Annual Review
April 2013 – March 2014

Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership
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Front Cover - St Albans Abbey Station May 2014.
Photo: Janet Tyndale
1. Message from the Chair, Terry Douris

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this 6th Annual Report for the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership (CRP). I am delighted to have taken over the helm at a time of great productivity, with a new look for the Abbey Line CRP and the delivery of a number of station projects engaging schools, a community youth group and individuals.

One of my first tasks as Chairman was to join in a celebratory event to thank pupils from Berrygrove Academy for the excellent art posters at Garston station. Pupils, with support from Groundwork Hertfordshire, designed and painted posters to brighten up the station for the enjoyment of passengers. This is at the heart of Community Rail, bringing the railway and community together for the benefit of passengers.

I have also joined at a time of uncertainty regarding the future of the Community Rail Partnership and will be working hard to see how we can secure funds to continue with this valuable work. Hertfordshire County Council has in previous years generously funded the CRP. Faced with severe pressure on its budget the decision was made in March 2013 to withdraw funding for the CRP Officer’s salary from April 2014 and then to discontinue hosting the post from April 2015.

This presents not only an exciting opportunity to structure the organisation differently but also brings the challenge of securing funding. I am optimistic that we can achieve both and move the organisation on to a new era.

I would like to personally thank Janet Tyndale, Community Rail Partnership Officer, for her dedication in delivering the projects and for providing guidance in moving the organisation forward.

I thank all the partners for their work over the past year, and for their commitment to the future. My thanks especially to London Midland and Hertfordshire County Council for their funding, without which, we would not have been able to deliver so many projects.

Terry Douris
2. Message from Patrick Verwer, Managing Director, London Midland

Welcome to our Annual Report; I’m pleased to report on another year of progress.

The Abbey Line remains one of our top performing routes; in 2013/14 we had 3 periods when punctuality was between 80% and 90%. However for the remaining 10 periods of the year more than 90% of our train services were punctual.

Passenger numbers remained consistent with just under 430,000 passenger journeys on the Branch; this was lower than the record year of 463,000 but well above the lowest year of around 411,000. Numbers held up despite the long winter of 2012/13 and the severe weather of the autumn and winter 2013/14.

Thanks to Hertfordshire County Council and the Department for Transport the new heated waiting room on the Abbey Line Platform at Watford Junction was finally opened for passengers. This represents another significant step in bringing the Abbey Line infrastructure up to date. More than £1m has been invested in the stations since 2007.

We’ve launched a new, super-fast, free national rail planning tool; Passengers who download the app now have an easy-to-use, personal travel assistant in their pocket. Good for all passengers, it’s particularly useful for passengers on the Abbey Line.

As well as a year of achievement; 2013/14 has also been a year of challenges, not least of which is the Class 321 trains that serve the line. They are spacious and very reliable mechanically but they date from the late 1980s and are in need of refurbishment, this is not funded within our franchise. The train is cleaned at the depot weekly, we are investigating other cleaning options but nothing is decided yet.

Finally I would like to thank our station adopters, volunteers and the other members of the Community Rail Partnership whose work behind the scenes has done so much to brighten up the stations and encourage more people to use the Abbey Line.

I also recognise the work of my colleagues in London Midland to make us a responsible company, employer, and very much a part of the community.

Patrick Verwer, Managing Director

Photo: London Midland
3. About the Abbey Line

The Abbey Line is a 6.5 mile long railway that serves local communities between Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey. The train, known locally as the Abbey Flyer, also provides a link for those wishing to make onwards connections into London or to Milton Keynes and beyond.

With ever increasing road congestion it provides a fast and convenient journey of just 16 minutes end to end; a journey which can often take up to 45 minutes by car at peak times.

4. What is a Community Rail Partnership?

Community Rail Partnerships provide a link between the railway and local communities. They are about positive development, bringing together a wide range of interests along the route.

Community rail typically involves local people and organisations working in partnership to improve their local railways. Community Rail initiatives such as station enhancements and innovative promotional schemes can help get better value for money from the rail network.

This might include improving bus links to stations, developing walking and cycling routes, bringing station buildings back to life, art and educational projects, organising special events which promote the railway and its relevance to the community.

The Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership was set up in 2005 as one of the first designated Community Rail Partnerships.
5. Our Aims and Objectives

Aims
- To help secure the long term future of the Abbey Line through a community-based partnership approach.
- To help link the railway more strongly with the communities it serves: to contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of local communities.
- To reduce road congestion in the area by enhancing the role of the local railway in delivering local and sustainable transport solutions.
- To deliver environmental benefits associated with a railway and reduced car usage.

Objectives
- To bring together a wide range of people from the local community, businesses, local government, railways, tourism and conservation to raise the profile of the Line.
- Through effective marketing, promote and increase rail travel on the line.
- To develop and improve links between rail and other forms of transport, including walking, cycling, buses and cars (park & ride).
- To develop projects that enhance station environments for local people and encourage the use of rail and which contribute to the social and economic life of the area.
- To engage with the local community to raise awareness of the opportunity for community involvement in the railway through station adoption.

6. Working with Partner Organisations to Deliver their Corporate Objectives

The Community Rail Partnership can support the work of organisations in delivering strategic objectives in areas such as engaging community, economic and environmental initiatives that bring benefit to local people.

Localism

Engaging Local Community
- Delivering projects that engage local people and schools
- Engaging local community to take part in transforming the environment at their local station
• Encouraging volunteering as station adopters
• Providing opportunity for local people to become more involved in the railway

Health
• Walking and cycling as healthy options to travel to a local station to take the train to work
• Encouraging people get out more often to enjoy the countryside and walk for leisure by using the train
• Introducing people new to leisure walks by trying one of our short walks

Supporting Economic Growth
Promoting Local Business
• Bringing new people to the area for walks - our new longer walk will be ready for autumn 2014 and will be promoted to London walking groups who are always keen on car free walks
• Promoting shopping and leisure activities through use of the train
• Promoting small and medium businesses along the route when marketing the line
• Promoting local events

Supporting Organisations to deliver Corporate Social Responsibility
• Supporting organisations to promote the use of the line to their staff
• Use of rail can help organisations to reduce demand and costs of car parking.
• Working with organisations to provide volunteering opportunities for their staff

Environmental
• Encouraging use of trains and other forms of sustainable transport
• Reducing carbon footprint for individuals and organisations
• Reducing congestion between St Albans and Watford and associated tail-pipe emissions from cars
• Reducing parking congestion in Watford
• Improving stations as part of local environment
7. Overview - April 2013 to March 2014

This has been a busy year with the delivery of many projects that have engaged the local community to enhance station environments, especially with art projects.

We were delighted that Patrick Verwer, the Managing Director, London Midland visited us during the year to take a trip on the Abbey Line, visit some of the stations to learn more about us to understand more fully the issues facing people using the Abbey Line.

We have a new look with our branding, now embedded in promotional materials, mini timetables and CRP station notice boards. Whilst the website has been updated with new pictures, we are still planning to have a new website designed that will be easier to manage and more informative for the travelling public.

The need to secure a future for the Community Rail Partnership has been a focus, in light of Hertfordshire County Council no longer being in a position to substantially fund or host the organisation from March 2015 onwards.

We will need to find a new home and funding, and have begun exploring options. We have considered a number of organisational structures, such as becoming a Community Interest Company, which would mean that we would operate independently as a business. Having assessed all the options we believe that third party hosting continues to be the best option for the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership.

In exploring potential hosts for the CRP we have entered into discussions with two organisations who have shown an interest, and whose objectives would be compatible with our own. These discussions are at a very embryonic stage and we will continue to explore these avenues over the ensuing months.

Hertfordshire County Council will continue to host the organisation until March 2015, but not pay the salary. We have sufficient funds to pay for the officer salary until March 2015 along with funds from London Midland earmarked for projects and marketing.

The challenge that lies ahead is to secure sufficient funds for core costs for CRP Officer salary and office overheads of around £34,000.

Approaches will be made to the three authorities in the Partnership and the Parish Council for funding contributions. London Midland have confirmed their funding contribution for 2014/15 and we are optimistic that this will continue for 2015/16. Hertfordshire County Council have indicated that they are likely to provide some funds but this is not confirmed.
8. Overview of our Work and Projects

Community Engagement – Station Adoption

Crucial to keeping an eye on our unstaffed stations along the Abbey Line are our Volunteer Station Adopters.

Acting as the ‘eyes and ears’ locally for London Midland, our volunteers keep a watchful eye on their local station environment on behalf of the communities that use them.

Regular checks highlight issues such as litter, graffiti, lights not working, faulty passenger information and emergency help points and any potential hazards at stations. Through regular station checks and sending in reports on their findings, London Midland staff are alerted sooner to issues that need attention at these unstaffed stations. CRP notice boards are kept up to date with local information for passengers.

This invaluable work is carried out by volunteers who give so generously of their time on behalf of their local community. Our heartfelt thanks go to these volunteers.

Through regular station checks over 100 reports on faults and issues were sent to London Midland during 2013/14.

As a thank you to our volunteer station adopters, visits to the new Heritage centre at Ridgmont Station on the Marston Vale line and Watford signal box were arranged. Our thanks to the Marston Vale CRP and Network Rail

Abbey Line Volunteer putting up new posters

Photo: Janet Tyndale

Station Adopters and signalman at Watford Signal Box

Photo: Janet Tyndale

Station Adopters at Ridgmont station Heritage Centre

Photo: Janet Tyndale
Working with schools

The Community Rail Partnership encourages and supports schools to use the line for educational trips, raising awareness of issues such as rail safety and of course gaining an understanding of how to use a train. It is always exciting when there are children who have not travelled by train before and we hope that this will be the first of many journeys they make by train in the future.

90 Pupils from Mount Pleasant Lane School took an educational trip on the line as part of their studies of the history of the railway. Inspired by the poem ‘From a Railway Carriage’ pupils made sketches based on views from the train windows.

30 Pupils from How Wood School used the train for a visit St Albans and gained experience of travelling by train.

Pupils from Mount Pleasant Lane School
Photos: Janet Tyndale

Sketching a view from the train window

Pupils from How Wood School
Photos: Janet Tyndale

Pupils from How Wood School with Abbey Line branded ‘Goody bags’ containing pencils, erasers, bookmarks and walks leaflets.
60 students from Prae Wood School in St Albans enjoyed a return journey from St Albans Abbey to Watford Junction to experience rail travel as part of their studies on transport and the history of railways. Some of the students had not previously travelled by train before and found the journey very exciting as well as learning about train travel.

Photos: Janet Tyndale

77 Pupils from Berrygrove Academy enjoyed a Victorian themed visit to St Albans Abbey Educational Centre by dressing in Victorian costume for the day. The school chose the train as a fast and efficient means of transport. Pupils learned about rail safety at stations and on-board as part of this trip.

The aim was to support pupils in gaining independence and encourage use of public transport as a sustainable means of travel, rather than reliance on travelling by car.

Photos: supplied by Berrygrove Academy
Promotion and Marketing

- **CRP station notice boards** have a new look and in addition to providing useful contact details these boards also include a QR code and NFC chip, providing a quick and easy link to National Rail enquiries live train information from that station. We hope that this provides additional benefit to those passengers who have this technology on their mobile devices.

- **12,000** credit card sized CRP branded mini timetables were distributed through local libraries, council offices, tourist information, local businesses, schools and local events. Our timetables also provide information on buses that connect after the last train. These continue to be popular and assist passengers, as the 45 minute timetable frequency is not easy to remember.

- **950** of our mini timetables were distributed directly to passengers on morning peak trains before timetable changes in May, October and December. Passengers appear to appreciate receiving these on the trains.

- **Walks leaflets** continue to be very popular and are distributed to St Albans tourist information centre, local libraries and St Stephens Parish Centre

- **550** Walks leaflets were distributed at St Albans Model Railway Exhibition over one weekend, along with mini timetables and other promotional items.

- Abbey Line promotional goody bags were given to school children attending trips on the lines, containing information, walks leaflets, pencils, erasers and bookmarks.

- **3** events received press coverage

- A new leaflet promoting Volunteering was produced and distributed to libraries

- **120,306** views on the CRP website – the timetable page being the most popular.

- **330** average views per day on the website with an average of 58 regular users on a daily basis.

- Articles about our projects have been featured in local parish newsletters national train on line and in the local press

- Exhibition displays promoting the Abbey Line, walks and volunteering were on display at St Albans Civic Centre, Watford Borough Council and Building Research Establishment

- Promotional talks were given to Stephens Parish Annual meeting, Bricket Wood residents Association, St Albans Rotary club, Quality Network Partnership meeting and Big Hearts Big Ideas for business networking meeting
Station projects

Improving station environments and making them a more welcoming place for local people through community art projects has proved to be very popular. This has been a busy year with station projects.

- **St Albans Abbey Mosaics** were replaced with new ones designed by pupils from St Peter’s School in St Albans. The old roman city of Verulamium was the theme for these wonderful mosaics. Pupils were supported by an artist, Jayne Visick and education officer from Groundwork Hertfordshire who delivered the project on our behalf.

- **Watford Junction Platform 11 Walkway art project** was achieved working in partnership with Watford YMCA. A youth worker provided guidance and support to young people from the Church of Nazarene youth club to design and produce a brightly coloured collage poster with a theme of sustainable transport. They also gained valuable experience of working as a team.
• Five photographic art posters displayed at Watford Junction platform 11 were designed by residents living at Watford YMCA hostel. This project, led by artist Eleanor Shipman and entitled A-B explored journeys and transitions inspired by travelling on the Abbey Line and walks around Watford. Residents were supported throughout this project to explore ideas and experiment using photography and other techniques, including the use of acetates overlaid onto their photographs. This has resulted in the creation of artistic impressions of scenes from Watford and the Abbey Flyer train.

Garston station now has some very brightly coloured posters designed and painted by 90 pupils from Berrygrove Academy in Garston. Sustainable transport as a means of travelling to the station was the theme. Pupils were supported by local artist Jody Ameneyro along with an education officer from Groundwork Hertfordshire who delivered the project on our behalf. This has resulted in very imaginative depictions of sustainable transport.

Artistic Posters at Garston Station
Photo Janet Tyndale

Pupils from Berrygrove Academy at an event to celebrate the installation of their work
Photo: Janet Tyndale
• **Garston Station Shelter** - This exciting, technically challenging and innovative project has delivered a robust finish for a shelter that had been vandalised on several occasions, leaving passengers sitting in a shelter with open sides. Stainless steel panels have been used as a base for cut out designs taken from the artworks produced by pupils at Berrygrove Academy for the station art posters. The stainless steel cut outs, allow light to filter through and give a unique finish for this shelter, which has been praised by passengers. We are hoping that this artistic and decorative solution will also be robust and fairly vandal proof. We will hold an event to celebrate with pupils from Berrygrove Academy, whose original artworks provided the design base for this project.

![Garston Station Shelter and close up of side panel. Photos Janet Tyndale](image)

**Highway Signage Project**

Our highways signage project has seen the installation of directional road signs to Abbey Line stations from Park Street through to Watford North. The stations can be very difficult to find for people new to the area and the new signage will also assist drivers of rail replacement bus services. Our thanks to Hertfordshire County Council who funded this and our partner colleague at Watford Borough Council for procuring and overseeing the delivery of this project on behalf of the CRP.

**9. Plans for 2014/15**

- Securing a future for Community Rail Partnership
- Securing funding to take CRP forward in 2015/16
- Identify 3rd party hosting and set up new structure
- Work with London Midland to address key issues raised by passengers
- Support communications plan for Watford Engineering works

• Develop new longer Abbey Line walk. This will give people newly introduced to walking for health the opportunity to explore longer walks

• Marketing – Develop and implement plan setting a clearer focus and direction for marketing the Abbey line, with the aim of raising awareness and increasing use of the train. The plan will:
  • Promote Volunteering – more station adopters, friends group
  • Promote the Abbey Line to local households through a marketing campaign
  • Provide walking and cycling maps to stations
  • Website redesign
  • Provide information about using the train

• St Albans Abbey Station Entrance - replacement of the height restrictive gate, incorporating a community art design and renovation of pillars to enhance the station approach.

• Station Adoption - to recruit additional station adopters and Friends Groups with a view to carrying out projects to enhance station environments

• Review and revision of Station Adopter guidance and agreements

10. Passenger Survey June 2013

The Community Rail Partnership traditionally commissions an annual passenger count and a survey of passenger opinions. The Railway Consultancy undertook a passenger survey for us in June 2013.

There was a high take up of respondents, with 1,000 surveys given out, and around one third completed (328). This represents around a 1/5th of weekday passengers suggesting that the responses should be a representative sample. These surveys were carried out over a range of times during the week and weekends in June 2013.

We have decided not to carry out a passenger survey in 2014 as there are issues from the previous survey still to take forward. The Community Rail Partnership and Hertfordshire County Council are working with London Midland on looking at ways of tackling the issues and concerns of passengers.

We also made the decision not to carry out a passenger count this year on the grounds of cost. Information from ticket sales is readily available and although not the same measure, is the industry norm and can be used instead of a passenger count.
Summary of Key Issues raised by Passengers

Likes:
- Quick journey time
- Convenient location for walking to station
- Good connections, both at St Albans and Watford
- Easy to get a seat
- Friendliness of staff

Dislikes:
- Lack of cleanliness
- Long waiting times between trains
- Trains cancelled due to train crew absence
- Last train service being too early in the evening
- Not always a smooth connection between the Abbey Line and mainline at Watford Junction.

Improvements that passengers would like to see:
- Frequency of trains – not within our scope but long term aspiration
- Regular cleaning of the interior of the train which is dirty and tatty
- Ticketing – Ability to purchase ticket on train, cheaper tickets, incentives to use train, smart ticketing.
- Communication when services are delayed or cancelled
- Ticket machines at all stations
- To keep the service running later at night, especially at weekends

Source: Railway Consultancy Passenger Survey for CRP June 2013
Improvements the Partnership and Volunteers would like to see

In addition to the passenger survey separate brainstorming sessions were undertaken with station adoption volunteers and CRP steering group members. They are fairly consistent with the larger passenger survey results.

- Frequency of trains – not within our scope but long term aspiration, major infrastructure works would be required.
- Communication when services are delayed or cancelled, a lack of information leaves passengers feeling deserted, especially at these unstaffed stations.
- Ticketing – Ability to purchase ticket on train, easier for companies to purchase staff tickets, cheaper tickets, incentives to use train, smart ticketing.
- Ticket machines at all stations
- Cleanliness of trains/tatty old trains/?fit for purpose
- Later running trains, especially at weekends

Journey Purpose, Weekdays

The line is predominantly used for commuting and business use during the week, with leisure, education and visiting family or friends accounting for the remainder of the journeys.

Journey Purpose, Weekends

Weekend journeys are predominantly used for leisure purposes, visiting friends and relatives and shopping.

Data Source: Railway Consultancy Passenger Survey for CRP June 2013
Passenger mode of travel to stations

- Walk, 75%
- Train, 6%
- Car - dropped off, 6%
- Car - parked, 6%
- Cycle, 4%
- Bus, 2%
- Taxi, 1%

The highest percentage of people using the Abbey Line walk to their local station

Data Source: Railway Consultancy Passenger Survey June 2013

Workplace support for use of public transport

We were keen to know if people were encouraged and supported to use public transport through their workplace. The most common form of support was through an interest free season ticket loan, with a few companies providing subsidised season tickets. Many people cited that their employers operated cycle schemes. Other incentives included a lack of work based parking or issue of parking permits and only being reimbursed for work travel expenses when using public transport. We also asked about awareness of Plus Bus and 48% of people were aware of this but some were not sure about how to purchase tickets or its validity on buses in St Albans.


The figures are taken from London Midland ticket sales allocated from Lennon data.
12. Financial Information 2013/2014 Accounts

The CRP officer is employed by Hertfordshire County Council but is responsible to the partnership. The post is part time.

**Income April 2013 to March 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£'s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCC Corporate Overheads includes: premises, IT, HR, travel, training, mobile phone, finance, insurance, equipment</td>
<td>18,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCC Salary (P/T) and employment costs</td>
<td>17,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertfordshire contribution for Hosting CRP Post</td>
<td>35,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council contribution: Operational Budget include, marketing, leaflets, brochures, administration</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council contribution: Capital projects</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Midland contribution: marketing and station projects</td>
<td>15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner Funds balance from previous years</td>
<td>90,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total operational Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>136,916</strong></td>
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**Expenditure April 2013 to March 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£'s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing, leaflets, brochures, merchandising,</td>
<td>5,908</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mini timetables</td>
<td>2,715</td>
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<tr>
<td>General stationery, subscriptions, volunteer expenses</td>
<td>659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walks leaflet</td>
<td>1,304</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Albans Abbey Mosaics</td>
<td>8,521</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passenger survey</td>
<td>3,621</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watford Photographic art Project</td>
<td>1,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbey Line Highway project consultancy and design costs</td>
<td>5,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garston Community Art Project</td>
<td>5,227</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expenditure 2013/14</strong></td>
<td><strong>35,047</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance carried forward</strong></td>
<td><strong>101,869</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Partnership Fund includes money that has built up over a number of years due to a lack of continuity of CRP officers in the past to take projects forward.

Partnership funds will be used for the projects identified for 2014/15 and £20,000 held to fund the salary for the CRP Officer for 2014/15.
13. Funders and Partners

The Steering group meets four times a year and set the strategic direction for the Partnership.

Our thanks to London Midland for their continued support and to Hertfordshire County Council for their generous funding contribution for 2013/14 and for hosting the CRP Officer post until the end of March 2015.

**Funding partners**

Hertfordshire County Council  
London Midland

**Partners**

St Albans City and District Council  
Watford Borough Council  
St Stephens Parish Council  
Abfly – Rail User Group  
Building Research Establishment  
Campaign for Real Ale – South Hertfordshire Branch

**Supported by**

Department for Transport  
Network Rail

14. Contact Details

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