

Lincolnshire

By Brian Hastings
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■ ■ A critical look at our own performance

Lincolnshire Railfuture members have been exceptionally active in the past six months. Under the leadership of branch chairman Alan Waddington, committee members carried out a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of Railfuture's standing both nationally and at branch level. The results are being analysed.

■ ■ Analysis of line closures and alternative travel plans

With the completion of the Lincoln blockades in connection with Network Rail's £55million track and resignalling upgrade, committee members took part in a survey of the replacement bus arrangements in place in August 2007 and again in August 2008. Monitoring by members took place at Gainsborough Lea Road, Lincoln, Newark Castle, Newark North Gate, Sleaford and Market Rasen. The bus service analysis sheets have now been sent to East Midlands Trains.

Generally speaking the bus operations improved considerably by the time of the second blockade. Members' findings showed that the operations were well supervised by pro-active co-ordinators. Timings of some routes revealed problems in timekeeping because of traffic congestion and in some cases too tight a schedule. Experience gained in 2007 and 2008 may well be useful when a future "joint line" enhancement requires another bus replacement operation.

Members of the branch committee carried out an internal "aspiration survey" where short, medium and long-term aspirations for rail development were requested. Initial responses revealed a great deal of commonality. The branch is currently collating the results which will be circulated within the rail industry and to the media.

■ ■ Lincoln blockades completed

Track and signalling upgrades were completed on time and on budget, following the 2007 and 2008 blockades. Good use is now being made of the bi-directional working in and out of the station area. Gone too is the old 10mph speed restriction at Pelham Street, where the Barnetby route diverges from the main Sleaford route. Committee member Brian Hastings was a guest of Network Rail shortly before the project was completed for visits to site work and to the new Lincoln signalling centre.

■ ■ North Lincolnshire closure

The route between Doncaster and Scunthorpe is to be closed for three months so Network Rail can deal with a severe subsidence problem near Medge Hall, about 12 miles out from Doncaster where the line runs through the Isle of Axholme. This is where the railway runs along the South Yorkshire canal bank and parallel to the North Soak drain.

History is repeating itself because the problem also existed in 1962-3. It will be necessary to excavate the location to ascertain the precise nature of the problem.

■ ■ Eye on TransPennine and Northern shutdown

Members in the North Lincolnshire area will be asked to monitor the buses which will replace TransPennine Express services east of Doncaster as far as Cleethorpes. The railway work will be carried out from Thorne Junction to Scunthorpe West and will be effective from 23.45 on Sunday 21 June to 04.00 on Monday 7 September.

First Group TransPennine and Northern Rail are each organising their own bus replacements. Freight traffic will be diverted via Haxey, Gainsborough Trent junction and Brigg using the newly revamped Brigg line. Some freight will be diverted to Market Rasen and Lincoln.

New Oxford rail link hopes Chiltern Railways is to consult the public on its plans for a new service from Oxford to London, via a new chord at Bicester. The company has engaged environmental consultants to assist in carrying out a full environmental impact assessment. Three public exhibitions outlining the proposals are being planned for "early spring" in Oxford, Kidlington and Bicester.



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Disused line reopened for freight

Network Rail has brought a disused branch line in Wales back into the network. But because the Gwuan-Cae-Gurwen line had been out of use for years, Network Rail launched a publicity campaign to warn children and dog walkers that 1,300 tonne trains – equivalent to 40 big lorries – would be returning to the line. The reopening allows Celtic Energy to transport 50% of its coal production from

East Pit by train via Pantyffynnon on the Heart of Wales line.

Mark Langman of Network Rail said: "This scheme has huge economic and environmental value to the community. Freight trains will take away the need for at least 40 lorry loads of coal using local roads in each direction from the coal mine. In addition, freight trains also emit four times less CO₂ emissions than road haulage."

Plan for European journeys

By Trevor Garrod

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Motorists can plan their journeys nowadays using global positioning systems, or satellite navigation. But what about people who want to use public transport?

There are already possibilities in some countries and regions. For example, in 1998 I was able to use a Dutch computer programme to plan a public transport journey from my hotel in Utrecht to the beach at Katwijk-aan-Zee.

All public transport operators in the Netherlands have an obligation to deliver their information into a national system and keep it up to date. The Dutch system has now been adapted for use in Sweden.

In the Spanish region of Catalonia, work is in progress to develop an "Open Mobility" system which will offer a similar facility.

In the USA, "Google Transit" provides such information, and this can also be used in Switzerland and Austria.

Then there is the website "Nahverkehrswege" developed

as a voluntary project by IT expert Jorg Bruchertseifer of Augsburg. By logging on to www.nahverkehr.info you can obtain details of local public transport services, or web links, in towns and cities to which you may be travelling by long distance train. This website, which is in English as well as German, includes the UK.

But do we need one easy-to-use, all-European system for public transport journey planning? The recent EPF council meeting considered this a worthwhile goal over the next five years.

Thus a group of rugby fans from, say, Wisbech, could plan a trip to the Stade de France in the suburbs of Paris; or a businessman in Antwerp could work out how to reach a Business Park on the outskirts of Newbury.

Could EU funding be sought to build on the existing systems and develop an international public transport users' sat-nav?

EPF is exploring the possibilities and the views of *Railwatch* readers would be welcome.

Passenger input into Euro policies

By Trevor Garrod

The EPF, of which Railfuture is a founder member, is increasingly being asked to give presentations at conferences and its representatives have recently addressed events in Amsterdam and Berne; with further events in Vienna and Bucharest shortly. On 9 March, EPF chairman Trevor Garrod was to

speak at a European Commission conference in Brussels on future transport policy.

It is hoped to include a report of this, and of the EPF annual conference and general meeting at Berne on 14 March, in the next *Railwatch*.

Many of the texts of EPF presentations can be found (in English) on the website www.epf.eu