

The East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership

Progress Report to December 2013



Community Rail

The Department for Transport's Community Rail Development Strategy is all about involving local people and organisations in partnership, to improve their local railways. Community rail initiatives such as station enhancements and fresh and innovative promotional schemes can help get better value for money from the rail network and can range from small to more major schemes. Community railways aim to:

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

The East Suffolk Lines

The two routes start at Ipswich, where services connect with the Great Eastern Main Line to Norwich and London, as well as trains to Cambridge and Peterborough. East Suffolk Line trains provide an hourly service to Felixstowe, sharing tracks with significant freight traffic to and from this major port. The main service continues north from Ipswich to Lowestoft, serving the Suffolk market towns of Woodbridge, Saxmundham, Halesworth and Beccles, as well as a number of village stations in this rural community.



The East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership

The CRP has been in existence for some years now but has recently developed into a more business-like function to ensure the many excellent ideas and opportunities are turned into measurable successes.

The CRP is now led by a Board which sets the strategic aims of the Partnership based upon ideas that arise from the involvement of the Community. These ideas are developed from supporting Line Groups representing different parts of the East Suffolk lines.

The CRP continues to be funded by:

- the train operating company (TOC) which is currently the Greater Anglia franchise, operated by the Abellio Group
- Suffolk County Council, and
- The district councils along the line, namely, Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council.



Network Rail, the organisation responsible for the rail infrastructure in mainland Britain is represented as are members of local town and parish councils. A close working relationship is maintained with the East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA) with which the CRP has worked cooperatively on a number of projects.



The Honorary Chairman is Geof Butterwick, a much respected transport professional who has been working with or closely associated with local authorities in Suffolk for over 30 years. The CRP employs a part-timer officer, Tim Ward, to ensure the business of the partnership is productive and work performed efficiently.

Improvements along the lines



In recent years the CRP has worked closely with its partners to implement its Stations Investment Plan to help prioritise and carry out the desired improvements. This a won recognition at a national level with ACoRP, the association of CRPs.



Following on from the introduction of a permanent Sunday service on the Felixstowe line an hourly service had been in operation between Ipswich and Saxmundham on the Lowestoft line since December 2010.

In 2013 after Network Rail invested over £18m along the line in new signalling equipment and Suffolk County Council contributed £1m towards the installation of a £4m passing loop at Beccles an hourly service was introduced along the whole of the Lowestoft line on six days of the week.

All the stations have been repainted and some improved with new Help Points at Halesworth and Melton, new customer information screens at Oulton Broad South and Beccles and the commissioning of ticket machines at Woodbridge, Saxmundham and Beccles.



A new car park for Darsham is planned and local community projects are being encouraged to use the redundant station buildings at Wickham Market, Saxmundham and Beccles.



Melton and Wickham Market stations now have enlarged car parks with improved lighting which support the growth in passenger numbers.



At Saxmundham the waiting room was reopened with the help of the local community volunteers, and Lowestoft Station now boasts a new £1m transport interchange supported and funded by the leading members of the partnership. This has helped transform the area immediately outside the terminus station.

Passenger Numbers Soar

As a result of these improvements passenger numbers on the East Suffolk Lines have soared in recent months. 2013 was a record-



setting year as more than 653,000 journeys were made on the line between Ipswich and Lowestoft, an increase of 11.5% from 2012. Compared to 2009 / 2010 passenger numbers are up by 60%.

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Promoting the railways in East Suffolk

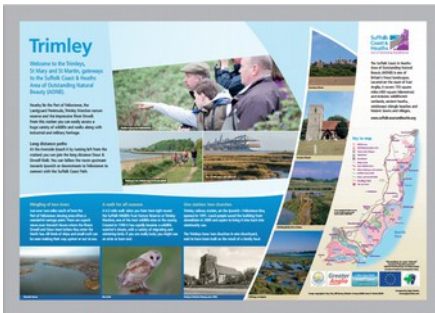
The CRP has focused on publicising and marketing the East Suffolk Lines.



A major promotion of travel along the line following the introduction of the hourly service was undertaken with the support of all stakeholders and interested bodies. The Station Adopters were crucial along with significant help from ESTA.

The CRP even took the message to local pubs and the Beccles beer festival with specially designed beer mats! Using traditional print media the CRP's initiative was so popular it was used by Greater Anglia for their own publicity!

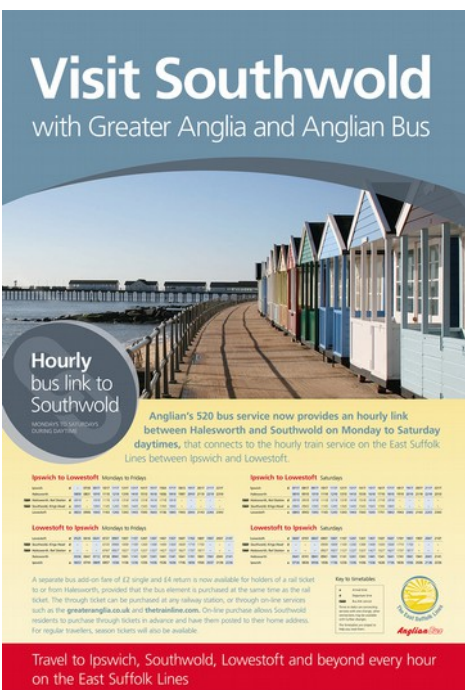
The CRP creatively used third party funding to promote various Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty that can be seen from stations. These smart interpretation boards illustrate the attractions from Darsham, Melton, Woodbridge, and Trimley.



The web site, the place to find news and information about the lines, was upgraded to provide real-time information, display planned changes to timetables and give each of the fourteen stations its own section. A Facebook page and Twitter feed were also set up.



There was a conscious effort to link the destination of Southwold into the message because during 2013 an innovative through ticketing arrangement meant it was possible for travellers to and from the seaside resort to buy combined rail and bus tickets.



Anglian Buses 88A meets the trains at Halesworth and provides an hourly service during daytime hours to and from Southwold. The original campaign to promote the hourly service was then refreshed and relaunched to focus on the cooperative arrangement with Anglian Buses.



Both launches featured a key event at which local authorities, MPs and interested parties came along to witness these major enhancements for the line.

The Station Adopters

The East Suffolk Lines has an active team of Station Adopters working under Greater Anglia's Adopter scheme. Working closely with and partially funded by the CRP these hard working volunteers do much to transform the appearance of our stations and the travelling experience.



Sizewell C

The CRP continues to take an active role in the consultations underway by EDF as construction of a new nuclear power station known as Sizewell C is considered. This project has major implications for the railway in East Suffolk and will present both challenges and opportunities affecting all modes of transport. The CRP wishes to ensure that passengers and potential passengers remain encouraged to use rail as the preferred form of transportation and if possible use the legacy of the construction to enhance rail services to the Leiston area. The CRP is working closely with all partners in this regard.



Join the Line Groups

The CRP is actively looking for volunteer organisations and individuals to help shape the future of Community Rail in East Suffolk. The time and work involved need not be too onerous but can be rewarding. There are three Line Groups and a chance to be involved in individual project groups too, dealing with specific initiatives.

Line Group East: Ipswich 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 with the Community Rail Partnership Officer, Tim Ward. There is no joining fee but an exciting chance to influence the railway environment in East Suffolk.

Contact Details

Geof Butterwick - Chairman
Aaron Taffera – Vice Chairman
Tim Ward – Community Rail Partnership Officer
07775 698758

Or send us a message through the contact section on the web site.

www.eastsuffolklines.co.uk

