondays-Fridays Fen Line peak services

14 December 2015 – 13 May 2016

Not all services shown.

Source: National Rail Enquiries. Correct at time of compilation. Check before travelling!

	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19A	19B	21
Morning	GN	AGA	GN	GN	GN	AGA	GN	AGA	GN	GN	GN	AGA
King's Lynn	0455	0519	-	0551	0610	0617	0651	-	-	0714	0725	-
Watlington	0502	0526	-	0558	-	0624	0658	-	-	0721	-	-
Downham Market	0509	0533	-	0605	0622	0631	0705	-	-	0728	0737	-
Littleport	0518	0542	-	0614	-	0640	0714	-	-	0737	-	-
Ely	0526	0552	-	0622	0647	0650	0722	0730	-	0748	0756	0802
Waterbeach	0536	0601	-	0632	-	0659	0732	-	-	0757	-	0811
Cambridge	0542	0610	>	0615	0639	0715*	<	0708	0739	0747	>	0755
Liverpool Street	-	0725	-	-	-	0825	-	0920	-	0804	joins	0810
King's Cross	0637	-	0716	0737	0807	-	0837	-	0902	0910	0910	-
	23	25	27	29	31							
Morning	GN	GN	GN	GN	GN	Two franchises, one interlocking success story!						
King's Lynn	0754	0827	0857	-	0954	(Thanks to those who make this all work).						
Watlington	0801	0834	0904	-	1001	<b>Mornings - Half-hourly King's Cross arrivals from Fen Line stations -</b>						
Downham Market	0808	0841	0911	-	1008	0637 [train 1]; 0716 [3 > 5]; 0737 [7]; 0807 [9 < 11]; 0837 [13]; 0910 [19A/B];						
Littleport	0817	0850	0920	-	1017	0944 [23]; 1013 [25]; 1044 [27].						
Ely	0826	0858	0928	1008	1025	<b>Evenings - Half-hourly King's Cross departures to Fen Line stations -</b>						
Waterbeach	0836	0908	0938	1017	1035	1514 (WBC, ELY, DOW only) [2 > 4D/6]; 1544 [8]; 1614 (WBC, ELY only)						
Cambridge	0843	0913	0945	1024	1041	[10 > 12]; 1644 [14]; 1714 [16 > 18]; 1744 [22]; 1814 [24 > 26]; 1844 [28];						
Liverpool Street	-	-	-	-	-	1914 [30 > 32]; 1944 [34]; 2014 [36]; 2044 [38]; 2114 [40]; 2144 (WBC,						
King's Cross	0944	1013	1044	1132	1135	ELY only) [42]; 2214 [44]; 2244 (WBC, ELY only) [46]; 2314 [48].						
Evening	GN	AGA	GN	GN	GN	AGA	GN	GN	AGA	AGA	GN	GN
King's Cross	1514	-	-	1544	1614	-	1644	1714	-	-	1744	1814
Liverpool Street	-	-	-	-	-	1558	-	-	1707	-	-	-
Cambridge	1602	>	1612	>	1619	1635	1702	>	1722	>	1740	1804
Waterbeach	-	-	-	1625	1641	-	1728	1746	-	1823	1829	1845
Ely	-	1626	-	1635	1651	-	1739**	1756	1821	>	1833	1840
Littleport	-	-	-	1659	-	-	1804	-	1840	-	1903	-
Downham Market	-	-	1650	1709	-	**1726 at Ely	1813	-	1850	-	1912	1938
Watlington	-	-	-	1715	-	if use 1712	1819	-	1856	-	1918	-
King's Lynn	-	-	-	1724	-	from CBG	1827	-	1908	-	1927	1954
Evening	AGA	GN	GN	AGA	GN	GN	GN	GN	GN	GN	GN	GN
King's Cross	-	1844	1914	-	1944	2014	2044	2114	2144	2214	2244	2314
Liverpool Street	1807	-	-	1907	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cambridge	<	1919	1939	2005	>	2014	2040	2110	2140	2210	2240	2310
Waterbeach	1925	1945	-	2020	2046	2116	2146	2216	2246	2316	2346	0016
Ely	<	1935	1955	2022	>	2030	2056	2126	2156	2226	2257	2326
Littleport	1942	2003	-	2037	2103	2133	2203	2233	-	2333	-	0033
Downham Market	<	1952	2012	-	2047	2112	2142	2212	2242	-	2342	-
Watlington	1958	2018	-	2053	2118	2148	2218	2248	-	2348	-	0048
King's Lynn	2010	2026	-	2105	2126	2156	2226	2256	-	2356	-	0056

## Unity of purpose

SPEARHEADED by **Elizabeth Truss**, the Fen Line's other MPs – **Henry Bellingham**, **Steve Barclay** and **Liz Frazer** – along with council and business leaders, have been relentless in pursuing an end to delays in constructing the Ely North Junction upgrade and the introduction of “half-hourly” King's Lynn-King's Cross trains on the Fen Line. We bring you the latest development below.

## From the Secretary of State

**Patrick McLoughlin**, Secretary of State for Transport, wrote to **Elizabeth Truss**, MP for South West Norfolk and Cabinet Minister, on 15 October.

*This is the text in full:*

“Thank you for your letter of 18 September 2015, co-signed by MPs, council leaders and Local Enterprise Partnership leaders, making the case to continue with the upgrade of Ely North Rail Junction as a regional priority.

“This Government has embarked on the biggest programme of railway modernisation since the Victorian era and I expect Network Rail to invest £38 billion in the five-year period to 2019. Both this investment and HS2 are vital to secure this country's economic growth and we will deliver them. As I explained to Parliament on 25 June, important aspects of Network Rail's investment are costing more and taking longer. I have taken action to reset the programme and get it back on track.

“Sir Peter Hendy – who has a proven record of delivering on major transport challenges – is the new Chair of Network Rail and will develop proposals for how the rail upgrade programme will be carried out.

He will report back to me in the autumn with his proposals to re-plan the rail investment portfolio and I will update Parliament at that time. I do not want to pre-empt his findings but I do recognise the extent of your support and concern that you have expressed to ensure the upgrade of Ely North Junction continues.

“The growth in rail demand in East Anglia is substantial and our franchise plans recognise this. I am strongly supportive of the efforts being made to generate economic growth through new and enhanced rail services, and commend the work done by local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and others to maximize the potential of rail services in the region. I have asked my officials to continue to work with you on this, once Sir Peter has reported back to me this autumn.”

**The Rt. Hon Patrick McLoughlin**

[www.elizabethtruss.com/sites/www.elizabethtruss.com/files/scan\\_0.pdf](http://www.elizabethtruss.com/sites/www.elizabethtruss.com/files/scan_0.pdf)

## Hard evidence

WE'VE said it before, but our metrics (going back to 1992) allow an *objective* view of matters to be taken and permit *facts* to count. We think that's important.

## The Fenman Interview

### Ian Fuller

**Home station: Downham Market**

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

**IF:** Monday-Friday, five days a week.

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

**IF:** I travel from Downham Market to King's Cross and return. This is for work purposes.

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

**IF:** I have only been travelling this journey since February so what follows are my fresh eye views. I must admit I found the hot summer days very uncomfortable with too many people in the carriages forced to stand up and fill the aisles.

➤ *What's its best point?*

**IF:** Being new to this game, I was pleasantly surprised at the reliability of the service. I had heard horror stories of delays and failures, but over the last seven months I have personally experienced but a small number of minor delays and only one complete service breakdown. I think the service provided just about offers value for money.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

**IF:** For me, upgrading of seats and air conditioning would be most desirable along with more carriages to make the journey more comfortable for everyone.

➤ *Finally, is FLUA worthwhile?*

**IF:** The value of FLUA should be judged on the impact it has. I probably don't know enough about it yet to comment, but any forum to enable customers to voice opinions and concerns must surely be worthwhile.



**Ian** (not pictured) was one of those on the 8-car 1644 King's Cross-King's Lynn, which terminated unexpectedly at Royston on Wednesday 7 October. A train earlier had struck a 73 year old woman at Foxton level crossing. The bus queue stretches as far as the eye can see! Travellers were relieved when the 1714 King's Cross-Ely arrived and was eventually able to go forward, squeezing many of the queueing hundreds on it. GTR arranged a connection at Cambridge for all stations to King's Lynn. It doesn't happen often and it wasn't the railway's fault. Fortunately it wasn't yet dark, nor raining, nor too cold. What could have been done if it was? Photo: MB.

[www.flua.org.uk](http://www.flua.org.uk)

Containing a large amount of information on a wide variety of topics, the presentations given at GTR's first annual Stakeholders' Conference (held on 9 September 2015) are available in the **Members' section** of our website.

### Sorry, we're full up!

*IT is becoming commonplace for afternoon/evening trains to be so overcrowded leaving Cambridge for King's Lynn that people have to step out onto the platform at Waterbeach to let other passengers get off the train. The fear is that the train will move off before there's time to get back on again – how can drivers know who is coming and who is going! First we report on over-over-crowding problems in the mornings.*

"I wish to complain in the strongest possible terms," writes **Guinevere Glasfurd-Brown**, "about the service operated from Waterbeach to Cambridge, which is frankly not fit for purpose. My daughter travels to school daily on the 0732 from Waterbeach [0651 King's Lynn-King's Cross]. This morning, when the train came in, she was pushed out of the way by adults there and was unable to board the train as it was full. The train is frequently overcrowded, clearly at capacity and unable to accommodate everyone, resulting in a complete rugby scrum. I have heard from others that they too cannot board at Waterbeach because the train is already full and can only assume that it will happen again.

**"Do you have plans to increase the number of carriages before [i.e. north of] Cambridge?"**

*This made the front page of the Cambridge News on Monday 26 October. **Guinevere**, who hopes to be at the AGM on 21 November, wants "urgent action."*

[www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Teen-pushed-crowded-train-Cambridge-angry-mother/story-28050495-detail/story.html](http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Teen-pushed-crowded-train-Cambridge-angry-mother/story-28050495-detail/story.html)

**Tim Howes adds:**

"It really is getting bad: I normally get the 0908 from Waterbeach [0827 King's Lynn-King's Cross] but if the preceding non-stop Cross-Country train has not collected people at Ely then the train I board can be seriously overcrowded. It is extremely troubling that people cannot board the trains - a product they've paid for. It amazes me that somehow there is not a market response to this. We've discussed the platform lengths at Waterbeach before, but I'm still amazed that the platform lengths are as long as they've always been in the 13 years I've lived here, despite the huge increase in passengers." *ORR figures for Waterbeach 2002/3 – 176,639. 2013/14 – 344,722, part of the Fen Line 4 million!*

And this is from **Debbie F** (who also intends to be at the AGM!): "about the 1635 from Cambridge to King's Lynn [1544 King's Cross-King's Lynn]. Usually whenever I leave work early I aim for the 'schools' train from Cambridge to Downham Market (my station) leaving at 1619. On Tuesday 13th October I arrived too late for it and got the next train. As it was less than 20 minutes later I didn't think there would be a problem. To my surprise a lot of people gather on the platform at that time and not everyone at Cambridge got on. We also left people behind at Waterbeach. When you consider that the next train going north of Ely isn't for another hour and five minutes, **that's a long wait.**"

### Cambridge North

THE SPECIFICATION for the East Anglia Rail Franchise (i.e. not GTR's 'TSGN') requires 1 tph from Liverpool Street to the new Cambridge North (Science Park) station now under construction [note: extended to Lynn at peak times] plus 1 tph on the Cambridge-Norwich service (most of those trains starting at Stansted Airport). Bids have to be in by 17 December. Abellio/Stagecoach, First Group and National Express are bidding - the winner will be known in June 2016 and the new 9-year franchise is to run until October 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/east-anglia-franchise-2015-invitation-to-tender>

### Lady in the Luggage Rack by Mawrenna Gleid

**Have you seen what they've done to Cambridge station? And if not, where have you been?**

There's a hotel going up in what used to be the car park. The bike park has temporarily vanished. A row of stumpy pillars now fence off the station buildings from the road, in case the buses should decide to try and drive in the main entrance. But perhaps most significantly for the regular commuter, the ticket hall is being expanded and switched around.

The old layout had passengers using the ticket machines lining up at right angles to the main flow of people. Somewhat annoying at quieter moments, and a nightmare for everyone in the peak. Those ticket machines have already been moved, and what a difference it's made. The morning rush is now constrained by the number of ticket gates, not by each person's willingness to trample their fellow passengers underfoot.

But one 'improvement' I don't think much of is the Smoking Zone. Don't believe me? Go and read what it says on the wall-mounted bins on the front of the building. That's if you can bear the clouds of smoke drifting across the approach from the bus stops. Some helpful soul has put up a line of barriers, 'encouraging' passengers to walk this way. Most ignore them, passing instead through the always-empty delivery parking space, where at least you can breathe.

**Far from giving the impression that smoking is banned in public places, it looks like positive encouragement. Not classy, Abellio. Why not stick to making Cambridge a nicer station to use for all your customers?**

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

### Ten Years Ago

**Another lorry had hit Ely station bridge and newspapers reported its driver as the 'latest victim.' We said, "Err, hang on a minute. It's us – the people trying to get to work who are inevitably delayed while trains are halted for bridge safety inspections – who are the victims."**

### Ely improvements

PLATFORMS 2/3 at Ely are being revamped – at a cost of £500,000. After what seemed a rather slow start, the new waiting room/shop/office/toilets are now well under way. Keep it up, Abellio!

### Shining armour

EAST CAMBS Council's new Corporate Plan says "The Council will complete the feasibility study and funding strategy at Ely and Littleport stations ensuring commuters have sufficient parking."  
[east-http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/agendas/fc160715-Q33\\_Ap1.pdf](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/agendas/fc160715-Q33_Ap1.pdf)

### Ely Southern Bypass

THIS ROAD, which allows closure of the Ely station level crossing, is on track for completion by the "end of 2017" says Cambs CC.

<http://www.ely-news.co.uk/Bypass/story-27729741-detail/story.html>

**GREWAT OUSE BRIDGE ORDER NOW MADE -**  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1824/pdfs/ukxi\\_20151824\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1824/pdfs/ukxi_20151824_en.pdf)

### Saturday night out

FROM 19 DECEMBER the Saturday evening 1914 King's Cross to Ely train will be extended to King's Lynn, calling en route at Cambridge, Ely and Downham Market only. Encouraging news!

### FLUA diary 2015

**Saturday 21 November**

AGM, King's Lynn.

**Sunday 13 December**

New timetable starts.