

THE TRAVELLER

NEWSLETTER OF FELIXSTOWE TRAVEL WATCH



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October 2017

**Felixstowe Travel Watch's next meeting is on
Tuesday 17th October 2017
at the Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Road - at 2.30pm**

Chairman's Editorial



Graham Newman writes...

Firstly in this edition, may I thank all members for entrusting me with the Chairmanship of Felixstowe Travel Watch for another year, at this year's AGM back on May 9th.

New Members At our recent Executive Committee meeting, Jean Leitch - our Membership Secretary - reported we had attracted 55 new members this year - taking our membership to very nearly 400; a phenomenal achievement. Many thanks must go to our existing membership for evangelising Felixstowe Travel Watch. But special thanks are due to Richard Holland, who has given a number of presentations to associations and societies around the town, and Gwynneth Esmarch and her colleagues on the Tours Committee who have attracted new members through a number of very successful outings so far this year.

We really want to know what our new members want to see from Felixstowe Travel Watch. We'd love to hear your suggestions for next year's Tours Programme and for speakers/activities at our Members' Meetings. Please don't hesitate to make your thoughts known to any of our Committee members, many of whose e-mail addresses appear in this edition of *The Traveller*. And if you feel able to give a couple of hours to Travel Watch, we can always do with more faces at our popular Public Transport Information Stalls held in the East of England Co-op supermarket in December and June each year.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *The Traveller*, and look forward to seeing you at our afternoon members' meeting on October 17th. I can assure you of a warm welcome and interesting speakers.

E-mail Graham on graham.newman.FLX@gmail.com

Secretary's Notes



Margaret Morris, our Hon Secretary on our forthcoming meeting programme.

As noted above, our **next members' meeting** is on 17th October at 2:30pm in the Salvation Army Church. This time we welcome Alex Kirk from Network Rail, who will be talking about his company's plans to double track just over a mile of the Felixstowe branch line between Trimley station and Grimston Lane, together with new crossovers, changes to the signalling system, a new horse riders' overbridge and the closure/diversion of all six foot crossings along this stretch of track. The scheme has unfortunately attracted a number of objections and will now be subjected to a public enquiry early next year.

After refreshments provided by Jenny Holland and her team, our second speaker will be from the *Campaign for Better Transport*. Lianna Etkind is a specialist in the needs of the those with reduced mobility (having previously worked for *Transport for All*) and will be talking about her organisation's national campaigns.

Our next public-facing activity will be our **Public Transport Information Stall** in the entrance hall to the East of England's Co-op Superstore in Hamilton Road, on Saturday 9th December, between 9am & 12:30pm. By this time we should have the winter rail timetables to hand, in addition to the usual range of suggestions for outings by public transport.

Finally, by the time the next edition of *The Traveller* falls through your letterbox, Christmas holidays will be over and we'll be into a brand new year! So even if a little early, may I wish all members the very best for the season, and a happy & healthy New Year.

E-mail Margaret on margaretmorris@hotmail.com

**FELIXSTOWE
TRAVEL
WATCH
OFFICERS**

Life Presidents	Ken Tricker & John Woollan	01394 278770 /210271
Chairman & Editor 'The Traveller'	Graham Newman, 1 Mellis Court, Felixstowe IP11 2YQ	01394 286937
Vice Chairman	Richard Holland, 14 Princes Gardens, Felixstowe IP11 7RH	01394 278061
Hon Secretary	Margaret Morris, 79 Ranelagh Road, Felixstowe IP11 7HY	01394 274345
Hon Treasurer	Peter Leitch, 104 St Andrews Road, Felixstowe IP11 7ED	01394 285320

The Seaside Specials

This year, our *Seaside Specials* ran on Wednesdays 26th July and 2nd August.

Around 4,000 leaflets were distributed to schools and homes in the Derby Road area during the preceding fortnight, and Richard Holland displayed a banner on the railings at Derby Road station.

The first Wednesday fell during a run of poor weather, and the forecast for the day was far from encouraging. Nevertheless, a couple of dozen souls assembled at Derby Road in time for the 11:09; Felixstowe Travel Watch memorabilia were duly distributed (a pen set for the adults, pens and bubbles for the youngsters), Greater Anglia supplied a 2-coach train and the Mayor was out to meet the special on arrival at Felixstowe.

On the second week, the weather forecast was less ominous (although somewhat short of a proper Felixstowe summer's day!). This time, around double the number turned up... again Greater Anglia fulfilled their side of the bargain by putting on a two coach train, and all seemed well. But this was the week that the East Suffolk line was closed for major track replacement between Westerfield and Woodbridge, which caused the 11:09 to run a few minutes late. Sadly on arrival at Felixstowe, the connection with the open-top bus was broken (it having departed a few minutes early), so a great opportunity for our travellers to enjoy their tour of the town and sea front was lost.. whilst the bus circled the town with only a handful of passengers...

Although the 11:09 from Derby Road wasn't billed as a Seaside Special for subsequent weeks, that train ran crammed to bursting point on some of the other Wednesdays in August, reflecting the improved weather, demonstrating there's a market there to be exploited.

Thanks to Richard (e-mail: richolland1@btinternet.com) and his team for arranging the specials this year, along with all the gifts and other logistics. GN

Upcoming 'Route Improvement' works

Many members will be aware that improvement works frequently affect weekend train services on the Felixstowe branch, and/or services radiating from Ipswich. According to the Greater Anglia web site, you can expect bus substitution throughout the day on part or all of your journey on the following days:

Felixstowe-Ipswich branch: Sun 5 & 26 Nov, 3 Dec

From Ipswich towards London: Sats 7 & 21 & every Sunday in Oct, Sat & Sun 4-5, 18-19 & 25-26 Nov.

From Ipswich towards Peterborough: Sun 10 Dec

From Ipswich towards Lowestoft: Sat & Sun 21-22 & 28-29 Oct.

Some early morning and later evening services may be altered in addition to the above, and of course there is always the possibility that further changes can be imposed at short notice. So please check before travelling. See www.greateranglia.co.uk/travel-information/service-alterations. GN

Public Transport Notes



Bryan Frost

(E-mail: bmwfrost@btopenworld.com)
Chair of FTW's Public Transport Committee, updates you on latest developments

BUSES

A welcome return to the sea front It is pleasing to report that First have yielded to pressure from many quarters (not least from ourselves) and from 2 July, have restored a regular service to the newly reopened Pier head building and the Leisure Centre by diverting service 77 along Undercliff Road West and Convalescent Hill.

The buses run hourly during the daytime (including Sundays) but please check with timetables before planning your journey. This is a welcome reinstatement of a link between the town centre and the seafront, and it has already generated increased patronage as the 77 begins its journey at Ipswich and has proved popular with families travelling to the beach and Pier during the recent school summer holidays.

As with many changes in bus routes, there are a few losers as the section of Orwell Road between Leopold Road and Garrison Lane is no longer served. No doubt First, which operates the service on a strictly commercial basis, has taken the view that there are far more winners than losers. Although we recognise that some people will be inconvenienced by this alteration, we do agree with the change, which basically represents a reversion to the situation of a few years ago, when service 78 was the only route serving this section of Orwell Road, with just five buses per day.

However, at the time of going to press, we understand that an extra stop may be added along Wolsey Gardens near Hyldon Court, which may alleviate the situation to some extent.

The case of the missing bus stop (Leopold Road) At about the time of the above changes, First removed the bus stop along Leopold Road, apparently on the grounds that parked vehicles on the road where the stop was situated were making it difficult for buses to stop there. This is a most disappointing decision, particularly as it coincided with the rerouting of buses away from Orwell Road, and we are 'on the case' to request that this stop is reinstated – it is hardly the only location where parked vehicles obstruct a bus stop, and it is very disappointing that First appears to have 'thrown in the towel' to the detriment of its passengers. Hopefully common sense will prevail so that this stop may be reinstated.

Re- timings of afternoon buses on Mondays to Fridays In order to improve timekeeping and reliability, the departure times of buses from Ipswich have been amended between 1430 and 1800 on Mondays to

Public Transport Notes (cont'd)

Fridays. The regular 15 minute interval pattern has been altered so that most services depart from Ipswich between 5 and 10 minutes later than previously, with consequent 'knock on' effects on returning times from Felixstowe. Although this disturbs an easy to remember pattern, it has to be said that increasing traffic congestion within Ipswich has made this move inevitable, and no journeys have been lost.

Limited stop X7 is now only a peak hour operation

Not unexpectedly, in view of the low number of fare paying passengers during off peak hours, the limited stop X7 service has been reduced to a peak hours only operation with two morning journeys at 0720 and 0750 from Great Eastern Square and two return trips from Ipswich at 1620 and 1720. As before, these journeys operate around the Mill Lane, Coronation Drive and Cavendish Park loop similar to service 75.

COACHES

National Express coaches - the saga continues Over the past few months, communication with National Express continues to be difficult and all in one direction – no prizes for guessing!

However, one piece of positive news is that the return 481 journey to Felixstowe has been retarded to depart Victoria Coach Station at 1800, allowing for an extra hour and a half on a day visit to London. The journey is still timed at a leisurely pace, and the coach is not scheduled to arrive in Felixstowe until 2210 – a mere 3 minutes faster than in the 1950s!

The frustrating news is that most of the problems mentioned in our last newsletter still remain, not least being the difficulty of obtaining accurate timetable information from the Natex website. It was only by making an enquiry from a different angle that the above information could be gleaned.

For those without access to the internet, Natex has made matters worse by withdrawing its handy timetable leaflets – a most user unfriendly gesture given that a sizeable proportion of its market will be elderly folk who may not have such access.

With weekend rail disruption on the London line set to continue well into the Autumn, Natex misses the opportunity to capitalise on this situation.

We are currently attempting to escalate our complaints further up the Natex hierarchy, so in the meantime the saga continues!

Disintegrated transport! Staying with the National Express saga, one of the points which we raised with the company is the ongoing failure to reinstate the stopping point for service 250 at Ipswich rail station, now that the work on the forecourt has been completed. One reason why the company does not feel it worthwhile to operate more coaches to Felixstowe is that it claimed that several passengers using the 'airports' service 250 travelled by rail into Ipswich and

joined the coach at the station. It appears that the continued absence of these coaches from the forecourt is due to an access issue with Greater Anglia which remains unresolved at present, so that passengers wishing to transfer from rail to coach are faced with an inconvenient walk or taxi ride to or from Cardinal Park. No doubt many (if they are able) will drive or use a taxi for the entire journey instead, thus depriving both rail and coach companies of revenue. So much for integrated transport!

RAIL

Same old problems persist We are now nearly a year into the new 'long' Greater Anglia franchise, and it has to be said that there has so far been little perceptible change in the local rail scene, with the all too familiar instances of delays and cancellations occurring both on our line and on the main line to London.

In fact, in the peak summer period from mid-July to mid- August, there was at least one cancellation on the Felixstowe line on more than half of the days during that time – not a record of which to be proud, and hardly one to encourage rail travel. Nevertheless, on days when a good service was operated, many trains were full to capacity with a good number of cycles and heavy luggage being conveyed, testimony to the usefulness of the train as opposed to other modes of travel.

We are currently in a 'limbo' period where there is little action which the rail company can take to ameliorate its dire rolling stock situation, a state of affairs which is unlikely to improve until the arrival of the much needed new fleets of trains in 2019. It was very disappointing to note that one of the loco- hauled sets in Norfolk was withdrawn in early September, which may well make matters worse.

So far, there has been no sign of the much needed investment being undertaken at some of our stations, in particular Derby Road, which has been devoid of platform shelters for far too long. This is simply a disgrace, bearing in mind the large catchment area of East Ipswich which that station serves.

As this newsletter was going to press, the unwelcome news broke that guards on Greater Anglia had voted by a large margin to take industrial action on the issue of drivers operating the doors on the new fleets of trains on inter city and rural services. The action was due to take place on 3rd & 5th October, and we hope that the parties can come to an agreement in the meantime which will avoid the extensive disruption and misery suffered by passengers on Southern, where the situation remains unresolved after well over a year.

Finally, it is good to recognise the work carried out by our station adopters, in particular by Tom Hatrick, who took up this position at Trimley earlier this year following the retirement of John & Betty Woollan. Thanks to the initiative of our Vice-Chairman Richard Holland, an adopter for Derby Road may also have been found.

How to join Travel Watch - or renew your membership!

If you're reading this online, or from a complimentary (or someone else's) copy of *The Traveller*, why not consider joining us? We've been here for over 45 years now, promoting and campaigning for the best in public transport for the Felixstowe area, and offering a comprehensive programme of tours throughout every year.

Our Membership Secretary, Jean Leitch will be at our October Meeting to take your money and issue you with a membership card. Alternatively, please send your cheque (payable to *Felixstowe Travel Watch*) enclosing a stamped addressed envelope to **Mrs Jean Leitch, 104 St Andrews Road, Felixstowe IP11 7ED** £3 for individuals or £4 for families (plus an extra £1.50 if you need your Newsletters posted to you or if you live outside our IP11 hand delivery area).

Existing members - If you had a Red Spot on your Newsletter envelope label, that shows that your membership renewal for 2017 is now overdue!

Greater Anglia's New Trains

Since our last members' meeting, Executive Committee members have had the opportunity to visit, and comment upon, mock-ups of the new trains which Greater Anglia have ordered.

The first visit took place to GA's Norwich Crown Point Depot in June, where a one-coach mock-up of a Stadler Flirt train was on display. Standard class in the 12-coach main line units will be similar to that on the 3 & 4-coach variants for the regional routes (including "our" line), but with the addition of buffet facilities and limited first class. Our principal concerns remain the number of toilets on the 12-coach units (just five), although the 3 or 4 coach trains will have two. The seating seems firmer than current coaching stock, although the lumbar support is good. The jury is out on just how comfortable these will be on a 90/100 minute journey.

The second visit was to Bombardier's factory in Derby, where the 5 and 10 coach Aventra units for "outer suburban" services are to be built. These units will be used on at least one Norwich to London stopping train each hour. The seating is generally arranged on a "3+2" basis in an "airline" style, with a few bays with 4 seats around a table. It too is high backed, and firmer than say the nearest equivalent in a Class 360 unit. Coaches are longer, and the fact that each 5-car unit will have 540 seats compared with 272 on a 4-car Class 360 demonstrates just how thoroughly space has been exploited. The inter-coach connections are the open plan style similar to the new London Underground Metropolitan/Circle/District line stock, offsetting the density of the seating.

All in all, two very interesting visits.

GN

Ken's Travel Tips



Ken Tricker

(E-mail: trickerken35@talktalk.net)
Our President offers some travel tips if you take the train to Cambridge!

By rail from Felixstowe to Cambridge the current timetable entails a fairly lengthy overall journey time (usually 2 hours 11 minutes), certainly much longer than by road, assuming no delays. However the return by the direct route via Newmarket is even longer (usually 2 hours 40 minutes) because of the nearly hour's wait at Ipswich for the onward train back to Felixstowe. But an alternative does exist: to avoid much of that wait passengers may use the two-hourly Peterborough-Ipswich service from Ely. These trains leave Ely at 32 minutes past the even hours (Mondays to Saturdays) from 08.32 onwards to 18.32, arriving in Ipswich at 09.28 and every two hours till 19.28, so reducing the wait at Ipswich. Connections from Cambridge depart usually at 01 and 04 mins. past the even hour, arriving in Ely at 14 and 21 mins. past the hour. This routing takes 2 hours 20 minutes. It is shown on Cambridge station timetable departure boards in normal type, as opposed to bold type for through trains. (A similar service operates on Sundays, but please check in advance. Journey time, Cambridge - Ely - Ipswich - Felixstowe is 2 hours 15 minutes).

Perversely, due to the limitations in setting connections at key junctions, Felixstowe - Cambridge via Ely does not produce a time saving. However, we are hopeful that, with the new trains coming in a couple of years, connections at Ipswich will be improved. Your Committee have pressed for this, and will continue to do so.

Tours News

We have just a few tickets remaining for the evening tour to the Seckford Theatre (to see Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Sorcerer* and *Trial by Jury*) on 26th October; and the Thursford Christmas Spectacular on 4th December. Please contact Gwynneth or Richard as soon as possible for more information or to reserve places. RH

Diary Dates - Members' Meetings - 2018

We've already booked the dates for FTW's members' meetings for 2018, so invite you to put them in your diary as soon as you can! They'll be on 6th February at 2.30pm, 8th May at 7.30pm (AGM) & 16th October at 2.30pm. We'll be holding our Information Stalls in the entrance to the East of England's Co-op Hamilton Road store on Saturdays 2nd June & 8th December. GN