

Kent Community Rail Partnership



Annual Report

September 2018 - August 2019





Chris Fribbins - Chair
Kent Community Rail Partnership

Kent Community Rail Partnership (KCRP) aims to help local communities support their local lines and look for opportunities for events and actions to improve them. This has been a further successful year with a full programme of KCRP projects, activities, events and meetings.

Our educational involvement has concentrated on two groups of 16-19 year olds this year:

Five Acre Wood School is situated near Snodland station on the Medway Valley Line it is an outstanding District Special School for children and young people with Profound, Severe and Complex Learning Difficulties, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder. They are making improvements to landscaping, ongoing maintenance at Snodland Station and are receiving train travel training.

Sheppey College students on the Swale Rail line are looking into improvements at all stations on the line including designing and displaying information posters, planting and adding seating. Opportunities for train travel training and work experience have been provided. Five Acre Wood is in the process of adopting Snodland station and Sheppey College are adopting all five stations on the Swale Rail line. Both projects are supported by ACORP through the Community Rail Development Fund.

Additionally the KCRP team and volunteers have been busy running events which bring people together and provide a voice for the community, promote sustainable, healthy and accessible travel, support diversity and inclusion and social and economic development. Events we have been involved with or facilitated are summarised in the report.

At the national ACoRP Awards KCRP have continued to be recognised nationally, being nominated in a number of categories and winning first prize for a Community Art Project Promoting Safer Rail Travel with Bradfields Academy and British Transport Police. We are very pleased to have been nominated for a three awards for this year, in the following categories:

- **Involving Diverse Groups – Five Acre Wood Project**
- **Best Community Engagement Project – Sea Folk Sing on the Train**
- **Best Photo - The Santa Train photo**

We experienced an injection of new staff during August with Andy Place joining us as Engagement Officer and Helen Kellar joining us as Delivery Coordinator which brings the team back up to its full compliment. There have been changes in community representation within the Partnership; myself becoming Chair of Kent CRP and James Willis becoming Chair of the Medway Valley Line. These changes provide an exciting opportunity for new ideas. I'd like to thank the outgoing staff for their commitment to Kent CRP. Despite these changes and the uncertainty around the future franchise arrangements the team have developed a new Action Plan and continue to deliver activities to promote our key aims and objectives.

We would express our thanks to Southeastern, the current franchise holder, for their continued financial and operational support throughout their franchise period and the extensions. The support of Southeastern, Kent County Council, other authorities and especially individuals have helped. Matt Fraser, from Southeastern, is always on hand to help and without him many events may not have happened or at least run as smooth as they did.

The DfT are now looking to establish a new base for Community Rail in the UK. Previously lines were designated on a line by line basis including criteria excluding mainline services to London. This led to the Medway Valley Line being designated, but the Swale Rail Line not, although now both lines include a Service to London in the mid-week peak periods. The previous designation process has been replaced by a new accreditation process managed for the DfT by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP). KCRP will be applying for accreditation during Spring 2020 and if successful this will give KCRP access to additional national support and funding.

What is Kent Community Rail Partnership?

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) encourage local communities to support their local railway lines and stations. There are approximately 65 CRPs across the country and the number is continuously growing. CRPs are comprised of railway operators, local authorities including; county, district, borough and parish councils, schools, colleges, businesses, rail user groups, community organisations and volunteers. CRPs deliver a wide variety of projects to fulfil the needs of the local community whilst recognising the need to provide a voice for their communities, promote sustainable, healthy and accessible travel whilst supporting diversity and inclusion and social and economic development.

Kent Community Rail Partnership (Kent CRP) was established in 2003 and works within a 5 mile radius of each of its 19 stations along the Medway Valley Line (MVL) and Swale Rail Line (SRL) see map on front cover. Both Line activities are overseen by a Steering Group which is chaired by Chris Fribbins and meets quarterly at County Hall. Each line has its own partnership meeting, the MVL meeting is chaired by James Willis and the SRL is chaired by Linda Brinklow, line meetings take place 3 times a year. The Partnership could not operate without the collaboration of the members, who dedicate many hours to support our work for which we are extremely grateful. Kent CRP has been hosted by the charity Sustrans since April 2014, chaired by Sue Murray and meets quarterly at County Hall.

Kent Community Rail Partnership supports 2 railway lines;

1. The Medway Valley Line (MVL) which runs alongside the beautiful river Medway connecting Tonbridge and Strood via Maidstone, the County Town of Kent and has 14 stations.
2. The Swale Rail Line (SRL) which runs from Sittingbourne to Sheerness connecting the Isle of Sheppey with the rest of Kent and has 5 stations.

Financial Report and Funding

Kent CRP is grateful for the majority of its funding via grants from Kent County Council, Medway Council and Southeastern Railway. It is also thankful for Borough and Parish Council funding which is diminishing year on year due to central funding cuts however, every penny received is carefully spent to benefit our communities. Kent CRP has been successful in attracting grants and match funding from elsewhere including Swale Borough Council and ACoRP for specific projects and events enabling the completion of a comprehensive programme of projects and events this year.

Financial notes: Income £10,741 in additional income had been received which was not forecast, due to £9,942 received from Southeastern in advance for period April – June 2019, plus some additional income from Boroughs and Parishes. £15,254 was carried forward from 2017/18. Expenditure underspend is partly due to the lower than forecast staff costs and associated overheads. This is mainly as a result of the original Engagement Officer deciding not to return from a career break – the revised 18/19 budget accommodated an uplift from one Officer to two for a short period. Due to uncertainties with the franchise renewal it was decided not to recruit a new, third, member of staff until the new franchise, and subsequent funding, is formally announced. The project continues to operate with 1.4 officer FTE. Also, reduced costs are due to savings and efficiencies in printed materials and event costs.

Core Funding & other income	ACTUAL	BUDGET	BALANCE
Kent County Council	£16,000	£16,000	
South Eastern Rail income	£52,646	£42,704	
Parish Council & other local grant income	£1,325	£775	
Medway Borough Council Income	£6,000	£6,000	
Income from Events	£250	£0	
Abellio & ACoRP grants	£0	£0	
Carry forward from 2017/18	£15,254	£15,255	
Total income	£91,475	£80,734	£10,741
Expenditure	ACTUAL	BUDGET	BALANCE
Staff costs & overheads	£59,872	£70,832	
Events & Marketing	£3,362	£7,800	
ACoRP Awards Glasgow	£263	£1,000	
Volunteer Expenses	£212	£300	
Office Admin	£1,205	£802	
Total expenditure	£64,914	£80,734	-£15,820
Deferred into 2019/2020	£26,561	£0	

Review of Events, Projects & Activities 2018-2019

The events, projects and activities have been listed under the 4 Pillars of Community Rail:

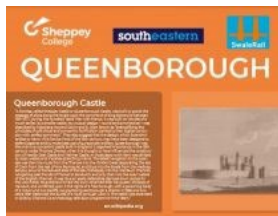
1. Providing a voice for the community

The voice of our communities was heard through the following:

- National Association of Community Rail Partnership (ACoRP) Awards 2018 - First place for Community Art Scheme category for BTP text number poster campaign in conjunction with Bradfield School.
- Sheppey College students (16-18 year olds) surveyed passengers on the platforms for views of how they would improve travel experiences. These students have adopted the 5 stations on the Swale Rail Line and are implementing the improvements gathered in the surveys including building additional platform seating, planters and artwork they have also produced platform posters, an information website and video informing passengers of local attractions and activities within each of the station areas. Tutors and students also plan to join the SRL Partnership and by attending the meeting will further raise the voice of the community.
- Five Acre Wood (Snodland) students (16-19 year olds) have planned and developed Snodland station garden, they adopted this station and will be further improving it by developing waste land into an allotment. A tutor and student are members of the MVL Partnership bringing the community voice to meetings.
- Surveys on the SRL highlighted safety concerns of passengers when travelling by train. During Rail Safety Week 400 ticket wallets detailing the BTWP non-emergency text number were given to passengers with an explanation of its use at Sittingbourne station.
- The number of station adoptions this year has increased from 2 to 8.



First place ACoRP award



Poster by Sheppey College Students



Five Acre Woods student garden



Rail safety week



Maidstone West station garden

2. Providing sustainable, healthy and accessible travel

Sustainable, healthy and accessible travel has increased across the lines by:

- Delivering group travel training sessions for students of Sheppey College. Over 200 16-18 year olds have enjoyed these sessions and for most it was the first time they had travelled on a train. It is hoped that some will have increased employment opportunities if they feel confident to travel across or off the Island for work.
- Delivering group travel training sessions for students (16-19 year olds) of Five Acre Wood School some of whom have severe learning difficulties. It is hoped that some of these students may be able to advance to travel independently to access further education or employment.
- Pop-ups at businesses and school places to promote train and active travel (cycling and walking). This year particular focus has been given to cycle, train, cycle journeys and the smoothie bike has proved very popular.
- Cycle, ride, cycle family bike ride. Fourteen participants met at Tonbridge (most travelling by train) for the relaxing ride to Penshurst Place where lunch was enjoyed before returning to Tonbridge station for train rides home. This is a 12 mile, mostly off road cycle ride.
- The publication of 4 seasonal newsletters to encourage train travel and to share the work of Kent CRP.
- Further expansion of social media via; Facebook has 313 followers, Twitter has 438 followers, new website with many updated pages and a growing data base of over 350.



Isle of Sheppey smoothie bike pop-up



Maidstone CycleFest 2018



Pop-up Southern Water



Pop-up Sheppey College



Family Bike Ride

3. Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion

Kent CRP continues to increase community involvement by:

- Facilitating the 2 active community rail partnership groups who each meet 3 times a year – The Medway Valley Line Partnership and The Swale Rail Line Partnership. Members are drawn from the communities served to generate the work of Kent CRP.
- On Sat 10 and Sun 11 Nov 2018, Sea Folk Sing, an over 55's choir performed reconciliation pieces to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ending of WW1. The 35 strong choir was formed to help combat isolation and loneliness. The choir sang at Strood Station on the Sat and at various stations and on the trains along the SRL on the Sun. Around 400 passengers enjoyed these moving events.
- Fourteen Maidstone Rotary volunteers planted purple crocus bulbs at Maidstone Barracks Station, the bulbs will not only enhance the station but will also raise awareness of the aim to eradicate polio across the world which is one of the Rotarians key objectives. Envelopes of bulbs, packed by a Maidstone women's refuge were also available to purchase on the day in order to help fund polio vaccinations and the women's refuge is financially supported via the packing of the bulbs. The significance of the purple bulb is that the finger nail of those vaccinated is painted with the colour purple to distinguish them from those still to be vaccinated.
- Continuation of the prestigious Volunteer of the Year Award at the Stakeholder meeting. This year it was presented to Matt Fraser by Sue Murray (Ex Chair) for his considerable support to Kent CRP's community. Matt was not only Santa aboard our Santa Train, he also undertook cycle ride leader training with officers and supported the family cycle ride to Penshurst Place, he helped facilitate the crocus bulb planting in conjunction with the Rotary Club and participated in the MVL station audits.



Sea Folk sing at Strood station (MVL line)



Sea Folk singing at Sittingbourne station (SRL)



Rotary Club crocus bulb planting at Maidstone Barracks



Volunteer of the year Matt Fraser

4. Supporting social and economic development

The social economic development of the areas within 5 miles of our stations was supported by:

- Arranging monthly events which promote awareness and tourism along the lines including the Santa Train. Approximately 80 passengers enjoyed visiting Santa on the train whilst enjoying craft activities, having their faces painted and being entertained by our fabulous balloon artist and Spiderman all whilst travelling along the 2 hour round trip from Maidstone West via Tonbridge and Strood.
- Participation in the annual ACoRP Community Rail in the City event. The engagement team was made up of Kent CRP officers, a Sustrans officer, Kent CRP volunteers, Network Rail volunteers and a Sustrans volunteer. The smoothie bike was set up at St Pancras Station, 142 surveys were completed and the cycle, rail, cycle journey was promoted into Kent for day trips and longer stays by the sharing or walking and cycle path information and tourist events across the county by providing leaflets and information bags.
- Arranging monthly events which promote awareness and tourism along the lines including the Santa Train. Approximately 80 passengers enjoyed visiting Santa on the train whilst enjoying craft activities, having their faces painted and being entertained by our fabulous balloon artist and Spiderman all whilst travelling along the 2 hour round trip from Maidstone West via Tonbridge and Strood.
- Undertaking our annual joint Tonbridge Tourism pop-up with Sussex CRP – Tonbridge station is where our two lines meet. Over 100 passengers were engaged in promoting tourism and active travel across the county. Information bags and leaflets relevant to passenger's interests were provided.
- Collaboratively working with Visit Kent, Produced in Kent, Locate in Kent and Explore Kent which has resulted in collaborative working opportunities.
- Developing working relationships with Planning Members and Officers to allow for timely engagement in consultation processes with particular interest in development plans where Kent CRP is able to positively impact on transport plans.



Santa on the Train event



Community Rail in the city - St Pancras



Tourism Pop-Up - Tonbridge

Increased Passenger Numbers on our Lines

This has been another good year with passenger numbers further increasing.

Passenger usage figures for the Medway Valley Line

southeastern

Station	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	Growth 2018 vs 2017
Strood	1,071,564	1,132,056	1,197,602	1,182,148	1,098,676	1,110,912	(5.3)%
Cuxton	51,124	42,512	40,808	41,578	39,854	45,140	20.3%
Halling	94,422	68,100	58,710	55,240	48,070	45,124	38.7%
Snodland	325,322	249,698	217,306	194,954	192,934	185,384	30.3%
New Hythe	161,968	124,612	115,314	115,906	90,614	89,712	30.0%
Aylesford	144,792	122,554	115,314	115,906	112,666	107,356	18.1%
Maidstone Barracks	281,524	271,710	266,522	270,645	266,938	267,765	3.6%
Maidstone West	877,164	846,586	830,421	843,268	831,718	834,293	3.6%
East Farleigh	35,772	33,162	31,604	29,312	27,580	29,794	7.9%
Wateringbury	55,808	48,084	47,302	47,976	49,796	50,472	16.1%
Yalding	29,160	25,544	23,600	21,604	22,542	24,086	14.2%
Beltring	15,074	15,074	11,314	13,502	11,890	13,152	33.2%
Paddock Wood	1,181,218	1,174,732	1,152,514	1,147,648	1,103,546	1,129,994	0.6%
Tonbridge	4,391,184	4,414,394	4,337,310	4,207,328	4,052,722	4,100,552	(0.5)%

Data Source: ORR Station Data

Passenger usage figures for the Swale Line

southeastern

Station	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	Growth 2018 vs 2017
Sheerness-On-Sea	449,590	432,798	403,538	395,970	390,136	411,480	3.9%
Queensborough	175,994	153,166	123,064	118,204	119,210	120,008	14.9%
Swale	4,740	4,458	3,916	5,026	3,792	3,372	6.3%
Kemsley	163,438	148,188	145,748	140,950	129,438	124,688	10.3%
Sittingbourne	2,223,636	2,164,064	2,111,046	2,063,382	1,965,579	1,949,484	2.8%

Data Source: ORR Station Data

The MVL passenger numbers have increased by 15.06% and the SRL passenger numbers have increased by 7.64% this is an average of 11.35% across our two lines.

Be Part Of Our Future

Whether you are an individual, a group, an institution or a business, we can offer a range of opportunities to become involved whether it be work experience, station adoption, help plan an event, create a piece of artwork to be displayed at one of our stations or maybe you're a social media whizz, whatever your favourite activities we would be interested in hearing from you, email kent.crp@sustrans.org.uk or visit our website <http://kentcrp.org/get-involved>.

Funders and Partners

Kent CRP is very grateful to its Funders and Partners, without their continued support we would be unable to bring new life to our secondary lines on Kent's Rail Network and thus secure their future.

Funders

- Barming Parish Council
- East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council
- Queensborough Town Council
- Snodland Town Council
- RailFuture (London and SE)
- Yalding and Beltring Parish Council



Partners

- Aylesford Parish Council
- British Transport Police
- Cuxton Parish Council
- East Farleigh Parish Council
- Explore Kent
- Halling Parish Council
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Minster-on-Sea Parish Council
- Nettlestead Parish Council
- Network Rail
- North Kent Rail User Group
- Nu-Venture
- Paddock Wood Town Council
- Passenger Focus
- Promote Kent
- Swale Borough Council
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Tonbridge Town Team

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Medway Valley Line - Chair : James Willis

Swale Rail Line - Chair: Linda Brinklow
Vice Chair: Jonathan Fryer

 **Website:** www.kentcrp.org.uk  **Twitter:** @kentcrp1

 **Kent Community Rail Partnership**



Kent CRP is hosted by Sustrans  **sustrans**
JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Kent Community Rail Partnership , Maidstone West Station, Station Approach, The Broadway, Maidstone Kent, ME16 8RJ

