

The New River Line Community Rail Partnership

2021/22 Annual Report



Photo by Stuart Fox

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Message from Chair of the New River Line



Kate Belinis
CEO, Community Development Action Herts



On behalf of the Steering Group may I report on the excellent year we have had establishing the partnership, their energy and commitment to the New River CRP, is notable but above all our Community Partnerships Officer, Katie Goldthorpe who has brought to the communities the value and excitement of being active members of our New River Community Rail Partnership.

Katie's report on the wonderful catalogue of activities with our Station Adopters who we cannot thank enough and other communities who have worked hard with the stations between Hertford East and Broxbourne. For me, the outstanding achievement for such a small and newish CRP is coming third for the Art @ the Station project at St Margaret's Station, in East Herts. The competition for the coveted Community Creative and Station Art was very high so for us to receive the Certificate of Excellence Third prize was a massive achievement.

Well done and big thanks to the volunteers, Katie Goldthorpe, stakeholders and commercial sponsors and not forgetting the artists themselves. A true community spirit coming together to make the stations better and more welcoming.

I do hope that you enjoy reading our annual review and all of us would love to welcome more local people and groups to help us to promote each station and the town's attractions and connections.

Introducing the Community Rail Partnership

Community Rail Partnerships (CRP) provide a link between the railway and local communities.

They bring together a wide range of individuals, organisations and businesses along their route.

The New River Line CRP was formally established in January 2020 and the Line officer took up their post in August 2021.

The CRP has had a busy year, enhancing station environs for the local community, planning and delivering exciting projects as well as continually forming new connections with local charities and businesses. Read on to find out what has been achieved this year and look forward to what is coming.

Thank you to all our current members of the The New River Line Community Rail Partnership for their ongoing support.



Financial report



FINANCE SUMMARY

INCOME

The total income received in 2021/22 was £43,202. This total was a combination of £29,500 core funding and £13,702 of additional funding as set out in the tables below.

Core funding received for 2021/22

Organisation	2021/22 Contribution (£)
CDA	500
East Hertfordshire District Council	2,000
Greater Anglia	20,000
Hertfordshire County Council	5,000
Hertford Town Council	1,000
Ware Town Council	1,000
TOTAL	29,500

Additional funding received in 2021/22

Source	Amount (£)	Description
Greater Anglia	12,502	Additional contributions
East Herts Council	300	Contribution to St Margarets planting scheme
French & Jupps Ltd	900	Contribution to St Margarets signal box artwork
TOTAL	13,702	

EXPENDITURE

The total expenditure in 2021/22 was £24,692, which was made up of £18,864 of hosting costs, £2,004 on projects and £3,824 on general running costs.

Spending on projects was limited due to the continued impact of pandemic restrictions.

Detailed breakdowns of expenditure are regularly reported to the Steering Group.

OVERALL SUMMARY FOR 2021/22

A summary of the overall financial position is given in the table below.

Summary of the 2021/22 Financial Position

Carry over from 2020/21	(+) £69,688
Income in 2021/22	(+) £43,202
Expenditure in 2021/22	(-) £24,692
Carry over to 2022/23	(=) £88,198

FORECAST 2022/23 POSITION

Whilst all figures are subject to change, the forecast core funding for 2022/23 is expected to £28,500, with on-going costs at £19,184.

Total project costs for the year have not been fully assessed.

Report from Alan Neville

Community and Customer Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia



Performance – Our service performance on West Anglia routes has continued at a high level this year. Our “Greater Anglia wide” moving annual average is over 94%. Even throughout the traditionally challenging autumn and winter periods, and the extreme heat and drought of summer 2022, figures have remained high. The figure reflects great attention to detail every day by our staff in regard to punctuality, and those employed by Network Rail to keep the essential infrastructure in good condition. Few incidents have been handled quickly and effectively.

Direct Award – In September 2021 we transferred from the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement to a Direct Award. Business Planning, and a strong and focused working relationship with the Department of Transport is a key part of this.

National Awards – In the autumn, at the National Rail Awards, we were awarded “Rail Operator of the Year.” The judges recognised our strong performance, new train fleet, and some very positive environmental initiatives in their award choice. At the Community Rail Awards, held recently, our community rail partnerships won several awards including best partnership in the UK for our Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership.

Pandemic update – The first part of 2022 was overshadowed by the effects of the Omicron variant. Our additional cleaning has remained in place – both on stations and on trains. Messages of reassurance and encouragement to travel were ramped up as the situation improved, and several national and GA wide marketing campaigns have occurred throughout the year with the aim of bringing customers back to rail. This has proven very successful. Overall journeys are now at over 80% of pre-pandemic levels. Leisure travel, and inner London commuting is very strong. Commuting overall is just over 70% of pre-pandemic levels.

Station Improvement initiatives – Many initiatives have brought positive customer benefits though-out the year. On the New River Line, both Ware, Hertford East and Broxbourne platforms have been extended as part of the extension of 10 coach formation train sets on this line. Work will commence shortly to improve waiting facilities at St Margarets.

Station adoption – Over the Greater Anglia network, we now have over 300 adopters and 126 adopted stations out of our portfolio of 134 stations. West Anglia recruitment has been an important goal this year, and the last station on the New River Line to be adopted, Rye House, joined “the fold” earlier this year, with new volunteers also joining at Elsenham, Sawbridgeworth and Cheshunt. Our amazing volunteer teams continue to delight station customers, passengers travelling through our stations, and our staff with whom they work and cooperate with. They continue to provide vital information about issues and faults on stations and provide excellent collaborative links with the communities which our stations serve. They work closely with organisations such as the Bee Friendly Trust, Railscape and wildlife bodies.

Community Rail – Our community rail organisations have continued to raise rail’s positive profile though-out East Anglia and to bring passengers onto rail. Their amazing work was recognised recently at the national awards in Manchester. The New River Line has enjoyed an excellent year and the hard work continues to enhance the attractive stations between Broxbourne and Hertford East, working closely with communities along the route in many collaborative ways.

New trains and new longer trains – West Anglia is now a totally “new train” railway with the retirement of the Class 317 fleet earlier in the year. The West Anglia fleet now consists of Classes 755 and 745, and Class 720, the latter replacing the Class 317. Great performance by these fleets has underpinned the increases in performance and reliability. In late summer the short blockade of the New River Line saw the lengthening of platforms at the aforementioned stations and associated station and signalling improvements which enabled the commencement of 10 coach operation on the line. Each 10 coach train is able to carry just under 1,000 passengers. A successful publicity campaign for local residents about the work and its aims, and a similar campaign in schools and colleges about the implementation of ten coach services, also occurred during the summer holidays.

Integrated Transport and Stakeholder Advisory Board meetings – In December we will hold our fourth and final integrated transport meeting, where representatives of train and bus companies and local councils come together to discuss a subject which becomes ever more important as we seek more sustainable and efficient modes of travel. Other representatives will meet on our fourth and final Stakeholder Advisory Board panel during the month.

Future Timetable changes – In planning future services we need both to be cost effective and efficient, but also to encourage customers back to the railway in large numbers. There will be very minor changes in December 2022 with possibly a few more changes in May 2023. Housing developments continue to be built along the whole West Anglia corridor, and the growth of Stratford continues unabated.



Art @ The Station - St Margarets

Art @ The Station was a project inspired by the restrictions put on us all during lockdown.

The artwork was installed and launched in October 2021.

Installation was carried out by Wayne Simmons in Greater Anglia's asset team, ably assisted by our station adopter, Robin.

On launch day the CRP were joined by Cllr Eric Buckmaster, representatives from our financial supporters, French and Jupp's, all the artists with their families and friends. Themed cupcakes were supplied by a local cafe.

In October 2022 the project took a 3rd place at the Community Rail Awards ceremony held at Manchester.



Stakeholders Meeting

The CRP held their first Stakeholder meeting in April. It was attended by over 30 people representing local councils, charities, organisations and individuals with an interest in the aims and objectives of the CRP.

The event was held in the beautiful Ware Priory and catered by the team at Bridget's Tea Room.



Enhancing stations with new Planters

The CRP has worked with station adopters to get grants for a new planter at St Margarets.

The CRP, who has built connections with the group, Ware in Bloom was pleased to reuse three of their planters which have been placed at Ware and St Margarets.



Promotional opportunities

The CRP took the opportunity to promote The New River Line at London Liverpool Street for Community Rail Network's Rail in the City event. It was great to attend with fellow Greater Anglia CRP officers. Over 300 activity books were handed out and numerous positive conversations were had.



Greater Anglia Station Adopter Awards

We were pleased to win two awards at Greater Anglia's station adopter awards. The ceremony, held at Ipswich Football Club, recognised the fantastic work our station adopters do to enhance our stations.

Mudlarks were highly commended and Robin & Rosemary won most improved station at St Margarets.



Network Rail Campaign

At the beginning of May the CRP supported Network Rail's national Brighter Journeys campaign by filling Hertford East station with colour, helped by our wonderful station adopters, Mudlarks. Mudlarks also supplied the delicious Brownies that were handed out to grateful passengers.

Harts in Mind, an inclusive mental health charity were on site with some of their artwork. East Herts well being walking group came to visit. The CRP was supported by Greater Anglia staff.



Hertford East Station
10th & 11th May 10am to 2.00pm

We're brightening up everyone's journey by bringing the power of nature into our stations.

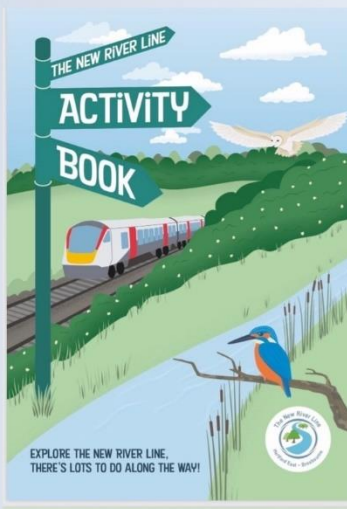
BRIGHTER JOURNEYS

For help with your mental health, download the Hub of Hope app at hubofhope.co.uk



The New River Line Activity Book

One of our achievements this year was the development, production and distribution of The New River Line Activity Book. It is a guide designed to encourage visitors and locals to explore the area with suggested walks and things to look out for. It has been received very well and over 1,000 have been distributed to local attractions and handed out at promotional events.



History Boards at St Margarets

The CRP worked with The Stanstead Abbots History Society (SALHS) to reproduce their information board on a large scale. This now has pride of place on the platform at St Margarets Station.



Stanstead Abbots
Ancient riverside settlement

Our village is ancient, with evidence of Bronze Age and Roman habitation and the Domesday Book (1086) includes it as one of five Hertfordshire towns paying significant annual taxation. This status wasn't sustained and Ware gradually became more prominent. Until 1531 Stanstead was held by the Abbots of Waltham hence Stanstead Abbots. The watermill and surrounding rich soils, river and road access to London encouraged the development of trade in barley, maling and barge ownership peaked in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, then declined gradually, ending in the early 1960s as rail, then road transport took over. After a few quiet years, leisure boating and development of the Lea Valley Park saw the river flourish again, with swelling numbers visiting local nature reserves (Amwell & Rye Meads) and walking in the surrounding countryside.

1 St Margarets Railway Station opened in 1843, it later became the junction station for the Buntingford branch (1863 - 1964). The railway encouraged development of a shopping High Street and until 1928 carried thousands of workers from London's East End on excursions to Rye House's pleasure gardens, and along the river to the village. The 20th Century saw the growth of commuting, which expanded further with faster, more frequent, electric trains after 1960.

2 The Lea Crossing - First evidence of a bridge is around 1100 but one may have existed much earlier, on a shallow stretch of river, replacing a ford. Previous wooden structures were replaced in 1873 by an iron bridge. Tolls were charged until 1885. The present concrete bridge dates from 1925.

3 Stanstead Hall - An imposing house and adjacent stable block built in 1750 by Michael Pepper. An early 19th century addition, the round tower, contains a spiral staircase for servants to access the main rooms, unseen by the family. The Pepper family, and in 1918, Richard Hunt lived in this house and were the local millers in their time. Note also Bachelors Hall opposite.

4 The Red Lion - the village's oldest pub. Dating from the 1400s but considerably remodelled, this building is dated 1598, possibly marking when it became an inn. Important during the road coaching era, it later catered for visitors arriving by train. Further facilities were added to accommodate day trippers in the later Victorian and Edwardian periods and included two large dining rooms, extensive leisure gardens and boating on the millstream. After five centuries it still serves drinks and food to the community.

5 The Clock House - This distinctive building, on the site of a chapel, was erected by Sir Edward Baeshe in 1635 as a Free Grammar School for local boys. He created the Baeshe Charity in 1538 to pay for a schoolmaster and a priest, who allowed its use as a Chapel of Ease on Sundays thus perpetuating its long standing religious function. In 1879 pupils transferred to St Andrew's School in Roydon Road. The Clockhouse was briefly a tea room, then a library, but is now a residence. With the Red Lion it forms an attractive corner of the village.

6 Maling - Historically the village was ideally placed to process barley from the surrounding rich farmland and send mail by barge to London. One of the earliest maltings (now in light industrial use) was the Rose and Crown Maling with its wharf just downstream of the bridge. Maling peaked between 1860 to 1890, with nine maltings in the village. French and Japps in Roydon Road remain and specialise in coloured malt for the food and drinks industry.

6 (continued) A Water Mill stood in Roydon Road for at least 700 years but the mill noted in the Domesday Book was probably further upstream. The millstream crossed by the Red Lion before entering the mill and flour was loaded directly into barges moored downstream. The millstream was culverted in 1934 and a roundabout built later. Today's brick built mill replaced the old wooden one, burnt down in 1952. Miling ceased in 1928 and it was later adapted to house offices.

9 St James' Church about a mile along Roydon Road, dates from Saxon times and was the parish church until 1862. The 13th interior is rare and largely unaltered, with high box pews, a 16th three-decker pulpit and a manually pumped Victorian organ. The red brick north chapel of 1577 was built by Edward Baeshe, Lord of the Manor. The church is in occasional use. Nearby is Stanstead Bury, at its most important between 1509 and 1782 when it was the Lord of the Manor's residence.

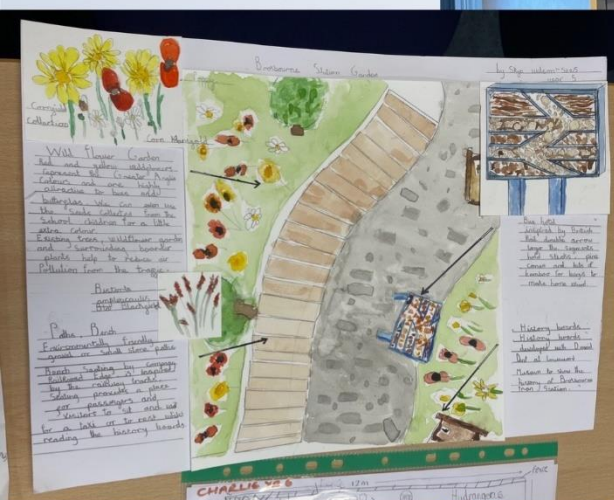
In grateful memory of Ian White
8 December 1946 - 17 October 2017
former Chair and instigator of Stanstead Abbots Local History Society whose enthusiasm and inspirational leadership made SALHS a huge success.

Stanstead Abbots Local History Society
www.salhs.org.uk
& 'A History of Stanstead Abbots, Rye House and St Margarets' by Ron Dale

The New River Line
Hertford East - Broxbourne

Looking forward - Broxbourne Station Garden

The CRP have started working with the station adopter at Broxbourne to re-install the community garden. The garden had to be taken away because of engineering works. The contractors, J Murphy & Sons are working with us to replace the garden. The CRP have involved the local Primary School to come up with some designs which will provide the basis of this project.



Looking forward - Video Project

The CRP is excited to be working with videographer Mat King at Kingstreetimages to produce content for all our social media channels. Events, businesses, charities and individuals are currently being interviewed and filmed to promote the wonderful people and places that thrive along The New River Line. The aim is to promote the area as a place to visit and work by train.



Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read The New River Line CRP's Annual Report. We are looking forward to continuing the good work throughout 2023.



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www.newriverline.org



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