

# Kent Community Rail Partnership Annual Report 2016 – 2017



Since our last Stakeholder Meeting in April 2016 there have been some changes to our line up – we said “goodbye” to Alexis in the July and “hello” to Linda Bell in the September. We also said “goodbye” to Mike Fitzgerald, the instigator of Kent Community Rail Partnership (KCRP) who stood down after 12 years as its Chairman. We have also said a temporary “goodbye” to Guy Schofield who has been seconded for twelve months from August 2017 by Sustrans to be Project Director of the National Cycle Network, a terrific feather in his cap, but we will miss him.

We encountered some criticism that our Annual Meeting was out of step with the production of yearly accounts, so instead of holding our Stakeholder meeting in March, we took the decision to defer this year’s meeting until September, so all future Annual Meetings will be in the September on a twelve monthly cycle.

I am pleased to say that both Medway Valley Line (MVL) and SwaleRail (SW) have increased the number of passengers they carry. We have sought from users of both lines what improvements they would like to see when the new franchise is awarded and to this end we have supplied the four bidders and the Department for Transport with our realistic ‘wish list’ together with our Strategy and Action Plans.

We have held many events over the past 18 months, all of them well attended. Our schools project under the very capable hand of Sarah Deakin has gone from strength to strength and is becoming embedded in a number of primary and secondary schools covered by KCRP. Last November in commemoration of WWI centenary, SwaleRail headed the major event of the year with the re-enactment of an Ambulance Train collecting wounded sailors and soldiers landed at Queenborough and Sheerness-on-Sea. It was the first time a Javelin train had been seen on the SwaleRail line and prompted a flurry of excitement with all 350 seats on it “booked” well in advance. Altogether our work this year has enabled us to engage with over 7,150 people.

A new initiative by Guy Schofield provided two “firsts” for us. Guy successfully negotiated with Ebbsfleet to hold a Farmers’ Market one Friday last March, a long but profitable day for all concerned. In May, Community Rail in the City took place at no less a venue than St Pancras International Station. Both experiences were positive ones and we hope they can be repeated, although we should perhaps act as facilitators with regard to Farmers’ Market initiatives as they are labour intensive. For more details of these and many other events which we hosted this year consult our latest newsletter which will be available at the same time as this report.



With the amount of new build projected for communities on or near our lines, it is important that we make comment on Local Plans and planning applications to promote the use of trains, buses, cycling and walking. To this end, we need to engage with relevant officers of the Local Planning Authorities (KCC, Medway, Swale BC, Tonbridge & Malling BC, Maidstone BC and Tunbridge Wells BC). We have met with some developers to flag up to their new residents about alternatives to the car; our highways being pretty much clogged up - so much better to allow the train to take the strain!

We have drawn up a five year strategy that involves the possibility of extending our interests along the east coast of our County, from Faversham down to Dover and soundings are currently being taken as to how welcome this expansion would be. Initial reaction is very positive.

We have very many volunteers without whom our Community Partnership would not survive and I would like to give them an especial thank you for the hours they put in to make our events “work”, adoption of their stations, attending meetings and so on. This year our volunteers gave at least 850 hours of their time. Mike Fitzgerald has provided a shield to be awarded on an annual basis to ‘The Volunteer of the Year’ and this will be awarded later this afternoon.

Funding is always an issue and will no doubt continue to be so. I am very grateful to those who do provide us with grants to enable our work to continue and close by reflecting on a very busy but totally rewarding eighteen months.

**Sue Murray, Chairman**  
25 July 2017

# Strategy – updated for 2017-22

As mentioned in the Chairman's report, we have reviewed and updated our strategy, which is now more closely allied to the Department for Transport (DfT) and Association for Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) strategic objectives.

## Key Strategic Aims for KCRP

By developing strong partnerships with schools, workplaces, communities and local stakeholders, Kent Community Rail Partnership promotes two local rail lines, delivering passenger growth and improvements to rail services and station environments. We take the railway out into the community, engaging new users; helping them choose rail and active travel for more journeys.

### 1. We will deliver growth by

- Promoting transport connectivity and door to door journeys by increasing awareness of sustainable and active travel options for everyday journeys, linking the railway lines with local walking and cycling routes including the NCN.
- Using schools & other educational establishments as a conduit to enable young people and families to choose active and sustainable travel.
- Engaging with new audiences by taking the railway out into the community and promote the area as a tourist destination.
- Creating opportunities for them to improve the public realm by co-designing the station environment.
- Building partnerships with key stakeholders including planning authorities and using local partnerships to influence local planning decisions.
- Influencing communities to instigate another community rail line in Kent (e.g. Dover to Faversham).

### 2. We will contribute to cost savings by

- Encouraging the local communities to take pride in and care for their local station leading to a reduction in crime and vandalism.

### 3. We will increase community involvement by

- Enabling the communities along the lines to get involved in improving their local railway through station adoption.

### 4. We will support social & economic development by

- Supporting workplaces to enable their staff to choose active & sustainable travel for commuting and business journeys.
- Developing tourism along the lines by supporting local businesses to promote themselves as tourist destinations.
- Improving the diversity and inclusivity of the users of the railway.

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## Our Action Plan

Our priorities for the year are set out in our Action Plan which is approved and then reviewed regularly throughout the year by our Line Groups and Steering Group. Each year we also review our performance against the plan with the DfT (Department for Transport) and ACoRP (Association of Community Rail Partnerships) and we also share with them our objectives for the following year. Maintenance of our Dedicated Line Status (for the Medway Valley Line) is dependent upon satisfactory performance against the plan. This year's review took place in July and was successful.

All our projects fall under one of our high-level objectives which for this year included:

- |  |   |                                  |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 Promote use of rail by local residents, workplaces and visitors. | 4 Increase use of lines to access tourism and leisure facilities. | 6 Improve communication & growth |
| 2 Safety on Trains   | (Promote) more attractive and                                     | 7 Community development          |
| 3 Franchise Renewal preparation                                    | 5 safer station environment, facilities and trains                | 8 Volunteers                     |

# Recognition

It is always pleasing to have the Partnership's work recognised externally and this year again has been successful in this regard.

All six of our entries to the ACoRP Community Rail awards were nominated and the crowning moment was when Mike FitzGerald, our Chairman for over ten years, won first prize in the Outstanding Volunteer Contribution category and the first ever "Lifetime Achievement Award" at the national Community Rail Awards.

Sarah's initiative for transition training Year 6 pupils won the Abellio Community Rail Challenge 2016, securing £8,000 funding for the Smarter Travel Challenge.

Since then, Sarah Deakin's work with Schools has been recognised when she won the "Cycle Champion" award in the National Cycle Rail Awards 2016, presented by Rail Minister Paul Maynard.

Sarah was also asked to present her transition work for schools to other Rail Partnerships at the Designated Community Rail Lines event in Lincoln in March.

Finally, Sarah was nominated for the "Community Services", Pride of Medway Awards 2017.

# Financial report

Although we have lost a number of local authority funders due to central government funding cuts, we continue to be financially supported by many of the parish councils along our two lines. We also receive grants from Kent County Council, Medway Council and Southeastern Railway.

We have also been successful in attracting grants/match funding from others for specific projects and these monies have enabled us to carry out our programme of events and projects.

At times it has been very much a hand to mouth existence and during the course of the year, we did have to make one of our officers redundant due to lack of funds. Happily we have been able to re-employ the officer, albeit on less hours than before.

As you will see from the bottom line, we have been successful in being able to roll over approximately £7.5K, not a huge sum of money but sufficient to give us a small breathing space.

**Sue Murray, Chairman Kent CRP**  
23 August 2017

## Financial Statement for 2016/17 Financial Year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

	ACTUAL	Budget	Balance
<b>Core Funding &amp; other income</b>			
Kent County Council	£16,000	£16,000	
South Eastern Railway income	£35,692	£30,000	
Parish Council & other local grant income	£4,675	£2,600	
Medway Borough Council Income	£6,474	£6,273	
Income from events	£856		
Abellio & ACORP grants	£6,005	£8,000	
Carry forward from 2015-16	£6,415	£6,415	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£76,117</b>	<b>£69,288</b>	<b>£6,829</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Staff costs & overheads	£61,872	£63,999	
Events & Marketing	£5,834	£4,500	
Volunteer Expenses	£309	£246	
Office Admin	£569	£543	
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£68,584</b>	<b>£69,288</b>	<b>-£704</b>
<b>Deferred into 2017/18</b>	<b>£7,533</b>		

Kent CRP funding is derived from across our Partnership and we gratefully acknowledge the funding received.

This enables us to fund our fantastic staff, who manage the line groups, deliver our range of exciting events and engage with the communities, workplaces and schools along the rail lines in order to help them choose rail and active travel for more journeys.

# The Smarter Travel Challenge for Schools

Last summer, we challenged primary school pupils to plan their own journeys to school using a new journey planning website called “Kent Connected”. Pupils visiting their new secondary school on their induction day were greeted by us in the school’s IT suite and were challenged to plan journeys from home to that school that were healthy and better for the environment, as part of the Smarter Journeys challenge.

The challenge was piloted with 120 Year 6 pupils at Holmesdale School. All pupils successfully completed the challenge with pupils planning journeys that increased walking by (15%), cycling (3%) and rail (5%) more than the national averages. Planned car use decreased by 17% compared to national averages.

Despite pupils planning to make journeys that were better for their health and the environment, it was found these plans were not always followed through when the pupils actually started at their new schools in September. One barrier to the challenge proved to be parental influence and so this summer we have additionally been incorporating travel advice at parents’ information evenings and have been

almost overwhelmed by the level of demand for information and number of questions, proving the value of this initiative! There is interest from other parts of the country, not least because of an excellent presentation by Sarah and Sue at a nationwide Designated Community Rail Partnership event in Lincoln.

This initiative was rolled out at Weald of Kent Grammar School, Aylesford Sports College, Mascalls Academy, Maidstone Grammar School for Girls and Holmesdale School with the help of a number of our volunteers.

This summer we will be expanding the challenge to a further four schools and are excited to see what results it will bring!

## Spreading the Word

Our new Website was launched in June this year. This now reflects our branding, is simpler to use and importantly is much easier for us to modify and update ourselves, saving time and the costs of paying external developers. The site is also much quicker as we have moved the hosting to a better infrastructure. Many thanks to our volunteer, Kevin Neale, for building the website, and to Linda Bell for preparing much of the content.

“Vic”, our new soft toy white horse and mascot will also help raise awareness and will be used in schools and at other events, including the Teddy Bear’s picnic at Whatman Park on the 1st July. Vic is short for In’Vic’Ta! He is already proving a hit with schoolchildren and with our Facebook and Twitter followers.

# Journey Figures

Last year we reported particularly high growth of 7% annual growth on both lines. That was followed by a period of reduction in passenger numbers for several months. Happily, growth has returned in the past few months with some of the highest average passenger numbers ever recorded.

For SwaleRail the latest moving annual average was 48,000, up from 46,000 a year ago. although this is still a long way short of the previous high level of 63,000 in 2009, but still a strong move in the right direction. Overall, the moving annual average number of passenger journeys on Medway Valley Line has risen back up to 88,000, up from 82,000 a year ago.

These figures are all the more encouraging in the context of continued challenges posed by the ongoing redevelopment of London Bridge and its impact on services.

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## Medway Valley Memo

As with SwaleRail, Medway Valley Line projects and plans are overseen in regular review meetings by its own Line Group, chaired by Sue Murray. The Partnership could not operate without the support of Line Group members, who dedicate many hours to support our work.

Some of the events on the Medway Valley Line this year included:

### Annual Medway Valley Line Walk

This took place on the "Farms & Downs" RailTrail around Snodland Station. This followed the cutting of a cake celebrating the 160th anniversary of the Medway Valley Line. There was a lot of focus on Snodland following the re-opening of the beautifully re-furbished station, which now boasts a re-opened ticket office, more car parking, cycle storage and bus stops as well as plants, a model Hogwarts Express and a wonderful mosaic by the students of Holmesdale Academy. The last three were all initiatives led by the Partnership.

### Yalding Halloween Event

An action-packed Spooky Fun day in an apple orchard for families, with special prizes for those who arrived by train.

### Wateringbury Fete

An excellent village fete which allowed us to promote both the Partnership and the exciting "Junction Arts" project which aims to create an artists' hub at the disused goods shed at Wateringbury station.

### Tonbridge Cycle Ride

Last July, a number of families embarked on the Tonbridge Family Cycle ride which set off from the station on the National Cycle Network traffic-free route to Penshurst.

Father Christmas uses the Medway Valley Line! This was the first, but by no means the last time that Santa visited Maidstone West station and welcomed many excited children to his grotto on Platform 2. Visitors also enjoyed Christmas songs by local schools and were able to make Christmas Crafts. Santa will have to find a new grotto next time because it has been taken over by a very welcome new coffee bar, operated by BeeZoo.



# Local Authorities and Parishes

A key part of our work is working with our many different stakeholders to identify, propose and promote improvements to station environments and surroundings, including integration of transport services, particularly in relation to the many new developments underway and planned in our region. We have held numerous meetings with parishes, Network Rail, Southeastern, town planners and councils, proposing enhanced access to stations, commenting on transport strategy and proposed developments on railway land. In turn we have noticed a marked increase in participation from local government at our steering and line meetings. The number of parish councils who support us financially has increased again this year which is much appreciated when our overall funding is under pressure as a result of national austerity measures. It is also strong evidence of our community engagement at the local level.

## SwaleRail Snippets

Projects and plans on SwaleRail are overseen in regular review meetings by the Line Group, which is attended by members representing local stakeholders. Linda Brinklow retired as Chair in April this year, after many years as a key supporter of Community Rail in Swale, committing many hours of her time creating and attending our events. Linda is succeeded by Mike Baldock who has done much to promote the Partnership locally. Mike also represents the line on the Partnership Steering Group. Many of the representatives are volunteers who give freely of their time.

### Sheerness Station Artwork

The second major event in Swale this year was the unveiling in March by local MP, Gordon Henderson, of a wonderful "Isle of Sheppey" sign which greets visitors at Sheerness station. Thanks to the initiative of Heather Thomas-Pugh, working in collaboration with Sarah Deakin of the CRP and Justin Aggett, Project & Arts Manager of Sheppey Matters, the sign was created by a dozen 16-24 year olds who were not in education, employment or training or had some form of disability.

### Ambulance Train Event

As featured in our current newsletter this was the main event for SwaleRail in the past year and was a huge success involving twenty local community groups who all came together for a memorable event last November to commemorate the vital role of Ambulance Trains in the first World War, transporting injured troops back from the front to hospitals and recuperation centres throughout the UK. In addition to exclusive use of a Poppy-branded Javelin High Speed train, events took place at Queenborough, Sittingbourne and Sheerness.

### Queen's 90th Birthday Celebration

Partners and volunteers also came together to support the Queen's 90th Birthday celebration event at Queenborough in June 2016.

# What is the Kent Community Rail Partnership?

The Kent CRP was established in 2003 to bring together interested parties in partnership with the aim of bringing new life to secondary lines on Kent's Rail Network and thus securing their future.

The Partnership improves the effectiveness of local railways and brings social, economic and environmental benefits to all those served by community rail services.

The CRP work focuses on promoting improvements to station environments and surroundings, seeking to improve integration of rail services with other means of sustainable transport, ensuring access

for all and promoting local rail lines and nearby attractions to local businesses and a wider public as a means to improve Health & Wellbeing and Tourism. We also work with schools to encourage young people to get into the habit of using the train. Crucially we seek to engage local communities in this work so that they see their local lines and stations as a core part of the life of their villages and towns,

placing a greater value on the benefits which they can obtain from their railway.

We are building relationships with other Rail Partnerships to identify and share best practices.

We currently concentrate on two railway lines, Sittingbourne to Sheerness (SwaleRail) and Strood to Tonbridge (Medway Valley Line).

## The Kent Community Rail Partnership is very grateful to its Funders and Partners for their continuing support

### FUNDERS

southeastern



Aylesford Parish Council  
Barming Parish Council  
Cuxton Parish Council  
East Farleigh  
East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council  
Minster-on-Sea Parish Council

Snodland Town Council  
Yalding & Beltring Parish Council  
Councillor Fay Gooch (Maidstone Borough)  
RailFuture  
Wateringbury Parish Council

### PARTNERS



British Transport Police  
Halling Parish Council  
Nettlestead Parish Council  
Paddock Wood Town Council,  
Queenborough Town Council.

Passenger Focus  
North Kent Rail Users Group  
Tonbridge Town Team

## Contact us

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The Kent Community Rail Partnership is hosted by the registered charity, Sustrans. The Kent Community Rail Partnership gratefully acknowledges financial support received from Southeastern Railway towards the production of this Annual Report. By working together we aim to encourage greater use of the Medway Valley and SwaleRail lines by local people and visitors and to improve station environments and facilities on offer.

### Steering Group

**Chair:** Sue Murray

**Vice-Chair:** Chris Fribbins

### Medway Valley Line

**Chair:** Sue Murray

**Vice-Chair:** Chris Fribbins

### Swaleraill Line

**Chair:** Mike Baldock

**Vice-Chair:** Jonathan Fryer

Website: [www.kentcrp.org.uk](http://www.kentcrp.org.uk)

Facebook page: **Kent Community Rail Partnership**

Twitter: **@kentcrp1**