

# PETERBOROUGH – ELY – NORWICH RAIL USERS GROUP

## *Newsletter – April 2026*

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Welcome to our latest newsletter. This edition includes:

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### PERFORMANCE

#### East Midlands Railway (EMR)

In **January**, 31 services were cancelled at the Norwich end of the Liverpool-Norwich route, all but two of them in the first 15 days of the month. Eighteen of the cancellations were between Nottingham or beyond and Norwich, six of them between Ely and Norwich. The two cancellations on 25 January were caused by another suicide at Grantham.

Twenty-two Liverpool-Norwich trains were cancelled at the Norwich end of the route in **February**, eight of them between Nottingham and Norwich, five between Ely and Norwich. Eight of the cancellations occurred on 16 February (see below), again suggesting that, when something goes wrong, the easy solution is to close down for the rest of the day.

Twenty-four Liverpool-Norwich trains were cancelled at the Norwich end of the route in **March**, 12 of them between Nottingham and Norwich, 10 of them between Ely and Norwich. Wednesday 18 March was a bad day with nine cancellations, seven of them due to one track being blocked by a train immobilised after striking a deer.

These figures do not include services which left Norwich but did not reach their scheduled destination nor those which reached Norwich but did not start from their scheduled origin.

Announcements for EMR departures at Peterborough station (managed by LNER) continue to state a penalty fares scheme is in operation even for Norwich bound services. As we have pointed out to EMR last year, this is incorrect as penalty fares only apply between Nottingham and Liverpool Lime Street.

### **Greater Anglia (GA)**

GA again provided extra Norwich-Cambridge trains at weekends when Norwich-Liverpool Street services were affected by engineering work. However, all 10 extra journeys were cancelled on Sunday 22 February due to 'more trains than usual requiring repairs at the same time'.

In March, GA won four awards at the [Golden Whistles Awards 2026](#) for train performance.

Our train operators have had some challenging days since the start of the year.

### **Ely points failure**

There was huge disruption on 16 February following a points failure early afternoon at Ely. EMR services via Ely were suspended but all afternoon the National Rail website's advice for EMR passengers was to use GA services between Ely and Norwich – but these were not running either save for a truncated service between Brandon and Norwich.

XC arranged for road transport between Ely and Peterborough, and between Peterborough and Leicester.

The disruption was initially predicted to last until 1800 but that was later revised to the rest of the day. Passengers expecting to take the final train of the day from Norwich towards Peterborough and Derby were advised to travel via Liverpool Street, the London Underground and King's Cross or Euston.

Well into the evening, GA staff at Cambridge (and doubtless elsewhere) had the unenviable task of finding taxis for passengers heading for an array of destinations including Attleborough and Wymondham.

### **Bridge strike at Thetford**

On 2 March there were some delays after a road vehicle reportedly struck Abbey Farm bridge at Thetford. Disruption appears to have been contained but the incident attracted considerable media attention including [BBC News](#). In Network Rail's Top 10 of bridge bashes in 2024/25, Abbey Farm bridge was one of four bridges hit 11 times.

### **Dimmocks Cote level crossing**

Just after 1000 on 3 March, a car and a XC train collided at the A1123 Dimmocks Cote level crossing between Ely and Waterbeach. Sadly, the occupant of the car was killed. The train services between Ely and Cambridge North were suspended with XC trains from Birmingham and GA trains from Norwich terminating at Ely.

### Overrunning engineering work

Overrunning engineering work affecting a set of points at Trowse, on the outskirts of Norwich led to trains being unable to run between Norwich and Wymondham on the morning of Sunday 15 March. EMR services between Ely and Norwich were replaced by buses. GA issued a 'do not travel' warning as all Stansted Airport – Norwich trains were initially cancelled. Passengers travelling between Norwich and Attleborough were advised to use First's number 13 bus at no extra charge.

Services gradually resumed from about 1400.

### Deer incident

All services between Norwich and Ely were subject to delays and cancellations on the morning of 18 March when the 0533 Norwich to Cambridge train sustained damage after colliding with a deer near Thetford.

Replacement buses were sourced and services returned to normal by lunchtime.

## MAY TIMETABLE: GREATER ANGLIA IMPROVEMENTS

Earlier this year we drew members' attention to a number of timetable improvements GA will be implementing from the May timetable change. Here's a recap of the main changes affecting our route:

- On Mondays to Fridays, an extra morning peak train from Norwich (0808) to Cambridge (0921).
- On Mondays to Fridays, an extra early evening peak train from Cambridge (1710) to Norwich (1826).
- On Mondays to Saturdays, an extra train from Norwich (2140) to Ely (2238).
- On Mondays to Saturdays, an extra train from Ely (2243) to Norwich (2342).

All these trains have the standard stopping pattern between Norwich and Ely and provide good London connections at Ely.

The 0633 and the 0726 Norwich to Cambridge now originate at Lowestoft (at 0538 and 0634 respectively). The second of these trains retains its stop at Waterbeach. The 2126 departure from Cambridge runs through to Lowestoft (2333).

We are pleased with these enhancements, in particular that the over-crowding on the 1730 Cambridge-Norwich is being addressed by the provision of an additional train 20 minutes earlier.

The revised timetable takes effect from 17 May. There is a full summary of the changes on the [Greater Anglia website](#).

Elsewhere . . .

- **EMR** have confirmed an extra journey on Sunday afternoons from Norwich to Peterborough. From 17 May, the 1429 Peterborough – Liverpool Lime Street service will start from Norwich at 1256, calling at Thetford and Ely.
- **XC** have no significant changes on their Birmingham-Stansted Airport service. Train times and travel information can be found in their online [timetable](#) leaflet. An interesting quirk is the 0625 Bristol Temple Meads to Stansted Airport – a five and a quarter hour journey via Birmingham and Peterborough which calls at Manea.

## EMR STAKEHOLDER MEETING

### ***Steve Smithson reports back from EMR's Stakeholder Meeting in Nottingham on 30 January.***

The December timetable had proved robust and had delivered extra seats across rural routes. Additional main line capacity was dependent on the new 810 units. These were being introduced slowly with some issues.

Ridership was up and subsidy was down. Timekeeping had also improved.

There was discussion about the closure of the pedestrian bridge at Nottingham station which was now extended to cover the whole weekend until 0600 on Monday morning. This had reduced ticketless travel but, perhaps more importantly, reduced the assaults on staff and incidents of anti-social behaviour.

The refurbishment of the regional fleet started in 2025. The first class 360 for the Corby services was in works. Six of the 2 car 170 dmus have been completed together with 4 class 158 dmus.

The reliability of the dmu fleet had improved. In particular, EMR had avoided the wheelset problems that affected the 158 fleet last year.

On the question of reliability of the Liverpool – Norwich route, it was stated that reliability had improved by around 1.5% but the route was still performing poorly. A project group was planned to take a close look at performance on the route.

In an effort to improve the service during bad weather, emergency timetables had been produced to be introduced when bad weather was forecast. The aim was to offer a resilient reduced service rather running a haphazard version of the normal timetable.

In the timetable session, a further look at extending the 1251 Liverpool -Nottingham to Norwich to fill the remaining gap in the hourly service was promised. A member of the planning team was responsible for looking at performance against the timetable in detail to make adjustments in running times when necessary.

As noted above, from the May timetable change, the current Sunday service which starts from Peterborough will start back from Norwich at 1256 reducing the three hour gap for Norwich departures.

## NEWS ROUND UP

### Harling Road

GA are looking for one or more station adopters for Harling Road. More information can be found at [www.greateranglia.co.uk/about-us/station-adopter-scheme](http://www.greateranglia.co.uk/about-us/station-adopter-scheme). Anyone interested should email: [StationAdopters@GreaterAnglia.co.uk](mailto:StationAdopters@GreaterAnglia.co.uk).

Some inspiration can be found four miles away at the award winning Eccles Road station where tubs of daffodils have once again adorned the platforms.

Harling Road is currently served by only two trains a day in each direction but Breckland Council's plans for a housing development of 1,900 homes at nearby Larling could increase the significance of this small station.

### Manchester Piccadilly

After a nine day blockade requiring nearly 9,000 rail replacement buses, Manchester Piccadilly reopened as planned on the morning of 23 February, restoring through trains along the full Liverpool Lime Street – Norwich route.

For a summary of the work and a high speed video, see the [Network Rail website](#).

### March

The Friends of March Railway Station were shortlisted for an award in the 'Most Enhanced Railway Spaces' category at the Community Rail Awards for their station improvements. For more information, see the [GA website](#).

### Norwich

Norfolk Chambers of Commerce held their annual 'Big Debate' at The Forum in Norwich on 6 February. The county's infrastructure including transport links was on the agenda. GA which sponsored the event reported back that the rail priorities were seen as upgrades at Ely and Haughley, and measures which would achieve more frequent Norwich-Cambridge services.

From 12 April First's Excel service will no longer serve Norwich Rail Station and will terminate at Norwich Bus Station. The extended route to the rail station only began at the end of August 2025 leading to bus connections from Norwich Rail Station to Dereham Market Place featuring in the National Rail journey planner.

Konectbus continue to provide a half hourly service from Norwich Rail Station to Dereham.

On a separate bus issue, PENRUG are pleased GA reacted quickly to our request to update the train departure notices at Norwich bus station in Surrey Street. The times on display were from the June 2024 timetable.

## **Nottingham**

EMR announced that following access to the platforms from the station's footbridge being restricted last year, the measures were being extended to weekends. Since 6 February, passengers have not been able to reach the platforms from the footbridge from 1900 on Friday until 0600 on Monday.

The restrictions introduced last year are designed to reduce fare evasion and improve safety. EMR report a 45% reduction in assaults and abuse to customers and staff when access to the platforms from the footbridge was blocked. EMR told us that in response to earlier feedback, they have introduced a number of mitigation measures including clearer signage, enhanced wayfinding, and updated guidance for those accessing taxi ranks and local services.

See also EMR's bullet point summary on their [website](#).

## **Peterborough**

[BBC News](#) was among the organisations to report that following a consultation exercise, work to regenerate the area around Peterborough station would begin by the end of March as part of the Peterborough Station Quarter Project. To improve pedestrian access between the station and the city centre, Peterborough City Council gave the 28 day statutory notice on 19 February that 35 trees would be removed.

## **Trespassers**

At the end of January, GA announced further measures at selected stations to deter [trespassers](#). They include additional fences, gates and anti-trespass panels on the ground (featuring rubber spikes known as 'witches' hats') to deter people from accessing the track.

Of the 18 stations to receive attention, 12 are between Norwich and Peterborough. All our intermediate stations are listed with the exception of Ely.

## **Waterbeach**

Most Stansted-Norwich trains pass through Waterbeach without stopping but it may be of interest that information about the facilities likely to be available at the new station there was publicised early in February. [BBC News](#) was among the organisations to report the possibility of a café, waiting room and toilets, none of which exist at the current station. Shortly afterwards, the *Cambridge Independent* mentioned that a report to the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership's assembly on 12 February said the additional facilities would cost between £400,000 and £600,000.

## **Whittlesea**

Between 5 January and 1 February, Fenland District Council invited rail users, residents and businesses to take part in a consultation on the future regeneration of Whittlesea station. This was on the back of £3 million funding allocated by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Each of the three options included provision for a new car park and a pedestrian bridge and lift while two of the

options involved extensions of the platforms to prevent the need for selective door opening. More waiting shelter space was also suggested.

The background and options are summarised in these [slides](#) from Hereward CRP.

Feedback from the consultation and a preferred approach will feature in an Outline Business Case.

### **Wymondham/Mid-Norfolk Railway**

The Mid Norfolk Railway (MNR) has launched its 2026 [timetable](#) which includes a [Vintage Bus Day](#) (10 May) and a [Spring Diesel Gala](#) (23-25 May). Trains operate from Wymondham Abbey to Dereham.

The Rail 200 Inspiration Exhibition train will be visiting the MNR in May following successful visits to Norwich, Lowestoft and Cambridge. The train will be at Dereham Station on 19/20 May and then at the MNR's Wymondham Abbey Station (0.9 mile from the mainline station) on 21 May.

Advance booking is essential through the link on the MNR's [website](#).

**For the latest news see the PENRUG Facebook page.**

### **PENRUG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Date: Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**Time: 1030**

**Location: Methodist Church, Tanner Street, Thetford IP24 2BQ**

**All members and non-members are welcome.**

**Refreshments can be purchased in the café.**

### **JOURNEY EXPERIENCES**

#### ***Ely to Nottingham and return - 30 January 2026***

I travelled on the 0748 train from Ely (0651 Norwich to Liverpool Lime Street). This arrived 6 minutes late after being held approaching Ely North Junction to allow a late running Great Northern to proceed to King's Lynn.

The train left 2 minutes late but was right time at March and for the rest of the journey to Nottingham. The train seemed to roll from side to side on the section of track up to March as if the embankment was moving in the same way as Fenland roads.

The train did not seem very busy. It arrives in Nottingham after 0930. There were regular ticket checks and announcements throughout the journey.

The return journey was on the 1637 from Nottingham (1351 Liverpool Lime Street to Norwich). This was a much busier train leaving Nottingham but getting quieter as the journey progressed. There was a ticket check after Grantham and regular announcements but the destination screens got 'stuck' after Nottingham – showing the next station as Grantham for the rest of the journey.

The units on both journeys were three car class 170s which were originally with Southern. They had the EMR maroon exterior livery but inside were as transferred from Southern. The seats were rather shabby and needed to be recovered and the power sockets seem to be mostly taped off. These units are in urgent need of refurbishment but the three car units will be last to be done after the two car units.

Both journeys were good although once the units are refurbished, they will be even better.

*Steve Smithson*

### **Cambridge to Manchester Piccadilly and return – 9/10 February 2026**

My journey starts with 1217 Great Northern service from Cambridge to Ely which is only three minutes late. Aside from all the crumbs on the floor, the short journey to Ely is uneventful on an ex GA 8-car Class 379. Very conveniently, the train terminates on Platform 3 from where it will return to King's Cross. My EMR train to Liverpool will leave from the northern end of the same platform.

My first observation is that both departure screens on that platform show the King's Cross train, whereas the 1248 to Liverpool is not mentioned. However, it is soon announced and arrives on time. It is a 3-car Class 170 unit with about half the seats occupied. The problem is what to do with my small suitcase but with careful manoeuvring it just about fits under my seat.

Immediately after departure the conductor does a ticket check and then makes regular announcements which are loud and clear. We leave Peterborough on time (with another ticket check) but then there is a signal stop at Helpston providing an opportunity to look around me. My coach is generally clean and tidy but the backs of some of the seats have discoloured and the one in front of me needs a thorough clean. There is wi-fi but there do not appear to be any charge points. The information screens are not in use.

We are soon on the move and at Grantham where 15 people and a refreshment trolley board. The trolley does brisk business. I am only five rows of seats from the door where the trolley boarded but it's a good 10 minutes before it can reach me. Another ticket check follows.

We are early as we approach Nottingham and are held at a red signal which is the subject of an automated announcement bringing to life the otherwise idle information screens. The conductor announces that another train will couple up to ours and

passengers should remain seated. Twenty passengers alight from my coach and someone empties the litter bins.

We arrive in Sheffield with plenty of time to spare and then it's a slow run past Edgeley Junction 'box and into Stockport where the shrubs on platform 3 provide a welcome relief from concrete and tarmac. Arrival at Piccadilly is only three minutes late.

It was a good journey. Full marks to the conductor as far as Nottingham for his diligence in making announcements and checking tickets. Full marks too for the refreshment trolley attendant and his engagement with passengers, and with an Advance Single ticket costing only £21.30 (with a Railcard), all went well. Will my good fortune hold out for the return journey the following afternoon? Sadly, not.

The 1443 departure from Piccadilly to Norwich is cancelled due to the 'late arrival of an inbound service' which tells me virtually nothing. The Realtimes Trains website says the train has been 'partially cancelled'; it is only operating between Nottingham and Norwich.

As I wait for the next train, a screen showing a red hand tells passengers to remain in the waiting area before heading down to Platform 13 for the 1543 departure. Does anyone pay any attention? No. I move down to Platform 13 with everyone else where an enormously helpful 'live' announcement tells people where to wait along the platform given the train will divide at Nottingham. There is a surge for the doors. I grab the first available seat and somehow push my case behind the seat.

Inside the train all is relatively clean and tidy. The screens are very clear with large wording but the automated announcements are barely audible. Once again the bins are emptied as we approach Nottingham but, crucially, there is no announcement to warn passengers the train is about to divide.

There were no ticket checks in my coach on the two hour journey from Manchester to Nottingham but there is one soon after leaving Nottingham and the announcements are now louder. Regular ticket checks take place for the rest of my journey on this train. If there is supposed to be a trolley service on board, there does not seem to be one.

As we approach March, I am in snooze mode until a small but clearly very heavy suitcase falls from an overhead rack narrowly missing two women below. It's a wake-up call to us all – in more ways than one. Soon afterwards, with a quick dash through the subway at Ely, I board a train for Cambridge where I arrive 50 minutes late.

Leaving aside the cancellation of my planned train, the journey on the next departure from Manchester was not too bad. My two EMR journeys may not be representative but the really noticeable point concerned the role of the conductor which was excellent east of Nottingham but minimal west of that station despite that part of the route being subject to penalty fares.

*Mark Crosskill*

## **Thetford to Peterborough and return – 5 March 2026**

Another nice walk in Peterborough this morning. Efficient yet happy conductors. Returning on the 0748 from Liverpool, we were stuck behind a limestone train for Snetterton from March to Ely. Apology at Black Bank explaining the delay then update on Cambridge connection approaching Ely I had printed off my tickets from RTT. The Peterborough barriers would not accept them but the devices on both trains had no problems. Facilities at Thetford were open today.

*John Saunders*

To share news, comments or journey experiences email:  
[markcrosskill@gmail.com](mailto:markcrosskill@gmail.com).

## **OFF THE BEATEN TRACK**

### **PREMATURE STOP**

Although Cambridge South station has not yet opened, we have heard announcements on the 755 bi-modes prior to departure from Norwich listing Cambridge South among the scheduled stops! The announcement is then corrected but that seems to trigger a message at every stop informing passengers that a revised service is in operation.

At the time of writing, June is being mentioned for the station's opening with XC's timetable showing 28 June.

### **THE COMMON CRANE**

Driven to extinction by hunting and the loss of their wetland habitats, the Common Crane is now making a comeback with the RSPB reporting three breeding pairs at Lakenheath Fen, next to the railway. According to the east edition of [ITV News Anglia](#) on 2 April, our line is playing a small part in the bird's revival.

The RSPB have co-opted colleagues from the British Trust for Ornithology who monitor the scene from the train windows on their commute to the organisation's headquarters at Thetford. Apparently, the birds are unfazed by passing trains.

For access to the reserve, some trains call at the adjacent Lakenheath station on Sundays with one return journey from Norwich possible on Saturdays.

### **60 YEARS AGO**

Hethersett station, near Norwich closed to passengers on 31 January 1966. Inconveniently situated for the village and separated from it by the A11, its revenue at the time of closure was said to be £200\* a year (about £3,300 in today's monetary values) compared with costs of £700\*.

*\*Source: Regional History of Railways of Great Britain: Eastern Counties by DI Gordon.*

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