



**Essex & South Suffolk
Community Rail Partnership**

Annual Update

2020

Well, what a year it has been!

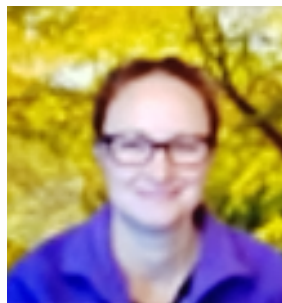
“Unprecedented” is the word everyone uses to describe it and it has certainly been that.

Who would have ever expected our daily lives to change so completely? Since lockdown started on March 23rd we have seen public transport discouraged apart from for key workers until mid July, face coverings becoming mandatory on stations from June 15th and our homes replacing our offices.

Having had to get over the disappointment of cancelling many of the events we had planned, we had to pick ourselves up and work out what we could get done this year. Whether virtually or by planning for the future by producing promotional material or getting some preparation done now to make life easier for our volunteers on the stations next year.

But in spite of everything community rail continues to thrive and our wonderful adopters continue to amaze and impress.

(Please note - some of these photos were taken pre-COVID regulations)



Goodbye to Lynda Stone

In April we said goodbye to Lynda.

Her eleven years' worth of experience of Community Rail and Greater Anglia will be much missed, and she has made many friends here over the years.

We wish her a long and happy retirement.

A very hands-on lady as the photo of her decorating the waiting room at Rayleigh shows on the back page!



Hello to Catherine Gaywood



And also in April we said hello to our newest Community Rail Officer, Catherine.

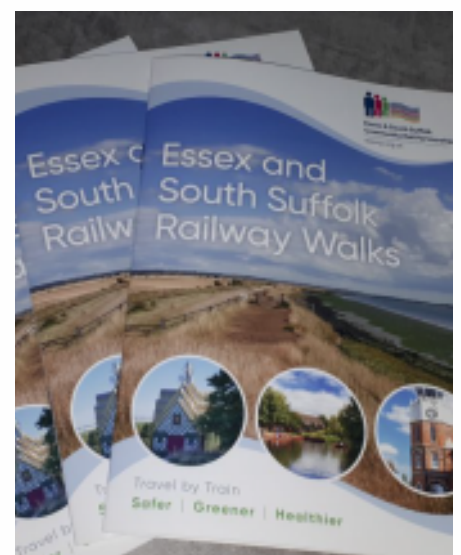
She is not new to Essex County Council, having worked for Essex previously and she is also not new to transport, having previously worked for HS2.

Her hands-on approach and attention to detail is appreciated and we wish her every success.

This elegant photo is the office version for virtual calls, but she has already been out in the mud and rain getting her hands dirty too!

Essex and Suffolk Railway Walks booklet.

We have been working on a new walks booklet over lockdown to help people get outdoors and discover their local area this autumn. We are hoping it will encourage people to use the branch line stations to do these walks. There are 12 walks in total, two for each of the branch lines and one of the team has walked each of them so can vouch for them. Ideas for walks always go down really well when we do our promotional events and using the train for part of the journey is an excellent way to create a circular walk. The walks vary in length between 3 and 10 miles and offer something for everyone – families, people new to walking and those who regularly walk. All the walks start at a railway station and either end at a different railway station or return via a circular walk. The 'Planning Your Walk' section details the suggested time the walk will take, a map reference, useful information and where to find refreshment. Using the train helps cut the congestion, pollution and carbon emissions to create an environmentally friendly and healthy day out. The walks are free to download at www.esscrp.org.uk. If anyone who hasn't had a copy would like one please email june.povey@essex.gov.uk with your address and we will pop one in the post – equally, if anyone would like more just get in touch.



New signage at Manningtree station



The inclusion of a walk at Manningtree to Flatford Mill prompted us to add some signage to the station to make it clearer where the walk started.



Greater Anglia Awards

The Greater Anglia awards were held virtually this year in lieu of the normal venue at Portman Road. This worked extremely well and Greater Anglia even managed to do the annual quiz virtually. Well done to Alan Neville for rising to the challenge so well. You can see our Wrabness adopter Julia Prigg enjoying the event in the photo.

Most Improved station – highly commended was Walton-on-the Naze

Best medium station – highly commended was Marks Tey

Best staffed station – highly commended was Braintree

Best newcomer – highly commended was Stephen Scrase at Chappel and Wakes Colne station



Coastal Leaflets

We worked with Essex County Council's Tourism section to produce four mini-guides to the coast. Funded by the Government's Coastal Communities Fund, the guides each offer information on wildlife and things to do in the area. This is a really exciting project to get people visiting the beautiful Essex coast in a sustainable way.

Ramble on the Gainsborough line

Our last physical event before lockdown happened was a walk which started at Chappel, used the train to travel to Bures and then our very knowledgeable local volunteer Jan guided us back. We got to see the market on the common at Bures as well as the beautiful countryside in that part of the world. Those who had brought binoculars had plenty of opportunity to put them to use.



Alresford bee sculpture

At Alresford station, we worked with Cobnuts cooperative (a group of local artists who have provided workshops in schools and undertaken environmental projects in other areas) to build a cob sculpture of people waiting for the trains with various pottery holes for bees and insects to use to lay eggs and hibernate. We worked with Alresford local primary school to create the sculpture. We first provided a rail safety talk in the school grounds with social distancing in place – which was our first outdoors safety talk!. Our rail safety talks include key information about keeping safe whilst travelling by train and on the station platforms. The pottery containers for the sculpture were made at the school with workshops provided by Cobnuts. The Bee Friendly Trust also provided pollination talks with the school, provided and put the plinth in place for the sculpture. All of these events were provided outside with social distancing in place.

There will be a talking bench in the garden with recorded information about the station and the wildlife garden we have created.

The sculpture is roughly 2.5 metres high with a 'living roof' to protect it and is already being put to good use by local insect life. We also created a wildlife/insect garden alongside the sculpture planted with wild flowers and bee friendly plants.

The partners were ESSCRP, Cobnuts Co-operative, The Bee Friendly Trust, Alresford Primary School and the station adopters. We recently had some exciting news. This project has won an award from the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The government gives out awards every year for the best contributions to making the environment more bee friendly. In previous years the awards ceremony has been a glittering event in the City of London. This year it will be on Zoom.



Bee friendly wild flower kits

The Bee Friendly trust kindly donated some attractive wild flower kits for use around our stations. We look forward to seeing the results in future years!



History boards

A key project this year has been to install History Boards in more of our stations. It is lovely when the public or adopters see them in other stations and ask if they can have one in theirs. We love this project, we work with a variety of local sources to provide the information and the really interesting photos and we learn so much ourselves in the process! They look wonderful when they are up and we get a special thrill when we see the passengers stop to read them.



Friends of Rayleigh station

The newly enlarged Friends of Rayleigh Station are enthusiastic and full of ideas to brighten up the station to make it welcoming for passengers and visitors to Rayleigh. They have made an amazing difference in a short space of time.

To kick start this, their first major project, the Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership provided funding for the boards for the planters. These planters were then constructed by the volunteers. The volunteers have donated their time, skills, personal contacts and personal finances and the impact is incredible.

Amongst new tubs and planters, the highlight has to be the three new raised beds which were a mammoth planting effort.

6 tonnes of loose soil was deposited at the entrance to platform 2 on a very wet day. 7 hours later, many wheelbarrow journeys up the ramp and long the platform the three planters were filled with soil. Thank you to the local residents who offered water to help clear down the area as well as wash the volunteers!

The plants chosen were 70+ hardy perennials, low maintenance and drought resistant, which, when established, will offer both attractive foliage throughout the year as well as create a bright colourful floral display that will last the summer. The colour scheme is white, pink and red, with annuals for Spring cover. Flowering plants include early spring daffodils, white Gaura Lindheimeri/ whirling butterflies, silvery bindweed, pink Mexican daisies and blue hebes. The display offers striking architectural plants such as Phormiums in red as well as green variegated leaves. Wild Flower seeds were sown in the cleared area behind the three boxes. We are in awe at the displays chosen and can't wait to see them as they develop. Thank you so much to Jack, David, Monica, Eddie, Anne and Sue for all their hard work. The end result will delight our returning passengers. And as if all that wasn't enough, the group are turning their sights on a potential new garden in front of the station.



Greater Anglia new trains arrive

A highlight of the year from Greater Anglia is the arrival of the new trains. The new trains which are transforming our branch lines are two different types. The bi-modes are the type seen in operation now on the Gainsborough Line, bringing extra capacity, air conditioning, wifi and additional power and usb sockets. The other type is the Class 720 suburban trains. Testing, commissioning and training are going very well so far. Greater Anglia are looking at later this year for the first trains entering passenger service. The first deployment will probably be on the Southend lin. We are all looking forward to seeing them throughout our branch line network.



South Woodham Ferrers mural

The new mural is in place now but there was a lot of preparation behind the scenes. To prepare the wall for a new painting our amazing adopters Jed and Frederick jet washed and undercoated the wall removing all trace of the original. It was tough work but resulted in a fresh surface for the now completed mural which is shown.



New water trolley at Manningtree

Time in lockdown has been spent trying to find solutions for any watering issues at stations. Here is the very innovative water trolley ESSCRP funded for use at Manningtree, to save watering cans being carried over from one platform to another.



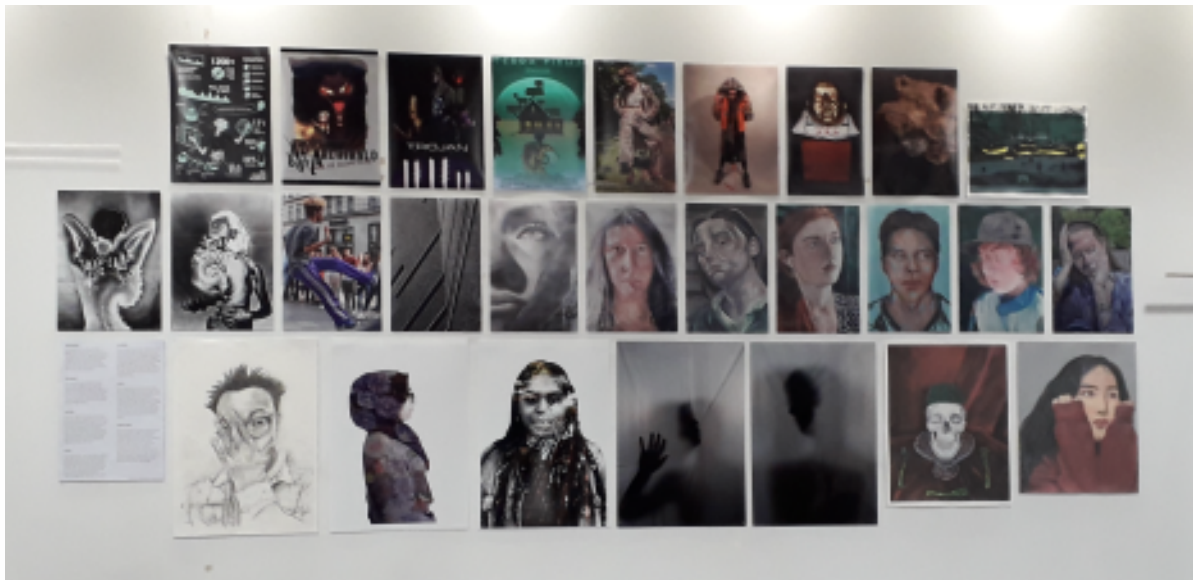
New green poster boards at Bures

We are grateful to have received some match funding from the Community Rail Network (formerly ACoRP) to allow us to replace mismatched poster boards outside the waiting hut at Bures with smart green ones, in keeping with this lovely heritage station.



Colchester waiting room

“What a brilliant idea” “Great to look at the artwork whilst waiting for my train” “What a difference this makes to the station!” are quotes from rail passengers whilst the installation of students’ artwork was underway at Colchester Station in the waiting area. This project, a partnership between ESSCRP, Colchester Sixth Form College Art and Design students and Greater Anglia, has turned a bare waiting room into a public art gallery with artwork that can be enjoyed by the station’s 370,000+ visitors per year. The waiting room is the ideal space to display students’ course work. They were literally given a platform far bigger than they could achieve by displaying their work at school. It was an opportunity to give students responsibility and ownership of the waiting room, particularly as many students travel to college by train via Colchester station. In the future we plan a rotational display (COVID permitting, of course!)



Marks Tey improvements

Marks Tey richly deserved its commendation in the Greater Anglia awards for best medium station. Maureen, Terry, Brenda, Mick and Corinne have done a sterling job not only in maintaining progress made to date but building on it. Brenda and Mick kept the beautiful flower borders going through lockdown by incorporating watering them into their daily walk. Corinne keeps the planters going and Maureen and Terry have made a radical transformation to the Embankment. The photo shows Maureen posing on her new step in front of the chicken wire fence which is keeping the rabbits at bay



Community Rail Network awards

We had two projects shortlisted this year, Maureen at Marks Tey and Community Arts scheme at Colchester Waiting Room. This event was pushed back from October to a virtual event on December 9th so we have our fingers crossed! But to us all our adopters deserve to win.

Station Adoption

We have been busy this year recruiting new adopters ahead of lockdown and out of 42 branch line stations now we now only have Cressing, White Notley and Southend Victoria unadopted. If you can help with this please let Jayne know – email jsumner@essex.gov.uk. Our station adopters are so fantastic and come up with so many ideas to make the stations look amazing and work so hard, we can’t thank you enough! We are totally in awe of what you do. We have missed the camaraderie that comes with station adoption, as seen in this photo here of a Gainsborough Line meeting





Mistley Station



Weeley



Coastal Communities project



Coastal Communities project



Xmas tree at Burnham on Crouch



New train over Chappel viaduct



Adopters with wild flower kits



Walk at rochford



Lynda painting at Rochford

