

Improving Connectivity
Network Rail (Group Strategy)
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Traffic / Highways Delivery Group

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Newmarket Vision Transport Delivery Group Consultation Response to Improving Connectivity

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to Network Rail's consultation on its new approach to planning rail services.

Newmarket Vision Transport Delivery Group (NVTDG) has representation from Newmarket Town Council, the horseracing industry, local businesses, Forest Heath District Council and Suffolk County Council. The transport delivery group is responsible for addressing the transport priorities.

This response contains the views of all of the parties listed, as well as the views of the Newmarket Vision Steering Group.

The NVTDG supports an approach that focuses on local rail connections as opposed to mainline services and agrees that more cost effective methods should be used to improve track capacity and frequency of services. However, infrastructure is required first to make the region's rail network more resilient and reliable. The proposals contained within Improving Connectivity seem to contradict the purpose of the Anglia Route Study, which seeks to implement more cost effective ways to improve rail links (Improving Connectivity cites that the infrastructure needed to support its passenger rail service proposals will be circa £1 billion).

Improving Connectivity claims that changes to passenger rail service timetables (alongside the introduction of split and join services, and cross-platform changes) will decrease some journey times. However, this will depend on the availability of good rolling stock and infrastructure. Diesel stock availability is currently limited across the UK and orders for new trains are few and far between. Improving Connectivity does not take account of the impact delayed or cancelled trains will have on journey times.

Cross-platform changes will also create a complicated timetable, it is therefore important that the provision of understandable timetabling and ticketing information is provided. Cross-platform changes would not be a suitable option for passengers who are disabled, or for those travelling with heavy luggage or with young children. This creates further issues if access between platforms is not DDA compliant.

Newmarket Station

The consultation document claims that a new platform could be constructed at Newmarket Station to act as an interchange hub for connecting services. We are very supportive of investment in Newmarket Station to improve connectivity to Cambridge, Ely, Peterborough, London, Stansted and eventually the South West via the new East West Rail Link. However, such investment in the station must improve passenger facilities and simply must not be

'another platform', but a station facility that complements Newmarket. This will be particularly important if Newmarket's bid for Royal Status is granted. The existing station consists of a single platform. Both the station building and land behind it were sold. There is little land available for further platform development. It would therefore be useful to understand Network Rail's redevelopment plans and the land that would be required.

The timetabling of services and passenger capacity must also be assessed if Newmarket became an interchange hub. This should be assessed to include rail demand during race days. In addition to this, staff presence at the station will be essential, especially for providing assistance to passengers who need help to board their trains.

Ipswich to Peterborough

The NVTDG also supports the development of the Warren Hill Junction to Snailwail Junction, which will connect to the busy Ely-Soham Line. It is imperative that additional track capacity is provided between Soham and Ely, and that level crossings are upgraded (ensuring no loss of access to local routes). Electrification of the line between Felixstowe and Birmingham, and between Ipswich and Cambridge will greatly improve line speeds.

There is a desperate need to improve infrastructure at Ely to accommodate additional freight trains that will travel from the expanding Port of Felixstowe (increasing to 60 trains per day by 2024). We are pleased that the Government has committed to upgrade the freight route between Felixstowe and Birmingham, using the Strategic Freight Network fund. However, we understand that work at Ely is in danger of slipping into CP6. Improvements to Ely North Junction are due to be delivered by May 2017, yet no date has been given for providing additional track capacity between Ely and Soham and there is a need to upgrade level crossings, which are presently entirely unfunded. It is important that infrastructure being delivered at Ely does not favour one service over another, and is mutually beneficial to all services.

The proposal to combine the Ipswich – Cambridge service and the Ipswich – Peterborough service could cause issues with seating capacity (in particular during peak times) if additional carriages are not provided. This could be particularly problematic during Newmarket Race Days.

The NVTDG is supportive of the campaign, being led by the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and Suffolk County Council, for an hourly direct service between Ipswich and Peterborough. The implementation of additional track between Warren Hill Junction and Snailwell Junction will provide the necessary infrastructure to connect Newmarket with this service, and with further rail connections at Ely. In addition to this, it will link Newmarket directly with Peterborough and with the Midlands, North East, North West and Scotland. An hourly direct Ipswich – Peterborough passenger service will deliver over **£60m** in economic benefits for the Suffolk economy. It will support housing and jobs growth, and greatly benefit business.

Ipswich to Cambridge

We are supportive of a half-hourly Ipswich to Cambridge passenger rail service. This would greatly support connections at Cambridge with London Kings Cross, London Liverpool Street and Oxford via the East West Rail Link. Faster line speeds, achieved through electrification of the Ipswich to Cambridge Line, are desperately needed. Electrification work could tie in with a scheme to electrify the line between Felixstowe and Birmingham.

Cambridge to London

The NVTDG is supportive of improved connectivity with London, as well as proposals to improve track capacity on the West Anglia Mainline and access to Thameslink services and Stansted Airport. However, we are concerned about the capacity at Cambridge station to take additional services and additional passengers. Investment will be necessary at Cambridge Station to provide additional platform capacity, and address present areas of passenger

congestion, such as the ticket foyer and waiting rooms.

European Rail Transport Management System

The passenger rail service proposals within Improving Connectivity will be heavily reliant on the implementation of the European Rail Transport Management System (ERTMS). This equipment will do much to help improve frequency of passenger services and resilience of the rail network. However, Government investment in the ERTMS must be forthcoming and consistent for all services and not just on mainline services. This would prevent delays in implementing the technology in passenger trains that operate on local lines.

The NVTDG welcomes future involvement in helping to better connect local services. However, the new approach should further explore current rail infrastructure needs and capability of the rail network (as being promoted by the Anglia Route Study) to ensure that the proposals set out in Improving Connectivity are not contradictory to rail infrastructure and new franchise plans. The concept of changing trains should also be tested against Passenger Focus research.

Yours faithfully

Lisa Chambers

Chairman of Newmarket Vision Traffic / Highways Delivery Group