



East of England All Party Parliamentary Group

Co-Chairs Daniel Zeichner MP and Peter Aldous MP
Vice-Chairs Sandy Martin MP
Secretary Clive Lewis MP

Minutes and Attendees | East of England All Party Parliamentary Group Evidence Session on Transport and Growth

14:30-16:00, Wednesday 28th February

Committee Room 21, House of Commons, SW1A 0AA

Welcome and introductions

Daniel Zeichner MP, Chair of the APPG, welcomed all attendees and thanked British Sugar and London Stansted for sponsoring the Group and DevoConnect for organising the meeting and providing the Secretariat role.

He went onto remark that the Transport Select Committee had recently taken evidence on the geographic disparity in DfT spending and that there were a number of strong advocates for particular regions of the UK.

That has not always been the case for the East of England where there are a number of transport corridors and plenty of groups. The new APPG aims to bring them all together, take evidence and try and make a submission to autumn budget on some big issues where, hopefully, there is near universal agreement.

Evidence Session: Transport and Growth

Jonathan Denby, Greater Anglia began by making two points: first that the region had come together and lobbied strongly and successfully around a prioritised transport prospectus in 2012; second that for our region a fantastic opportunity is coming up. Over the next 2/3 years all Greater Anglia trains will be replaced as part of the new franchise and many stations are being upgraded. Every single customer – individual or business – will benefit with more seats, more comfortable trains and a better timetable. This will be fantastic for the region and we will not have better opportunity to promote the region as a great place to invest, work, study and live.

He went on to say that opportunities would be even greater if we could increase the investment in the infrastructure. Network Rail has a mandate, and the funding, to maintain the network, but not to enhance capacity. Given the opportunities presented by the new fleet (and the approach taken in securing that outcome), it ought to be possible to lobby for rail infrastructure improvements.

Jonathan listed the key strategic rail projects which Greater Anglia would suggest (on behalf of all rail transport providers in the East of England and linked to the East Anglian Rail Prospectus) - are prioritised:

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Great Eastern Main Line

- Trowse single track swing bridge at Norwich replaced with fixed 2-track bridge
- Haughley Junction N of Stowmarket re-doubled (helps freight to/from Felixstowe too)
- Loops between Colchester and Witham
- Digital signalling – to allow a train every 2 mins not three, so more capacity – S of Chelmsford

West Anglia/Cross Country

- 4-tracking Broxbourne to Copper Mill Junction for increased capacity/reduced journey times (ideally as phase 1 of Crossrail 2)
- Cambridge South project
- Ely Area upgrades
- Ely- Soham doubling

London area

- Angel Road/Meridien Water to Tottenham Hale track capacity upgrade

Across the Greater Anglia network

- Level crossing upgrades and closures

These schemes all deliver significant capacity, performance and journey time benefits.

Our job as the APPG with other regional stakeholders is to make the business case for funding – we should then be prioritising those that are both easiest and quickest in terms of delivering significant improvements to customers. In his view Haughley Junction, which could be delivered by 2021, is one he would suggest is prioritised.

Tim Hawkins, London Stansted Airport began by pointing out that it is five years since MAG took over the airport and there are now 10m more passengers – 26mpasengers per annum – and there are double the number of airlines. There is more choice and more connectivity, with for example new services to USA, through new airline Primera, and direct services to Dubai starting in the summer. Our mission was to build a network of full service and we have been successful. This is helping drive the economic future of the region just as the new service to Beijing is helping deliver growth in Manchester and across the north.

Now we are looking forward to the next ten years. This is Stansted's moment – we have plans for £600m investment with a new departure building as well as enhancements to the airfield. More services will be attracted – our Chief executive is currently in China – and it will benefit businesses and public alike if we achieve the airport's potential. However current planning condition means passenger numbers are capped at 35m but Stansted could do 43m within existing environmental constraints.

He called on the APPG to support the current planning application to lift the cap. He also said that Stansted have pushed for improvements to West Anglia mainline but whilst the Government has accepted that it needs to be improved there has been no visible progress. He suggested that progress could and should be made at same time as Crossrail 2. Finally, he said that overall the Government could be more supportive – it is too fixated on increasing capacity at Heathrow – and should be assisting Stansted to reach its potential as well as looking at wider issues such as Air Passenger Duty reform.

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James Palmer, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough said that there are a number of frustrations for him in his new role. For example, the status quo is very debilitating to our plans regards housing – the timescales and costs for improvements by Network Rail are ludicrous. For example, we are told Cambridge south station - supported by Government - will cost £250 when a new arrivals hall at Stansted is only £130m. There is both incompetence and inefficiency at Network Rail.

He said he has bold plans to improve Cambridge and Peterborough – through the A10 to Ely and A47 from Peterborough to Wisbech. He is trying to move away from begging bowl culture and believes that through land value capture can create capital for important schemes.

All new projects should be handled by the Combined Authority not Network Rail. We need to deliver differently – including projects that benefit Felixstowe and Norwich – as the combined Authority is keen to deliver infrastructure. He ended by saying it is not just rail where there are problems – upgrades to A10 are suggested to take 8-10 years. Are we really so slow? The Great Western line was subject to legislation in 1835 after which 90 miles of track was laid by 1840. But government says will take ten years to extend it now.

Q&A, comments and discussion

Sir Henry Bellingham MP said he was focussed on west Norfolk and the A47 scheme which is vital. However the A10 non trunk road – Ely by pass – was completed quickly - in two to three years: I would like to hear how. It does seem to me that we have delivered some sudden improvements eg Kings Cross to Cambridge and Kings Lynn which was very good and electrified quickly. Meanwhile GTR having difficulties but Greater Anglia succeeded

James Palmer, Mayor, said the by pass was actually completed 14 months slower than should have been as procurement process was delayed by an appeal that was clearly never going to be upheld. A variety of people inputted to make progress. We now need similar approach as there are plans for 12,000 new homes in Wisbech so we need trains with 8 carriages.

Jonathan Denby, GA, said the prospectus in 2012 had helped get all voices together and singing from the same hymn sheet. The Government previously was not getting a clear view from the region. After that we decided to prioritise – the upcoming franchise process and with it new rolling stock – and we then got all behind these. After that Government always got the same message. Remorseless pushing won the day.

That said, the context for lobbying now is more challenging as the key issues are all about rail infrastructure – issues that are in control of DfT and HMT. They control Network Rail spend and so even if schemes are in the pipeline there's no guarantee that they will be progressed. Also Network Rail is not incentivized to deliver enhancements – so we have to influence DFT, HMT and BEIS and justify why the projects are so important

Peter Aldous MP, Vice Chair, said the A47 is a strategically important project as has potential to bring economic growth across north of region. He then asked James Palmer if he was handicapped by only representing a small patch? He also said he was sympathetic to frustration with Network Rail – there needs to be a small upgrade to Lowestoft. He went onto say that Stansted is good for our region but London's third airport is still not that easy to get to. Finally, he asked about regional airports such as Norwich. What role – if any - is there for them?

James Palmer, Mayor, replied that the northern Anglia highway – a dual carriageway between Peterborough and Norwich – could, should, be the lifeblood of that area. However, he has no control over Norfolk so cannot

put forward a comprehensive plan. Asked if he does co-ordinate with Norfolk and Suffolk? He replied that he could.

Jonathan Denby, GA, said if we were ambitious and secured funding from the new Anglia LEP towards the Haughey Junction scheme it could be delivered by 2021. However, to make the necessary changes to the Trowse swing bridge requires legislative change to de-designate Norwich as a sea port. If that is achieved, then it is not a complex project and could potentially be done by 2022/2023. The loop south of Colchester would be a little longer as a full plan for that project has not yet been agreed, but could feasibly be achieved by 2024/25: digital signalling, allowing more trains, could be done by 2026. These were all best-case scenarios, with effective lobbying securing investment at the earliest opportunity and schemes completed on schedule. In the meantime, he was pleased to say that one benefit of the Greater Anglia franchise is that a direct Norwich to Stansted service is due to be introduced.

Tim Hawkins, Stansted Airport, said that he is excited about a variety of services. Car parking provides a levy used for buses and to stimulate routes in rural settings. Regards regional airports, these are pretty challenging to operate in but have a bright future: Stansted is certainly not seeking to dominate the region. Some people will go via Schiphol but if there are 100,000 passengers – including those from London – then that will support a route which is a positive for the whole region. Meanwhile he clarified that MAG neither opposes nor supports a new runway at Heathrow.

Cllr David Williams, Leader Hertfordshire County Council, said Hertfordshire's target is 100,000 homes – however they are only able to levy by way of Section 106 £10,000 per home for infrastructure but really should be £50,000. What is needed is a land capture tax. Meanwhile we work in collaboration with Essex and central Bedfordshire but when comes to raising funding we are there with our begging bowls. The uplift for landowner is enormous and those benefits need to more fairly shared. He also said that he is supportive of upgrading the West Anglia Main line and four-tracking up to Broxbourne. Finally, he added that getting car parks upgraded are small but vitally important capacity improvements.

Cllr James Jamieson, Leader Central Bedfordshire Council, also reiterated the importance of land capture - £10,000 is barely enough to provide the extra schooling required. He referenced one thing in particular that would help – remove viability from statutory contribution. This is critical to ensure affordable homes. He also said that the Department for Transport has a quirky way of calculating benefit of investment: it only looks at additional numbers of passengers but benefits are greater including improving housing.

Jonathan Denby, GA, said that on car parking, a succession of short franchises in East Anglia had not helped. But we will look at Hertford stations with Herts CC. In Bishops Stortford much of the land was not GA's, nor Network Rail's and that is a problem. However, he said he was happy to meet separately.

Peter Richardson, Community Action Suffolk, said that thankfully the worst days of travelling over. He recalled that in the past whenever he travelled it was always the final leg home that was worst. But luckily the days have gone when one needed a book to stop the seat springs biting your bum. He endorsed the discussions and agreed we all work together to put pressure on. The voluntary sector provides a lot of services and is very dependent on good transport links.

Sandy Martin MP, Vice Chair, asked if Norwich Stansted route goes well would GA also consider Stansted to Ipswich. On the matter of the recent weather when all lines were closed an answer to all MPs would be helpful – constituents simply didn't understand why it was decided to close down entirely.

Jonathan Denby, GA, said an Ipswich to Stansted service is conceivably possible, but would need track

upgrades (loops or double-tracking west of Kennet and Cambridge as the current single track is a constraint), plus extra trains and funding as part of a future franchise. On weather – the key issue was Network Rail’s key route strategy which Greater Anglia was seeking to change. He noted the weather is just as severe today and GA was running services wherever practical.

Peter Aldous MP, Co-Chair, asked whether it is a dream to re-open new lines i.e. Haverhill to Cambridge?

Jonathan Denby GR, said it is not impossible, but unless you have major third-party funding and a very good business case it would be very, very challenging and long term

James Palmer, Mayor, said the proposed East West rail should not finish at Cambridge – should continue eastwards not look to Oxford

Conclusion

Daniel Zeichner MP, Co-Chair of the East of England APPG, thanked all speakers and attendees and let the audience know that a further evidence session will take place on the afternoon of April 24th.

ATTENDEES

Peter Aldous MP	Co-Chair, East of England APPG
Daniel Zeichner MP	Co-Chair, East of England APPG
Sandy Martin MP	House of Commons and Vice Chair of East of England APPG
Jonathan Djanogly	House of Commons
Sir Henry Bellingham MP	House of Commons
Cllr James Jamieson	Leader Central Bedfordshire Council
James Palmer	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
Cllr Mike Stonard	Norwich City Council
Martin Whiteley	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
Cllr David Williams	Hertfordshire County Council
Tom Hunt	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
Aaron Cohen-Gold	University of Cambridge
Joseph Dancey	Endeavour Advisory
Jonathan Denby	Greater Anglia
Giles Ellerton	BT
William Hall	London Stansted Airport
Tim Hawkins	London Stansted Airport
Peter Richardson	Community Action Suffolk
Tim Robinson	TechEast
Hannah Shah	East of England LGA
Cecilia Tredget	East of England LGA
Amy Trevethan	University of Cambridge
Martin Tugwell	England's Economic Heartland
Jeanette Walker	Cambridge Science Park
Chris Wiggan	London Stansted Airport
Andrew Marshall	British Sugar
Steve Barwick	DevoConnect
Gill Morris	DevoConnect

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