



PRESS RELEASE

RAILWAY LAND AT FAKENHAM WANTED...FOR A RAILWAY

“It is a strip of scrubby land with the liability of two long disused bridges, it can’t be used for anything other than a railway and it has very little intrinsic value. But it does provide one route by which the railway can be brought back to Fakenham to serve the community. We want to buy that piece of land, if it goes for a reasonable price, and very much hope that others interested in the railway and the environment will help us and not bid against us.”

Those are the thoughts of Trevor Bailey, a director of the Norfolk Orbital Railway project, speaking of a small piece of former railway land at Pudding Norton, Fakenham which is due to be auctioned this month. He points to the fact that a large section of this site, which was part of the Wymondham – Dereham – Fakenham – Wells line until closure in the 1960’s, is legally protected as a potential rail route for the future in the County Council’s Local Transport Plan, the existing Local Plan and the Local Development Framework which will govern planning policies for many years to come. He says that factor must seriously limit the land’s value for other purposes.



The Norfolk Orbital Railway aims eventually to use former railway trackbeds to link the existing Mid Norfolk Railway (Wymondham – Dereham) and North Norfolk Railway (Sheringham – Holt) which, together with the highly successful Norwich – Sheringham Bittern line and another Network Rail link (Wymondham – Norwich), would create an orbital route through a large part of Norfolk.

“This is a long-term plan”, explains Derek Haynes another N.O.R. director, “but we have already commissioned major professional engineering and traffic studies which demonstrate that the project is fully feasible and that the Sheringham – Fakenham – Wymondham – Norwich section would attract even more passengers than the Bittern Line, which is itself probably the best performing branchline in the country.”

An initial link for through running between Network Rail’s Bittern Line and the North Norfolk Railway at Sheringham has already been given official approval and is expected to be built later this year. It will restore track that was lifted over forty years ago.

“The Norfolk Orbital Railway Project is for the community and the environment”, adds Trevor Bailey. “We are not doing this for any sort of personal profit. It is hard, unpaid work but rewarding because we believe strongly in rail transport.”

The N.O.R. is working closely with the Mid Norfolk Railway in seeking to acquire the Pudding Norton site, as in other respects. The Mid Norfolk Railway has already achieved much. It runs services between Wymondham and Dereham and is actively extending its track northwards towards Fakenham. There is a long way to go but the section of trackbed now for sale is of importance to both schemes whose routes will join at Fakenham. If secured, it is an investment in the future.

The N.O.R. directors emphasise that their aim is to provide a public transport service for Fakenham. Their Chairman, David Rees, says that “Whilst heritage services with historic rolling stock are important, attractive and welcome, our principal concern is to make it possible for both local people and visitors to forget cars and all their problems and travel again to Dereham, Norwich and beyond, for work or leisure, by an efficient modern train service”.

David Bill, the fourth N.O.R. director, whose family worked on Norfolk’s railways for many years, feels that the evidence that it can be done already exists. “Some of us were founders of the North Norfolk Railway in the 1960’s and 1970’s and were endlessly told then that we could never do it. N.N.R. is now an established success. The Bittern Line was twice threatened with closure but is now the country’s top branchline!”

The Pudding Norton trackbed is to be auctioned on 17th February. The N.O.R. and M.N.R. ask that anyone interested in it because of its railway history or its environment help by not bidding against the N.O.R. and driving up the price. Instead, in the last few days before the auction, supporters of the railway can make donations to the N.O.R.’s trackbed purchase appeal in order to add to the limited funds currently available. Donations can be sent to:

Holt, Melton Constable & Fakenham Railway Ltd. (the N.O.R.’s company). Cheques should be made payable to Holt, Melton Constable & Fakenham Railway Ltd. and sent to The Railway Institute, Melton Constable, Norfolk. NR24 2DA

For general background on the N.O.R., visit its website <http://www.norfolk-orbital-railway.co.uk> where there are also more details of the Pudding Norton trackbed and the appeal.

Or email us:
feedback@norfolk-orbital-railway.co.uk

