

Mayor opens new railway station for Soham

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Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Mayor Dr Nik Johnson officially opened the new railway station at Soham as the first trains rolled into the new platform, five months ahead of the original timetable.

The Deputy Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire, Network Rail's Chairman Sir Peter Hendy, former Mayor James Palmer, local residents, community representatives and businesses were present at a special ceremony to witness the moment that Soham station was formally opened to passenger services, 56 years after the last passenger train called at the town.

The opening of the station marks the completion of a long campaign to bring railway services back to Soham, supporting local investment and creating more sustainable transport choices to travel to regional and national destinations more easily.

Along with scores of rail enthusiasts, the first of Greater Anglia's Ipswich to Peterborough train services called at the new station this morning. Using the new state-of-the-art trains, passengers can travel directly to places such as Bury St Edmunds, Ely, Ipswich and Peterborough, with easy connections, on to Cambridge, Norwich, London, the Midlands, the North and Scotland.

The £18.6 million station, funded by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, including

£1million in Local Growth Deal support, has been constructed over 12 months by Network Rail and its contractor, J Murphy and Sons Ltd close to the site of the old station that closed in 1965. The original completion date was brought forward by five months to help deliver the benefits of a new station sooner for the community.

Unveiling a plaque to mark the opening of the station, Mayor Dr Nik Johnson said: "Congratulations to everyone involved in this great enterprise. Cooperation and partnership have created a benefit of lasting value for this community and its future generations, opening a door into opportunity.

"We need more green, clean public transport for the public good – and this new station is proof that, together, we can make it happen."

Ellie Burrows, Network Rail's route director for Anglia, said: "It's taken years of hard work and dedication by colleagues across the rail industry and a range of local partners to reconnect Soham with the railway.

"The entire community has been so supportive throughout the development of this project and I to want to express our gratitude to everyone who has worked so collaboratively with us to make to make this project a reality."

Jamie Burles, Greater Anglia managing director said: "We're proud to be the train operator serving Soham with our high quality new bi-mode trains and to be the operator responsible for managing the new station. It's not often that new stations are opened and even rarer that they are then immediately served by new state-of-the-art trains.

"We know the opening of the station has been much anticipated and we're committed to continuing to offer an excellent service on this line and across our network."

John Murphy, chief executive officer of J Murphy and Sons Ltd said: "I'm very proud that Murphy delivered this station earlier than originally planned for the people of Soham. I'm also pleased to have seen the connections we have made in the community during the construction.

"Our project team have hosted school visits, organised charity fundraisers, spoken with care home residents and delivered school assemblies! I'm sure the people of Soham are going to enjoy using their new station."

About the opening of the new station, Lucy Frazer MP said: "I am delighted Soham Station has reopened. This project is a fantastic example of the quick delivery of public transport infrastructure that will benefit this local community.

"I believe it can act as a springboard for enhancing rail services in our area by helping us make the case for reinstating the loop near Newmarket which could provide a direct rail service between Ely, Soham, Newmarket and Cambridge. I have campaigned for this station since before I was elected and am delighted that it has now come to fruition.

"I want to thank all those involved in delivering the project at pace, including the Combined Authority,

Network Rail and J Murphy and Sons Ltd, as well as the former Mayor, James Palmer who played an integral role in driving this project forward.”

A second plaque was also unveiled by Ellie Burrows, Jamie Burles and Network Rail Chairman Sir Peter Hendy, on behalf of the railway community, dedicated to the memory of the four railway workers caught up in the Soham Rail disaster on 2 June 1944. Relatives of the railway men were present to see the dedication unveiled.

During the ceremony, a pupil from the Shade Primary school, Jasmine from Year 6, was announced as the winner of a local poster competition which involved children from three local schools, taking part. The winner, and runners up from St Andrew’s and Weatherall’s schools were presented with book tokens by the Mayor and a framed copy of their posters.

The competition was part of a series of activities planned by staff from J Murphy and Sons Ltd running sessions with local school children to design and build a bridge using building blocks. These fun activities help to promote these technical subjects to budding young engineers and designers who may, in years to come, be involved in future railway station projects.

A 12 month time-lapse sequence has been created showing how the station was constructed.

Photo and video credit: Network Rail