

East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership



Would you like to help influence what happens at your local railway station?

Dear Town or Parish Clerk,

The East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership (ESLCRP) is an unincorporated association of local government, public transport operators and community groups. We are actively involved in helping to promote rail services along the East Suffolk Line between Ipswich and Lowestoft, and the Felixstowe Line between Ipswich and Felixstowe.

Our board is comprised of and funded by the train operator Abellio Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, and Waveney District Council. Network Rail, Transport Regeneration, and our three regional line groups are also board members.

We are a Designated Community Rail Service as defined by the Department for Transport. This allows us to have real input into how train services are operated in our area.

Working with Abellio Greater Anglia and our other funding partners the ESLCRP helps to make improvements of real benefit to passengers. These improvements have included the installation of Ticket Machines at several local stations. A recent grant award from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) will help kickstart the building of a new canopy at Wickham Market Station.

Grassroots efforts are taking place at Trimley, Beccles, Saxmundham and Wickham Market to turn empty station buildings into cafés, arts centres, and places for community use. The ESLCRP can help bring stakeholders together to see these schemes come to fruition.

The ESLCRP works closely with Abellio Greater Anglia's Station Adoption programme. Adopters are responsible for many of the things you see happening at your local station, including keeping the stations tidy, and the planting of flowers and station gardens. We help provide funding for these small scale schemes.

We realise there are areas not served by the train. In these instances we work with local transport operators to explore connecting bus services and through ticketing. An example is the 88A bus service between Halesworth rail station and Southwold. Passengers are now able to purchase one ticket good on both the train and bus. This particular ticket can be purchased anywhere in the UK at the National Rail website as 'Southwold by Bus' is now listed as a destination.

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The ESLCRP also prints and distributes the popular East Suffolk Line Walks booklet. The walks are specially way marked, easily accessible from each station, and help promote the Suffolk countryside.

In short, the ESLCRP is interested in putting the community at the heart of what we do. We would like to invite your Town or Parish Council to join one of three line groups covering the following stations:

North (Lowestoft, Oulton Broad South, Beccles, Brampton, Halesworth)

South (Darsham, Saxmundham, Wickham Market, Melton, Woodbridge)

East (Westerfield, Derby Road, Trimley, Felixstowe)

There is no cost to join and membership gives your Town or Parish Council a chance to participate on shaping facilities and services.

In the meantime, please have a look at what we have accomplished over just the past year. We recently published our Annual Report 2014 – 2015 which is attached for your consideration.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Aaron Taffera

Chairman

East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership

Community Rail Partnership

Annual Report 2014 - 2015



Community Rail

Improving local railways is at the heart of the Department for Transport's Community Rail strategy. The DfT works in partnership with stakeholders to promote initiatives that lead to station improvements and service enhancements. Schemes range from station gardens and artwork displays to much larger projects that can make a big difference to the travelling public. Marketing and promotional activities are supported to get better value for money from the local railway network.

Local organisations and individuals are encouraged to get involved and help shape their local railway. Community Rail aims to:

- increase revenue
- reduce costs
- increase community involvement
- support social and economic development



The East Suffolk Lines

The two routes begin at Ipswich and diverge at rural Westerfield continuing onto the seaside towns of Felixstowe and Lowestoft. Along the way the lines pass through the market towns of Woodbridge, Saxmundham, Halesworth and Beccles as well as a number of smaller village stations. At Ipswich services connect with the Great Eastern Main Line to Norwich and London Liverpool Street, as well as regional services to Cambridge and Peterborough.



An hourly service operates on the East Suffolk Line Monday to Saturday (two - hourly on Sunday). The service runs hourly on the Felixstowe Line seven days a week whilst sharing the route with up to thirty freight trains in each direction, every day which serve the Port of Felixstowe.



Community Rail Partnership

The East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership was formed in 2004 and is comprised of stakeholders that include local authorities, the train operator, Network Rail and Line Groups that represent individuals, businesses, town and parish councils, and user groups including the East Suffolk Travellers Association. It was ESTA who saved the line from the Beeching Axe in 1966.

The CRP board is drawn from the membership which agrees a yearly plan to raise the profile of the line through marketing activities, station improvement schemes, and strategic partnerships.



The CRP is funded by train operator Abellio Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, and Waveney District Council.

Access to additional funds are also available through the CRP's membership of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) and the East Suffolk Lines' status as a 'Designated Service' as defined by the Department for Transport Rail Executive.

Designated Service

The East Suffolk Lines are now a Designated Service. The status was approved by the Department for Transport on 03 March 2015 following a consultation during the Summer of 2014. Thirty-seven responses were received; there were no objections, and many of those responses were very supportive.

The designation provides for a flexible approach to help improve the financial performance of the lines, increase the social value of the railway, and ensure the East Suffolk Lines long term future.

Over two days in March 2015 CRP members participated in ACoRP's 'Designated Seminar' in Nottingham to learn more about promoting the line, gain insights from the National Rail Passenger Survey and the Value of CRPs study, and exchange ideas with representatives from other Designated CRPs.

Record Passenger Numbers

688,835
Journeys in 2014/15
99%
More than 2009/10

Building on the success of the previous year passenger journeys on the East Suffolk Line increased to a new record level. In 2014 / 2015 an additional 26,000 passenger journeys were made bringing the total for the year to 688,835. The Ipswich - Lowestoft service has seen explosive growth following the introduction of an hourly service to all stations in December 2012. By comparison 345,000 journeys were made in 2009 / 2010.

In addition to the hourly service investment over the past two years has seen ticket machines installed at five stations, a complete rework of the car park at Lowestoft, car parks expanded at two stations, and secure cycle parks installed at two others, all factors which helped push passenger numbers to an all time high.

ACoRP Awards - Passengers Matter

The East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership was the recipient of a major award at the 2014 ACoRP Community Rail Awards held in Scarborough in October. Abellio Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, Waveney District Council, Anglian Bus and the CRP won first place in the category 'Passengers Matter' for the entry 'Developing the East Suffolk Line.' The CRP was shortlisted alongside six other groups.



The award was in recognition for efforts to make significant improvements following the introduction of the hourly service. It became important for those involved to continue the momentum into 2013 - 2014 by delivering on schemes which would make using the railway between Ipswich and Lowestoft even more attractive and convenient.

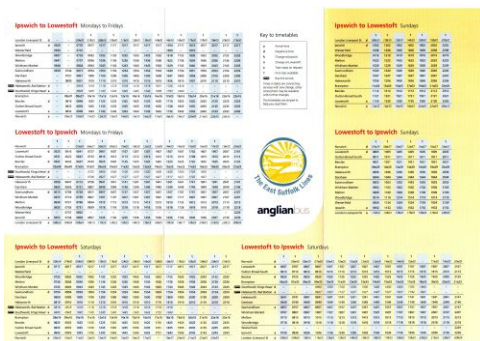
Several projects came to fruition; they included ticket vending machines at the key stations of Woodbridge, Beccles, and Saxmundham, a new through-ticket to Southwold connecting trains and buses, (available on the train and through the National Rail Enquiries online ticketing system), the completion of the bus - rail interchange at Lowestoft station, and cycle hire and secure cycle parking at Ipswich and Lowestoft.

Promoting the Railway



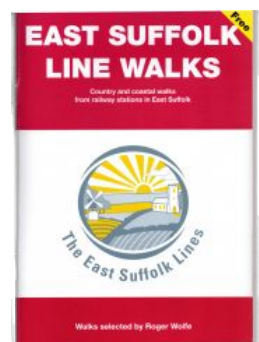
Promotional activities included producing a new leaflet and timetable entitled 'Explore the East Suffolk Lines.' Funded by the CRP and designed and published by Abellio Greater Anglia, the leaflet also included details on the new integrated bus connection from Halesworth station to Southwold.

The bus connection was specifically promoted by the CRP's Line Group North through its devolved budget. The group produced a leaflet showing destinations in the Blyth Valley along the connecting bus route.



Another run of the popular East Suffolk Line Walks Booklet was published and distributed throughout the county and at events including Community Rail in the City at Liverpool Street Station in 2014. Guided station-to-station walks took place in the Spring, Summer, and Autumn.

In June the CRP manned a stall at the Lowestoft Transport Festival in alongside the Wherry Lines and Bittern Line CRP to promote Community Rail. The CRP also maintains a website and Facebook and Twitter feeds to publicise news and events along the line.



Consultation Responses

Late 2014 and early 2015 saw a flurry of consultations, from the Network Rail Anglia Route Study and Improving Connectivity Consultation, to the East Anglia Rail Prospectus and the DfT East Anglia Rail Passenger Franchise Consultation. The CRP worked with its members and stakeholders to identify those areas which would most help improve the rail service through infrastructure improvements, service patterns, reliability, facility improvements, and updated rolling stock.

With respect to the franchise consultation CRP members canvassed stations to provide passengers with leaflets provided by the DfT on how to respond. CRP members also attended meetings held by the DfT and Network Rail concerning their respective consultations.



Old Buildings - New Life

Most station buildings along the line are in active use; a few are in private hands and used as homes; some are run by charitable organisations, while others are leased for business use. Halesworth houses MENCAP and the local museum; Darsham offers a self catering facility owned by the Darsham Country Centre charity; a butcher shop occupies the station building at Melton, and Woodbridge station is home to a flower shop, cafe and hotel.

Where vacant station buildings now stand at Beccles, Saxmundham, Wickham Market, and Trimley, plans are well advanced at three of these which will see those facilities brought back into use for the benefit of the community.

Grassroots efforts have paid off with the long-standing vacant station at Beccles. The station building is scheduled to open by Summer 2015 housing a waiting room and cafe, along with rooms for hire, and bicycle hire.



In 2014 the several-hundred strong group 'Friends of Trimley Station' secured a lease with Abellio Greater Anglia to take on the long neglected and dilapidated station building. Now no longer under threat of demolition the historic building will be turned into a centre specifically for community use. Structural remedial works have already gotten underway.

Station House Community Connections at Wickham Market station is now more than halfway to its £300,000 phase-one goal to fully restore and reopen the now vacant station building. The scheme will see the station's canopy reinstated to the days of the GER, house a museum, offer rooms for hire for community use, cafe, and provide the East Suffolk Line's only intermediate staffed station.

At Saxmundham plans are at an early stage to bring a Contemporary Arts Centre to the now boarded up station by a community interest company. They also have plans for a station cafe.

Additional Station Improvements

Following on the success at Beccles, Saxmundham, and Woodbridge, funding was provided by Abellio Greater Anglia and Suffolk County Council for Ticket Vending Machines at both Felixstowe and Halesworth stations; the latter scheme was awarded funding from the Designated Community Rail Development Fund.



Passenger safety at night was a high priority at Melton station where a fault saw the installation of temporary lighting. New lighting has now been fitted under the canopy, on the canopy fascia, on the station building, and also on the platform walls. Melton is now the most modern lighted station on the line.

New style LED Customer Information Screens (CIS) replaced the old tube-type units at Saxmundham. The new displays were also installed at Felixstowe, Trimley, and Westerfield along with a long line public address system to provide announcements of live train running services. Combination Help Points / CIS units were installed at Derby Road, and funding for CCTV was secured from the DfT.



A complete overhaul of cycle parking took place at Ipswich and Lowestoft. New secure cycle compounds were installed which utilise a key fob and code system for easy access. For those without a bicycle the innovative 'Bike & Go' scheme was deployed at each station adding to the many places across the Abellio Greater Anglia network where cycle hire is now available.

The waiting rooms at Ipswich were also refurbished. New flooring was installed in the waiting room adjacent to platform two; the island waiting room received a complete makeover with new lighting, new seating, decorative wall panels, and automatic doors.

Infrastructure Improvements

Network Rail embarked on an ambitious plan to make safer the many unprotected level crossings between Ipswich and Lowestoft. A, B, and C road level crossings without barriers were provided with half barriers, and at the busy Melton station level crossing the scheme funded traffic cameras monitored by the British Transport Police.



The £59 million Ipswich Chord opened 31 March 2014 serving freight traffic between the Port of Felixstowe and the East Midlands. The scheme, which required a major track possession during the Christmas period 2013, also needed several days of ongoing track work into the Summer of 2014. The chord is an important link in the plans to eventually electrify and dual more portions of the Felixstowe Line as part of the cross-country route to Nuneaton.

Rolling Stock Refresh

The class 156 two-car trains that run alongside the newer class 170 units were completely refurbished. The final set was placed back in service in June 2014. Abellio Greater Anglia spent £3 million on the scheme which saw each set receive new toilets, new carpets, dado panels, and seat covers. Each carriage was also fitted with a new passenger information systems to enable the delivery of automatic visual announcements. The fleet was deep cleaned and repainted in the new Abellio Greater Anglia white and red livery.



Station Adopters



From individuals to groups, the Station Adopters work hard to make each station as pleasant as possible for passengers. The adopters work with the CRP under Abellio Greater Anglia's Station Adopter Scheme.

Adopters meet with representatives from Abellio Greater Anglia yearly at an adopter drop-in to provide feedback. The CRP provides funding for schemes like platform flowers and station gardens, and projects brought forward by the adopters themselves.

An awards ceremony is held each year for all adopters within the Abellio Greater Anglia network (over 100 stations). In 2014 a mural at Felixstowe station produced by the youth project 'Level 2' was awarded first place for 'Best Community Involvement.' The scheme was part funded by the CRP's Line Group East and Felixstowe Travel Watch. Woodbridge station was highly commended in the category 'Best Medium Station.'

Invitation to join the Line Groups

The CRP is always looking to include the wider community in helping to shape the future of Community Rail in East Suffolk. There are a number of volunteer roles, from adopting your local station, to being a part of a group that identifies improvement schemes and sees them through to completion, or participating in events along the line. The work can be very rewarding and you can participate as much as your time allows.

There are three Line Groups within the East Suffolk Lines CRP. There are no joining fees and membership is open to individuals, businesses, and town and parish councils:

- Line Group East - Westerfield to Felixstowe
- Line Group South - Woodbridge to Darsham
- Line Group North - Halesworth to Lowestoft



If you or your organisation would like to be involved please get in touch.

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