

2018 ONTRACK AGM & QUESTION TIME – MINUTES & Q&A NOTES

1. **Chairman John Smock opened the meeting and welcomed members and guests.** There were no apologies for absence. *But by e-mail ex-poste Peter Kay, Derek Monnery, Cllr Nick Turner.*
2. **The minutes of the Annual General Meeting of May 2017** were read, there were no matters arising.
3. **The Annual Report 2017** was read, there were no matters arising.
4. **The Hon. Treasurer's Report** of year ending 31st December 2017 was read, there were no matters arising.
5. **The Membership Secretary's Report** for 2017 was read, there were no matters arising. The four reports were proposed for acceptance by Eric Rowley, seconded by Ray Gilmour and accepted unanimously.
6. **The proposal to amend the Constitution's aims** and objectives to cover wider transport/rail connectivity was discussed and accepted unanimously by secret ballot.
7. **Election of Officers:** The committed stood down but made themselves available for re-election. There being no nominations for any of the posts, the committee was re-elected unanimously by secret ballot.

8. Guest Speakers

Giles Watling MP: Along with other MPs in the group, He has had regular meetings with Greater Anglia and Network Rail. This summer there will be two weekends of disruption which he considered reasonable. The new trains are coming along and will give a marginal improvement in journey times – but significant improvements in journey times are necessary to help regenerate the District. For the West Tendring Garden Village, road improvements are planned and an announcement is due to be made shortly concerning the A120 around Colchester; there are also improvements to the A12 to come soon. The District is paying the price for decades of under-investment in transport infrastructure. Eric Rowley asked who the group of MPs comprised; in addition to Giles: these included Bernard Jenkin and Will Quince.

Cllr Mark Platt: As a district councillor, in 2015 he set up the Transport Liaison Group, being frustrated by the lack of input by Tendring District Council, responsibility being left to the County Council. With the on-going problems caused by repeated weekend closures of the main railway, he suggested a blockade to get the work done in a shorter overall time. John Smock noted that the Ipswich tunnel blockade was properly organised with temporary car park and shuttle buses and resourced. David Bryant noted that in the local plan there seemed very little mention of rail, was this due to lack of interest? The response was that there was an increasing interest locally among councillors.

Paul Oxley (Public Affairs) & Alan Neville (Community & Engagement Manager),

Greater Anglia: The current timekeeping position is that performance is just below 90% and that the response to last autumn's leaf-fall was much better than the previous year. Extra capacity had been achieved from the start of the franchise by the addition of 20 extra class 321 emus; the 321 units are being refurbished under the Renatus programme. Customer contact centres were now open 24/7 and station upgrades had been taking place. The uptake of smart ticketing had been good, as had the 26-30 and Club 50 railcards. An automatic scheme for delay repay is being trialled. Giles Watling asked whether a missed connection qualified a user for delay repay even though neither train was excessively late: the reply was “Yes.” Regarding snow fall, it was explained that Network Rail specifies the level of service that can be operated in bad weather and

on one occasion during the winter, services were curtailed, but when the snow did not materialise, it took until midday for Network Rail to lift the restrictions. It was questioned why cancellations seemed to affect the Walton-line but not Clacton: Paul Oxley responded that they were attempting to ensure that Walton does get a service. Giles Watling noted that at Thorpe-le-Soken, the waiting room had been locked with passengers stuck on the platform for extended periods; it seems that Greater Anglia is working on a remote locking/unlocking mechanism. New ticket vending machines are being installed at most stations on the GA network (excepting stations such as Shippea Hill) and new train building was under way. Network Rail is seeking third party funding for Ely North Junction re-doubling, Haughley junction re-modelling, Trowse swing bridge doubling and for the loops north of Witham.

Trevor Garrod, ESTA chair & Rail Future committee member: Doubling the service frequency had resulted in a 90% increase in passenger numbers so that ESTA considered that there should not be cuts to front-line staff at Lowestoft, as they helped with disabled passengers, clearing litter, etc. A visitor information centre had been opened on Lowestoft station and this added to the staff presence there. He referred to a February 2018 Rail Future report on seamless transport in East Anglia concerning integrated bus/rail ticketing and to the PlusBus scheme, which did not seem to be well known to the public and needed more publicity.

10. Question Time (Chaired By TDC Chair Cllr Mark Platt)

- i) The comfort of the new trains was questioned: it was noted that the new trains will be better – but emphasised that the Renatus units (Renovated upgraded Class 321 Units, an initiative of the Leasing Co.,) were NOT the new trains.
- ii) John R..... queried cycle spaces on the new trains – there is to be four spaces (but carriage of cycles will be restricted on peak hour services to/from Liverpool Street as at present.
- iii) Cllr Anne Davis asked about capacity on the new trains - 25% increase with longer trains; and about conductors on trains – these to remain until the end of the franchise as present, for the subsequent franchise, transport minister Chris Grayling will talk to the rail unions.
- iv) Cllr Andy Baker noted that the exterior ticket machine at Manningtree was south-facing and the screen is difficult to read – could this be re-sited?
- v) Andrew W..... noted that he had lost around £30,000 over the past 10 years through being unable to get to work on a Sunday morning in London due to disruption resulting from engineering work: could Greater Anglia not arrange for the first buses of the day arrive at Liverpool Street at the scheduled time of the first train, even if it meant leaving earlier. Greater Anglia will investigate this suggestion.
- vi) Mrs. Julia G..... commented on the 22.18 from Liverpool Street she was on a few weeks ago which appeared not to stop at Thorpe-le-Soken so she was unable to alight. Great Anglia representatives stated that examination of the black-box recorder showed that the train stopped for 40 seconds during which time the doors were released. They also stated that in the case of late running late evenings causing missed connections, staff on trains would ascertain the number of Walton-line passengers and telephone ahead to arrange onward transport from Thorpe-le-Soken. (note Ex-poste Mrs JG advised that ABELLIO GAR had looked at data for the wrong train viz 21.18 not the 22.18)
- vii) Peregrine M..... noted that there was generally a lack of frequency locally that needed to be improved – it was stated that there were problems with inadequate track capacity to improve the situation.
- viii) Cllr Andy Baker stated that there needs to be improvements in infrastructure to attract people to use the rail services and improve the local economy.