

Consultation Launched on Bid to Upgrade West Norfolk Rail Link

According to a report in the Friday Lynn News, a consultation has been launched on how to tackle a critical bottleneck on West Norfolk's rail link.

In August, the Government announced more than £13 million of funding to develop a business case for upgrading the network in the Ely area. Now, Network Rail, the body responsible for maintaining and improving the tracks and infrastructure, is asking the public for its views on the plans. The Ely capacity enhancement project is seen as crucial for a range of additional freight and passenger services across the region, including the long-sought twice-hourly trains between Lynn, Cambridge and London.



Network Rail says its plans would allow for 10 trains to run in each direction per hour. The Ely north junction is a major bottleneck on the rail link serving West Norfolk. A six-week consultation exercise, which is being undertaken by phone and online, began today. Ellie Burrows, the company's Anglia route director, said: "It is important that we provide opportunities to engage with the communities that could be impacted by our work as it develops. It is even more important that we listen to people and gather their views to help inform our development and design process.

"By starting these discussions early, we hope to embark on this journey with the community and progress these proposals together, finding the right solution for the railway and for Ely."

Rail passengers in West Norfolk can already expect a significant increase in capacity later this year, following the recent completion of a £29 million upgrade to the line, which will enable eight-coach trains to run instead of the current four-coach units.

The longer trains are expected to come into service in December, following a testing programme. A senior West Norfolk Council official warned construction work was unlikely to begin for at least five years. But supporters say the project could generate hundreds of millions of pounds in economic benefits for the region.

The consultation, which runs until November 1, is being run via the project website, www.networkrail.co.uk/ely. Printed copies of the consultation materials can be requested by phoning 03457 114141 or emailing ElyAreaCapacity Enhancements@networkrail.co.uk. General comments about the project can also be sent to that email address.