



Norfolk Orbital Railway

<http://www.norfolk-orbital-railway.co.uk/>

PRESS RELEASE

SUPPORT FOR FAKENHAM RAILWAY

“It’s more than heartening. I don’t think we even hoped for this sort of support at such short notice”, said Norfolk Orbital Railway director Trevor Bailey. “During our research and planning for the NOR we’ve commissioned professional studies of local people’s attitudes to our proposals, just as we have had careful studies made of the engineering issues and traffic potential. The results were always very positive but this reaction is the living proof of those findings.”



Trevor Bailey was speaking in the aftermath of the auction, on 17th February, of a small section of the former Wymondham to Wells railway line at Pudding Norton which the NOR would have liked to have acquired to provide part of the route needed eventually to restore rail services to Fakenham. The NOR was outbid, the land going for a much higher price than that originally suggested by the auctioneers.

Despite that disappointment, the NOR directors were greatly encouraged by the substantial financial donations and messages of support that reached them in the few days available to put together a bid.

“It’s a pity that we were not successful”, said NOR Chairman David Rees, “but we do now realise how much a lot of people would like to see Fakenham back on the railway map.”

“Exceptional publicity attracted a lot of attention and the final bid was well beyond what we felt was the value of the land. We were prepared to go to a good price but we do have to use our supporters’ money carefully and responsibly. It would be easy for us to get carried away in circumstances like these but, really, we were never going to do that! There are demanding liabilities in the two bridges on the site which we do not take lightly. They must be looked after and they will need expenditure.”

“This is just the beginning of the story. We only ever need the southern part of this section of trackbed and there are, if really necessary, other routes to bring the railway into Fakenham. This is the one that we should like to use and it would have been a major encouragement to our hundreds of supporters if we had made our first land purchase on Tuesday. Even so, this piece of trackbed remains protected as a railway route in the County Council’s Local Transport Plan and the new Local Development

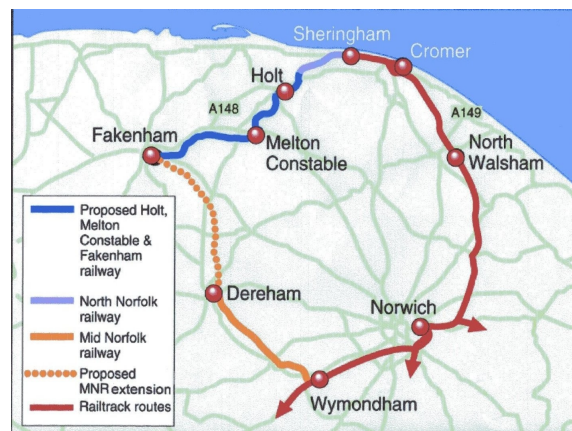
Framework which governs future planning policy. It can't be developed for anything else."

The NOR directors are very happy indeed with the way that their partnership with colleagues at the Mid Norfolk Railway has worked. The MNR already operates services from Wymondham to Dereham and is gradually extending its route northwards towards Fakenham. The two organisations readily agreed their approach, with the NOR making the bid and MNR discouraging unwitting competition from its own supporters. They will continue to work together.

Contemplating the future, Trevor Bailey says: "I think people have really understood that we want to provide the area with a genuinely useful public transport service, without destroying the countryside in the way that roads inevitably do, and that we are doing this for the community and the environment and not for any personal profit."

"We have to convince the owners of sections of former railway track bed that we need, in order to make this happen, that our efforts are worth supporting. Their assistance will be of immense help."

"In the meantime, we very genuinely thank everyone in the community who has given support. We are working on the next task and ask them to stay with us."



18th February 2009
