

Report of meeting 27 February 2015 arranged at Chelmsford Anglia Ruskin University campus to explore and develop expectations of the next Greater Anglia rail franchise operator – attended on behalf of Burnham Town Council (BTC) by Cllr Una Norman together with BTC Transport Representative Paul Haworth

The meeting was convened by The Transport Systems Catapult, one of seven “elite technology and innovation centres established and overseen by the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK”.

Innovate UK is the operating name of the Technology Strategy Board, a not-for-profit non-departmental public body, operating at arm's length from Government but reporting to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

In recent weeks The Transport Systems Catapult has held a number of meetings throughout East Anglia with a view to building a vision of what might conceivably be expected from the next franchise operator. They are also offering similar but separate sessions for potential bidders, with the aim of cross-fertilization of ideas towards “a world where journeys are seamless, transport is smart and connected, and delays and congestion are a thing of the past”.

The meeting lasted two hours and was focused on group work around customised worksheets.

Key points raised by Catapult:

- Top 100 companies in the UK typically invest 1.7% of turnover in R&D; UK rail operators typically invest between 0.1% and 0.3%.
- Transport Systems Catapult has been supporting the Rail Executive in injecting innovation into the franchising process.
- They are looking for greater scope to carry forward investment programmes from one franchise operator to the next.
- More co-operation is required along the entire supply chain.

Key points raised by official representative from ‘Passenger Focus’:

- There is a lack of trust in rail operators, who have generally failed to build good relationships.
- Successful brands build affinity and trust through a personal address that values the customer.

Verdict: a hopeful and helpful indication that we may not be alone in the process of seeking a step change in customer service from the next franchise holder. A timely session, coming as it did just a couple of days before our own mini-meeting with a selected group of Burnham commuters.

Paul Haworth

Transport Representative appointed by Burnham Town Council.

3 March 2015