

# TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ABBEY LINE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

## 1. Preamble

The Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership (Abbey Line CRP) is committed to the positive and imaginative development of the Watford Junction – St Albans Abbey line in ways which benefit the communities served by the railway. It sees the line as a vital link serving both the large towns and desires to work with all interested parties to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities along the line, and the railway itself.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

### Aims

1. To help secure the long-term future of the Watford Junction – St Albans Abbey railway line through a community-based partnership approach.
2. To help link the railway more strongly with the communities it serves, in order to contribute to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of those communities.
3. To reduce the road congestion in the area by enhancing the role of the local railway in delivering local transport solutions, as envisaged in Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and other local authority sustainable transport plans.
4. To deliver environmental benefits associated with the railway and increased active travel.
5. To work towards environmentally-friendly projects and operations.

### Objectives

1. To bring together a range of people involved in the local community, businesses, local government, railways, tourism, conservation and regional development, who share the above aims.
2. To develop practical ways of raising the profile of the line through
  - a. Raising awareness of, and to promote, the rail services on the Abbey line as a sustainable way to access destinations for recreation, leisure and tourism

- b. Involve the community in the work of rail user groups; station partnerships; arts initiatives and improving links with local schools and colleges
- 3. To develop appropriate uses for stations that encourage people to use the train and enhance facilities for local residents and local businesses. This will include new uses for redundant land and buildings along the line.
- 4. To develop projects along the railway which encourage the use of rail and which contribute to the social and economic life of the area.
- 5. To work with relevant bodies to improve links between rail and complementary forms of transport, including walking, cycling, buses and cars (park & ride).
- 6. To identify sources of funds to carry out projects in keeping with the above aims and objectives, and if appropriate to employ staff to help achieve them.
  - a. The partnership shall abide by the principle of equal access and equal opportunity for all and will strive to ensure that the particular transport needs of people without access to private transport, and those with disabilities, are met.
  - b. Meet the objectives set out in the Department for Transport community Rail Development Strategy 2018

The aims and objectives can only be changed at a steering group meeting with stakeholders.

### **3. The Partnership Area**

The Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership covers the rail services between Watford and St Albans. The communities of Watford, Watford North, Garston, How Wood, Park Street, Bricket Wood and St Albans form the core partnership area.

### **4. The Partnership**

1. Membership of the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership is open to any local or regional organisation with an interest in furthering the aims and objectives of the Partnership such as local schools and colleges, environmental groups, rail user groups, chambers of commerce and trade, BIDs, tourism organisations, local resident associations, county, district and parish authorities and relevant train operating companies. Individuals with a local community-focus can also apply for membership. In addition, one member of our station adoption groups / volunteers may be stakeholder members to represent the interests of our volunteers.
2. Membership shall be made by application to the partnership.

3. The Members are shown in the Appendix to this term of reference which consists of both Steering Group members and Stakeholder Group members.
4. The Partnership may nominate a President and Vice-president who will occupy a nominal role only within the Partnership. Those nominated must be persons with a substantial commitment to the line and the surrounding communities, with a distinguished record of community service.
5. A consensus approach shall be taken in the work of the steering group and only in exceptional circumstances shall decision making be other than by general agreement. In such circumstances, a two-thirds majority vote of those present at a steering group meeting shall be required.
6. The Partnership may execute its functions through:
  - a. A Steering Group to provide direction and specify the projects to be undertaken
  - b. Project Groups to execute the projects specified by the Steering Group
  - c. A dedicated Community Rail Officer to carry out the day-to-day responsibilities of the Partnership.

## **5. The Steering Group**

1. The strategic direction of the Partnership will be provided by a Steering Group comprising of any independent members and one representative nominated from the stakeholder group organisations. Individuals and organisations must provide substantive financial or in-kind resources to the Partnership and fully support and promote the aims and objectives of the Partnership. They must also commit to attending and contributing to meetings as required. Examples of in-kind resources are listed in the Appendix.
2. The Steering Group shall:
  - Draw up and agree an Activity Plan specifying projects which fulfil the agreed aims and objectives of the Partnership
  - Prioritise the projects set out in the Activity Plan
  - Lead practical developments and implementation of projects, by identifying funding opportunities and partners.
  - Monitor the progress of projects and ensure they are completed within the agreed timescale
  - Evaluate and measure the success of projects
3. Decisions shall be made by the Steering Group on the basis of a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

#### 4. Election of officers

- a. The Steering Group shall elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair from the partnership.
- b. Any Chair and Vice-Chair shall not serve more than three consecutive years in these positions.
- c. Each Steering Group member (individual or for the organisation they represent) has one vote.
- d. The secretarial role shall be undertaken by the Community Rail Partnership Officer.
- e. New members of the Steering Group shall be approved at any Steering Group meeting during the year and announced to the Partnership

#### 5. Membership of the Steering Group

- a. Membership to the Steering Group will be made via invitation / recommendation by existing Steering Group members and will be from members of the Partnership and Stakeholders. Aspiring members will need to meet the criteria as set out in point 5 of this Terms of Reference.
- b. Representatives from the following organisations may attend Steering Group meetings when invited as their presence at these meetings are deemed as necessary to help with the activity and work plan of the partnership, Network Rail, Community Rail Network, Department for Transport and British Transport Police. They will be invited to attend as non-voting members.

#### 6. The Partnership Officer

1. The Partnership shall appoint a suitably qualified, paid CRP Officer to lead the day-to-day functions of the Partnership, the Steering Group and volunteers.
2. The responsibilities of the CRP Officer shall be defined by the Steering Group, in conjunction with the Partnership. They will include the development and implementation of Activity Plans, promotions, events and projects.
3. The CRP Officer will be an employee of the host organisation, who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the post.

#### 7. Meetings

1. There shall be at least three Steering Group meetings a year, as follows. Not less than 7 days' written notice shall be given of meetings. The notice shall set out the business to be considered.
  - a. Meetings of the Steering group and Stakeholders of the partnership (suggested for February, May, September and November).
2. The Steering Group Annual General Meeting to be held in the second quarter of the year (April to June).
3. In addition, an 'Open day' to attract new stakeholders may be held if required and agreed by the Steering Group (August or September. To be held instead of a fourth Steering Group Meeting).
4. Meetings will be led by the Chair, or in his/her absence, the Vice-Chair if present. In the absence of the Vice-Chair, the meeting shall be chaired by one of the other members of the Steering Group who is present and elected to chair that meeting.
5. Only the Steering Group shall have the power to amend the Terms of Reference. One months' notice shall be given in writing to the CRP Officer of any proposed change.
6. Special General Meeting
  - a. A Special General Meeting shall have all the powers of the Annual General Meeting for all members of the steering group and the stakeholders.
  - b. A Special General Meeting shall be called if two-thirds of the Partnership members entitled to vote at a Partnership meeting decide it.
  - c. A Special General Meeting shall be called within six weeks of a valid request.
7. Voting at meetings
  - a. At all full meetings of the Steering Group, each member (individual or organisation representative) shall have a maximum of one vote.
  - b. At all full meetings of the Steering Group and Stakeholders, each member (individual or organisation representative) shall have a maximum of one vote.
  - c. Decisions shall be taken on the basis of a simple majority vote, except where specified otherwise in this Terms of Reference.
  - d. The Partnership Officer and representatives from Community Rail Network and from Network Rail, British Transport Police and Department for Transport shall be non-voting members of the Steering Group.

## **8. Principles of Behaviour**

1. The Partnership shall abide by the principle of equal access and equal opportunity for all.
2. Every member of the Partnership, whether a corporate body or individual, shall be accorded the same degree of respect and consideration by all other members. Behaviour contrary to this, in particular that which causes offence on grounds of race, gender, disability of age, shall be deemed suitable grounds for expulsion from membership.
3. Whilst wishing to encourage local business development, it would be contrary to the spirit of the Partnership for one business to seek advantage over another through membership of the Partnership.
4. To abide by the Code of Conduct as set out in the attached Appendix.
5. Non-attendance of meetings. Members of the Steering Group must endeavour to attend meetings as scheduled. The named representative for member organisations must endeavour to send a proxy from their organisation if they are unable to do so.
6. Absence at two consecutive Steering Group meetings and/or three meetings (including the AGM) in a calendar year with no explanation may result in the Steering Group member losing their seat on the Steering Group.
7. Steering Group members who are asked to step down due to non-attendance, are still required to fully uphold their obligations to the Partnership whether it be financial or in-kind contributions as pledged.
8. Steering Group members are expected to show full commitment and contribute positively towards developing the aims of the CRP and supporting its work by attending Partnership meetings and events whenever possible.

## **9. Subsidiary Operations and Charitable Status**

1. The Partnership may seek charitable status if its members agree. It may also take part in commercial activities in accordance with its aims and objectives and may need to consider the establishment of trading subsidiaries if this is the case. These shall not be allowed to compromise any of the restrictions on trading that may apply to individual members of the Partnership.

## **10. Media Relations**

1. All communication with the media, including press and social media, must be with the agreement of the Chair and CRP Officer unless it is to promote particular events and projects as agreed by the Steering Group.

## **11. Assistance from Other Organisations**

1. The Partnership may call upon assistance and advice from other bodies - such as the Community Rail governing body, currently Community Rail Network or other supporting bodies in the industry in carrying out its normal activities. This participation may include attendance at Stakeholder, Steering Group, Open Day or Project Team meetings, as necessary.

## **12. Finance**

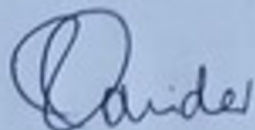
1. The Host Organisation shall act as the fund holder for the Partnership, setting up a specific account for that purpose within its financial structure. Contributions from other partners will be held in that account, and a statement of the current balance and the transactions undertaken on behalf of the Partnership each year shall be presented for the approval at the Annual General Meeting.
2. The Partnership is not a grant-giving body and will not grant money from its funds to Stakeholders, Steering Group members / organisations for their own project, events or work programmes.
3. The Partnership may part-fund projects, events or programmes when working in partnership with a Steering Group organisation or Stakeholder that promotes the aims and objectives or as part of the Activity Plan as agreed.
4. The Partnership may invite independent auditors / from the host organisation to audit the Partnerships' account.
5. The procurement of goods and services on behalf of the Partnership shall be in accordance with the host's own regulations and practices.
6. The Partnership may decide at some time in the future to establish itself as an accountable body, in which case a review of the financial arrangements will be necessary.

## **13. Dissolution**

1. A decision to suspend or disband the Partnership shall only be taken at an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting and shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and eligible to vote and which will also include a representative from Hertfordshire County Council as current hosts.
2. Prior to any dissolution decision a financial assessment will be undertaken regarding creditors, debtors, membership fees and donations. All current contracts, letters of offer and service level agreements will be reviewed to ensure no money will have to be paid back for failure to complete any outstanding work. All grant funding terms and conditions will be reviewed to ensure the organisation is compliant in disposing of any funded assets and in repaying any required elements of funding back to each funding body.

3. After satisfying any debts and liabilities any remaining assets will be allowed to remain in situ for the benefit of rail travellers (subject to agreement with the franchise holders) or will be given or transferred to another similar institution/public body.
4. All records and databases will be reviewed by the group prior to dissolution and a retention schedule drawn up for any funding records. Any sensitive/un-needed data will be destroyed by agreement of the group.

Approved by the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership Steering Group on: 20th May 2026



STEVE CONINDER

CHAIR - ALCRP