

Historic Bury St Edmunds rail station building restored to former glory

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The old station master's house at Bury St Edmunds rail station has a brighter future after extensive restoration works were carried out by train operator, Greater Anglia.

The company has invested £400,000 in the scheme with a further £192,000 funding being provided by the Railway Heritage Trust to give the Victorian structure a new lease of life.

Since 2019, contractors have worked to reinstate the roof, doors and windows and repair fractured brickwork on the Grade II listed building, which is adjacent to the main rail station.

The building was originally the Station Master's House and was built in around 1847. At some point in its history it also operated as the station hotel and then, after an extensive refurbishment it opened as The Great Eastern Bar, restaurant and nightclub in 1991 before closing again in 1995.

The building has since stood empty, slowly deteriorating due to the effects of the weather, pigeon infestation and vandalism.

Greater Anglia's Asset Management Director, Simone Bailey, said: "We are very grateful to the Railway Heritage Trust for their help and support in restoring this beautiful grade II listed station, to conserve its unique features for future generations to enjoy and to protect the building, making it fit for use in the 21st Century."

Andy Savage, Executive Director of the Railway Heritage Trust, stated: "The RHT is delighted that Greater Anglia has taken on the restoration of this building, and we are very happy to give a grant towards that work.

"We had previously sponsored work on the building in the 1980s and were very disappointed that previous operators of the station had allowed it to deteriorate so much.

"We congratulate Greater Anglia on its responsible attitude to its heritage and look forward to seeing a tenant and the building back in use in due course."

West Suffolk Council and the Bury Town Trust worked alongside Greater Anglia making the case for investment in salvaging the Grade II listed Station Master's House.

Cllr Susan Glossop, Cabinet Member for Growth at West Suffolk Council, said: "The station is an important gateway to the town and prior to COVID-19, we had been seeing increased use and in the long term we expect that to continue.

"That is why this investment is so important and one which we very much welcome.

"It preserves this Grade II listed piece of our heritage, improves the station area and supports the wider work of the town centre masterplan.

"We will work to assist Greater Anglia in finding new tenants for the building and look forward to more improvements to include the new north side station entrance."

The rail station itself was restored in 2016 thanks to a £1 million restoration programme which saw Greater Anglia restore and repair brickwork across the entire station, fix decades of damage caused by leaks, replaced 100m of canopy fascia and carried out some platform adjustments with new surfacing and copers.

The station, once named Bury St Edmunds Northgate, now has just two platforms serving the Ipswich – Cambridge line. Originally, it had two more central tracks for services to Thetford and Long Melford with a covered roof spanning all four platforms.

Last year, Greater Anglia secured Access for All funding – a Government funding programme for schemes to improve station access – for Bury St Edmunds station.

This means that a new accessible entrance can be built on the north side of the station, linking the newly-built car park with the station concourse.

Photo credit: Greater Anglia - old station master's house at Bury St Edmunds rail station