



The Bittern Line and Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnerships Annual Report 2013



Community Rail Norfolk

This annual report summarises our activities and successes over the last year. It demonstrates the progress made in developing the lines for passengers, communities and wider stakeholders.

For the last decade and a half, the Bittern Line and Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) have been pivotal in promoting and improving the local railways of eastern Norfolk and Waveney.

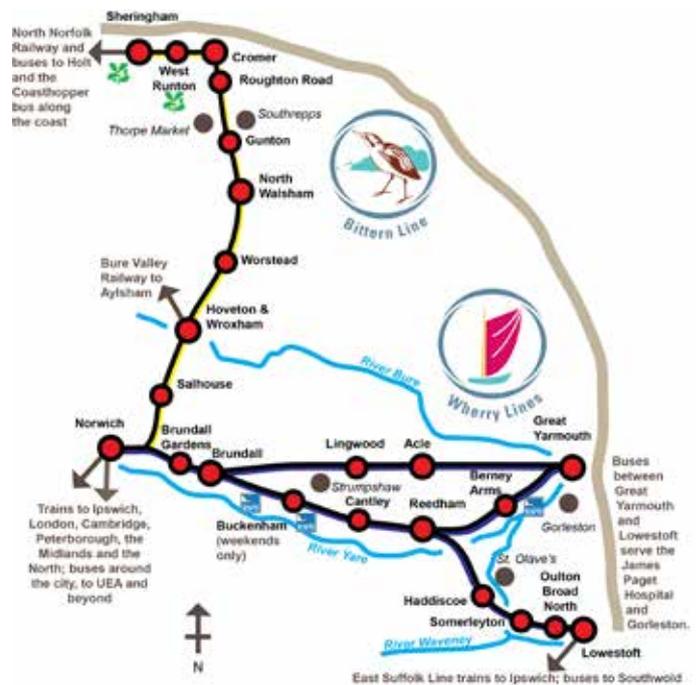
When the Bittern Line CRP was formed in 1997, the Norwich-Sheringham line was an under-utilised asset; there had even been talk of closure. The CRP soon helped turn the fortunes of the line around, by a combination of community advocacy and strong marketing. This success led to the formation of the Wherry Lines CRP in 2000, so that the lines to Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft could share in the good fortune. Continued growth, along with national and international awards, have demonstrated the on-going, positive impact of the CRPs.

Today, the routes that make up the Bittern and Wherry Lines carry upwards of 1.6 million passenger journeys, with an overall steady year-on-year increase. They are economic arteries of the region. The services are operated by Greater Anglia, which is an enthusiastic partner in the CRPs, along with county, district, town and parish councils, tourism and education bodies, businesses, community and user groups, and individuals. The CRPs come together in the not-for-profit company, Community Rail Norfolk (CRN), whose objectives are:

- Promoting the railways of Norfolk and its surroundings for the social, economic and environmental benefits of residents and visitors, and supporting the well-being of the communities served.
- Encouraging greater use of local rail and complementary forms of sustainable transport, including freight, where applicable.
- Encouraging the integration of bus, rail and other services, and cycling and walking.
- Educating the public in the benefits of integrated, sustainable forms of transport.

CRN has one employee, the Community Rail Partnerships Manager, whose responsibility it is to lead on the delivery of the joint Action Plan for the two CRPs, ensure adequate levels of funding for community rail work in and around Norfolk, and keep the CRPs running smoothly.

The work depends fundamentally on the co-operation of partners and the effort of many volunteers, from station adopters and guided walks leaders to the Chairs of the two CRPs themselves.



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Promoting the Lines

The Bittern Line and Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) are all about getting more people to use trains. We do this by various means.

The stalwart is the annual Line Guide, distributed widely along the lines and full of useful information on what to see and do, and how to get to facilities and attractions from the stations on foot, bus or bike. Norfolk County Council has supported half the production of the guide. We also funded and distributed a new leaflet promoting Greater Anglia's 16-18 student travel scheme, giving significantly reduced fares for travel to study at participating schools and colleges.

The CRPs can be seen at a number of events around the area (and the annual Community Rail in the City event at London Liverpool Street station), promoting the trains and selling the popular booklets, *Rambles from the Bittern Line* and *Rambles from the Wherry Lines*. We also sell a railway calendar, production of which was supported by the Department for Transport, Network Rail and



Association of CRPs Small Grants Fund in 2012, and by Norfolk County Council in 2013. We also feature frequently in local media, assisted by Greater Anglia's PR team.

A big event this year was 'Morris on the Bittern Line' in September, which saw Norwich's Kemp's Men side hosting the Rutland Morris Men in a 'Six Stations Wonder' (alluding to the 'Nine Daies Wonder', Will Kemp's epic dance from London to Norwich in 1600). The two sides danced at stations and pubs from Cromer down to Norwich, attracting people to see the spectacle at stations and experience the local railway as fun!

Electronic media feature prominently in our portfolio. Our long-standing web-sites are complemented by a social media presence and the first smartphone 'app.' to be produced by a community rail partnership, bringing users everything they need to know about travel in eastern Norfolk. Our use of technology meant we were shortlisted in the EDP Tourism Awards at the end of 2012 and recognised in this year's Community Rail Awards (below).



Peter Mayne, a CRN Director, engaging with visitors at our stall at the North Norfolk Railway Steam Gala at the end of August 2013 (above, middle), and wearing his other hat, as one of Kemp's Men, with the Bittern Line branded train at North Walsham on 14th September (left); the guests on that day, Rutland Morris Men, are seen dancing there too (above).

Success at the Community Rail Awards

There is a national awards ceremony for Community Rail every year. This year, projects on the Bittern and Wherry Lines were placed in a number of categories against stiff competition!

Best Station Volunteers' Project – Large/More Formal	West Runton Adopters	Second Place
Best Innovative Use of IT in the Promotion of Community Rail	The 'app.', websites, social media, etc.	Third Place
Outstanding Volunteer Contribution	Brian Jewell, Great Yarmouth Welcome Hosts	Second Place
Passengers Matter	North Walsham Station Travel Plan	Second Place

Station Improvements



Miriam Kikis of Vauxhall Links and Geraint Hughes of Greater Anglia begin the launch of the Great Yarmouth mural, on 10th September 2013 (above left) and the mural in situ by the bridge (above right).



Greater Anglia's Alan Boagey presents the prize for naming 'The Rose of Cantley' to Rachel Smith Bond of Cantley School, on 15th March 2013.

We work with the train operator, Greater Anglia, local authorities, station adopters and others to achieve improvements at stations and for access to them.

We have been active in the North Walsham Station Travel Plan and the Community Rail Partnerships Manager is completing a series of station access audits, which are already informing the work. The initiative for projects may come from anyone, but the CRPs are a catalyst, making connections to make things happen.

Sometimes we only have to do a little to oil the wheels and the local community does wonders, such as the new mural installed outside Great Yarmouth station, co-ordinated by Vauxhall Links, which is a community group that has been instrumental in achieving the restoration of Vauxhall Bridge - the key pedestrian and cycle route into the town, as well as a major heritage asset. Unveiled at the end of September, the restored part of the bridge and the new foot and cycle path across it are truly impressive and we congratulate everyone involved (above).

The Wherry Lines CRP supported the Friends of Cantley Station when they worked with a local school to name the boat that is now a flower-bed on the station: 'The Rose of Cantley' (above right).

Sometimes one partner does it all, but celebrates the Bittern Line and Wherry Lines, as with Gordon, the gorilla-art installation by Teresa Hill at Norwich station, sponsored by Greater Anglia as part of Norwich's GoGoGorillas art trail during the summer of 2013 (right).

North Walsham station has received a major facelift over the last year, with new, energy-efficient LED lighting, flat-panel departure screens, better information and cycle parking, and a much-needed ticket machine (right), installed by Greater Anglia with the support of Norfolk County Council and DCRDF (see p. 4). Suffolk County Council secured Local Sustainable Transport Fund money for a new north-bound bus interchange at Lowestoft station.

Greater Anglia has also completed a welcome programme of repainting at stations on the Bittern and Wherry Lines - canopies included, much to local people's joy. At Hoveton and Wroxham, this has been complemented by a scheme, funded by the EU STEP (Sustainable Tourism in Estuary Parks) programme via the Broads Authority, to brighten up the boarded-up windows and doors and replace the life-expired mural on the station with images and a map emphasising the station's role as a gateway to the Broads (right).



Above: Mike Young, Bittern Line Secretary, uses the new ticket machine at North Walsham.



Working with Station Volunteers

Stations are enhanced on a day-to-day basis by the work of Station Adopters. These hard-working volunteers are managed separately by Greater Anglia, but they are involved with the CRPs and we work closely with them on projects. In particular, we help fund plants and compost where needed.

The work of the adopters is recognised in the Community Rail Awards (West Runton this year (p. 2), Cantley last year) and the local press. In addition, Greater Anglia holds an annual Station Adopter Awards event, which this year saw the adopters at Reedham win

'Best Small Station' (Lingwood was runner-up) and those at Cantley win 'Community Involvement' (for their boat, p. 3). Cromer won 'Most Improved Station', and Brundall Gardens was runner-up in 'Innovation'.

We have also supported the Great Yarmouth Welcome Hosts, a scheme organised by Great Yarmouth Community Trust to provide a welcome and information to travellers arriving at the station, whilst giving volunteers customer-facing work experience, and brought in funding from DCRDF for them (see below).



New murals by local artist, Anne Stoker, grace Reedham station, thanks to the adopters.

Community Rail Development Strategy

Community Rail Norfolk's objectives dovetail with those of the Department for Transport's Community Rail Development Strategy. Here are some examples of how we have been satisfying these.

Increase ridership, freight use and revenue

All of our activities are aimed at doing this! Examples include the Line Guide and 'app.', stalls at events, and promotion of the 16-18 travel scheme, via Paston Sixth College, North Walsham, in particular.

Reduce costs

By levering in and co-ordinating funding from other sources, as at North Walsham and Hoveton and Wroxham, we have reduced the costs of station improvements to the railway industry.

Increase the involvement of the local community

We benefit from the work of volunteers with our projects and we support the station adopters.

Enable local rail to play a larger role in economic and social regeneration

We promote local businesses and facilities, together with connecting bus services, along the lines through the Line Guide, web-sites and 'app.', and assist where we can in making the connections between the railway and development proposals.

2014

The year ahead is both exciting and challenging. Improvements to access and the environment at stations are in the pipeline, but we cannot ignore the ever-increasing pressures on public sector funding. Once again, however, the CRPs' key priorities will be to increase ridership, build community involvement and support local prosperity.

Funding

The major funders of the CRPs have traditionally been the Train Operating Company (currently Greater Anglia) and local authorities. Core funders currently include Greater Anglia, Broadland District Council, North Norfolk District Council, South Norfolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Sheringham Town Council, Cromer

Town Council, North Walsham Town Council, and the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association. Significant project funding has come from Norfolk County Council and from the Designated Community Rail Development Fund (**DCRDF**), run by the Department for Transport, Network Rail and the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.