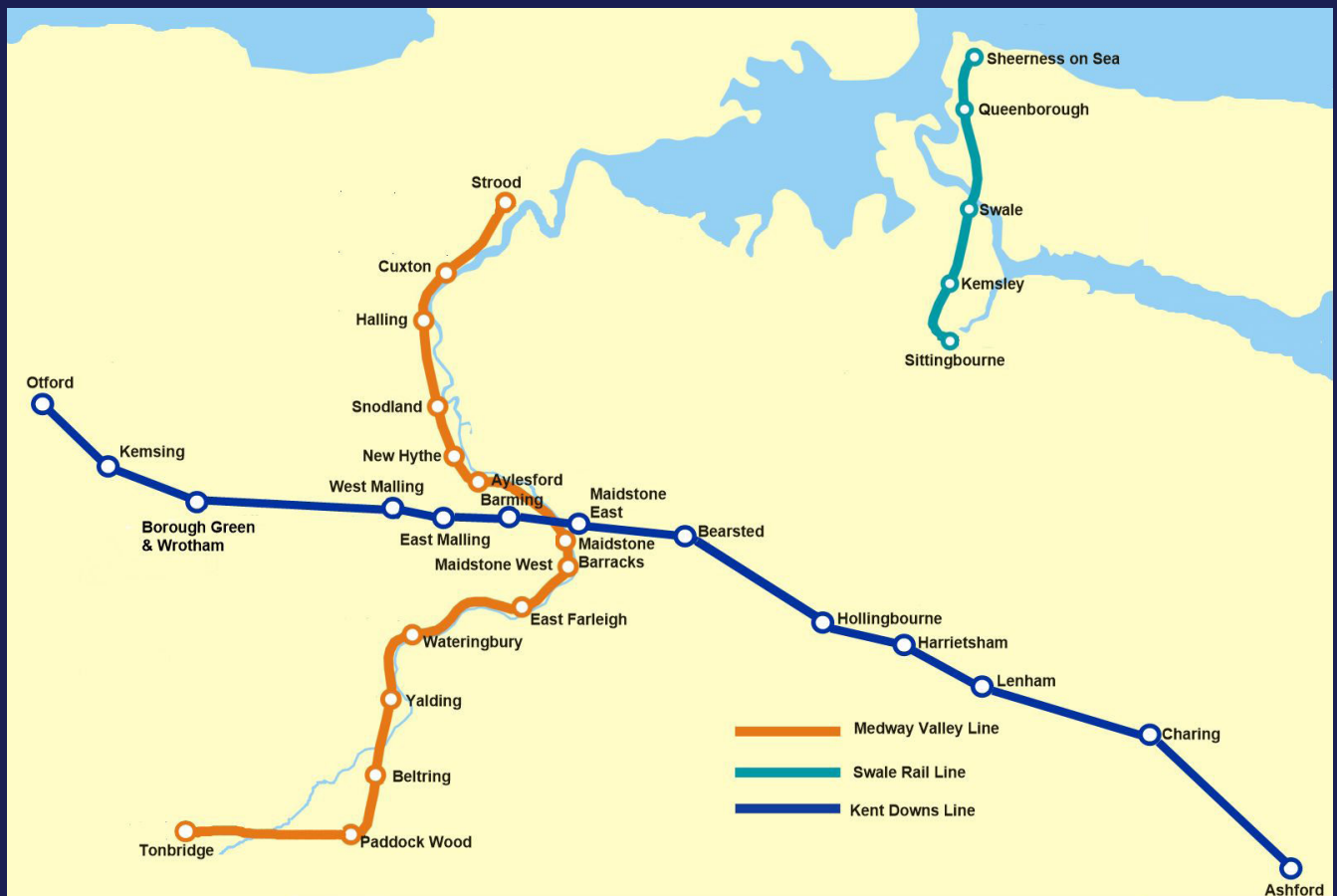




Kent Community Rail Partnership



Annual Report September 2019 - March 2021



Community Rail
Accredited Partnership

Community Rail Development Strategy

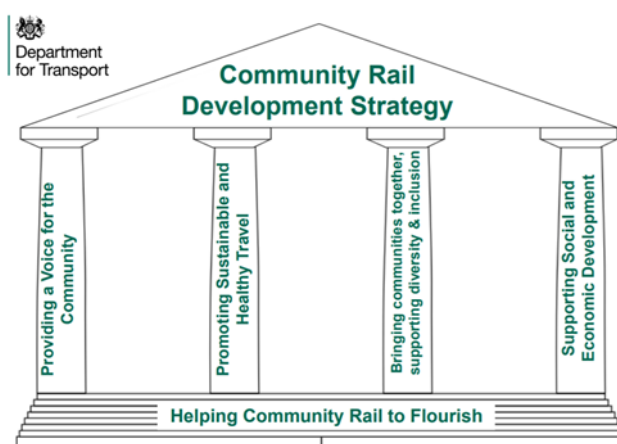
A short insight into Community Rail and its strategy

Community Rail focuses on connecting communities to the railways through local partnerships, groups, organisations, social enterprises and volunteers. The community rail concept initially developed from grassroots organisations, before being adopted as a government strategy in 2004 and supported more broadly by the rail industry. It plays a leading role in the government's vision for civil society (individuals and organisations that undertake activities whose primary purpose is to deliver social value and which are independent from state control).

On 16 Nov 2018 the DfT published an updated community rail development strategy, 'Connecting communities with the railways'. Partnership working is essential to the delivery of this strategy and so government works closely with Community Rail Network (CRN), train operators, Network Rail and others.

A report published by CRN in April 2019 revealed that a hidden army of 8,500 community rail volunteers give nearly 400,000 hours a year to bring local railway lines and stations back into the heart of their communities – promoting sustainable travel, empowering communities, and benefiting health, wellbeing and social inclusion. Community rail volunteering alone is calculated to be worth £33.2m annually, through work contributed to local stations and communities, and the social value to the volunteers themselves through improved health and wellbeing. Comparing data from a 2015 report Community Rail Partnerships have increased by over 50% to approximately 85 and station groups have more than doubled in number to well over 1,000 groups.

Jools Townsend, chief executive of CRN, said: "Community rail empowers local people to have a greater stake in their local railways and stations, and to access opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach, through sustainable and healthy means. There are now more than 1,000 community rail partnerships and groups across Britain, and thousands of volunteers benefitting their local communities. Our research shows not only that their numbers have grown, but that they are working with passion to help local people get the most from their railway lines and stations, and they are delivering all sorts of benefits. Community rail is playing a unique role, working at a grassroots level so more people can get around through sustainable travel, and helping people to connect with their locality and those around them."



The 4 community rail strategy pillars under which all Community Rail Partnerships plan their activities.

Chairman's Report



Chris Fribbins - Chair
Kent Community Rail Partnership

The previous Annual Report focused on the previous year's achievements and looked forward to even more in the coming year. Despite the major impact of the COVID virus and the implications for rail passengers and our own activities, I am pleased to report that the Kent Community Rail Partnership has continued to deliver and has been recognised locally and nationally. Despite limiting rail passenger travel to essential only and very few opportunities to meet face to face, much has been done and preparations for coming out of the restrictions are well advanced with an extensive Action Plan. During the 'lockdown' much has been done online and the line partnerships and the Steering Group have met using on-line tools. An additional challenge will be encouraging people back to rail and demonstrating how this can be undertaken safely.

Due to the change in the schedule for preparing the Annual Report, this covers the previous 18 months. In that time we have won 5 awards in the 2020 and 2021 Community Rail Network Awards - amongst stiff competition from Community Rail Partnerships across the UK, a major recognition of

the quality and quantity of deliverables from our Sustrans operational team and volunteers along our lines and especially the Sheppey College and Five Acre Wood School Snodland and Grow19 - activities that will have ongoing benefits to them, our communities and our rail users.

After the cancellation of the Franchise award competition, Southeastern were given a direct award to continue providing services on our lines. It became one of the shortest awards in history as only a day or so later, it was replaced by emergency measures contracts that took overall control back to the Department of Transport. It does limit the operator's flexibility but necessary in these uncertain times, however there was recognition of the role of community rail and a major expansion of those activities within the franchise area was sanctioned. As part of this expansion, Kent CRP was awarded funding for an additional line (Otford to Ashford, via Maidstone East), the "Kent Downs Line" (in July 2020) and enabled us to recruit a further part-time officer Gary Outram (November 2020). Despite not being able to meet face to face with local communities along our new line, it is being established with a lot of interest, and we look forward to an official line launch as soon as possible.

With the change from our previous designated line status for the Medway Valley Line, there has been the introduction of Accredited Community Rail Partnership covering all our lines. Our organisation was able to demonstrate it was fit for purpose and in April 2020 Accredited Community Line Partnership was awarded demonstrating sound governance, adherence to Community Rail principles, aims and objectives. This is an ongoing exercise and will be renewed annually. Individuals, community groups, parish, district, unitary and county councils are active members of our line groups and/or the umbrella steering group. New members are welcome to join us and have an active role as volunteers and representatives of their areas.

What is Kent Community Rail Partnership?

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) encourage communities to support their local railway lines and stations. There are approximately 80 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, station adoption groups, schools, colleges, businesses, rail user groups, community organisations and volunteers. CRPs deliver a wide variety of projects to fulfil the needs of the local communities, provide a voice for their communities and 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 31 stations along the Medway Valley Line (MVL), Kent Downs Line (KDL) and Swale Rail Line (SRL) see map on front cover. All three Lines activities are overseen by a Steering Group which is chaired by Chris Fribbins and meets quarterly. Each line has its own partnership meeting, the MVL meeting is chaired by James Willis, the KDL is chaired by James Lehane 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 its members, who dedicate many hours to support its work for which we are extremely grateful. Our members/volunteers dedicated approximately 753 hours to Kent CRP activities over the last 12 months for which we are extremely grateful. It is the Kent CRP members/volunteers with the support of the part-time Officers (2.3FTE) that achieve the considerable activity detailed within this report. Kent CRP has been hosted by the charity Sustrans since April 2014.

Accreditation

We are delighted to share that Kent CRP achieved accreditation on 23 March 2020. "Accreditation is the formal recognition by the DfT that a CRP operates to a high standard and that its objectives and activities are supported by Government. Accreditation should provide assurance to others, including potential funders and partners, that the CRP operates to high standards of governance and financial propriety; adopts a collaborative approach; is worthy of trust by others; and is a suitable entity for receiving public funds. Further Government considers it a good representative of the local community." DfT

Kent Community Rail Partnership supports 3 railway lines;

1. The Medway Valley Line (MVL) which runs alongside the beautiful river Medway connecting Tonbridge and Strood via Maidstone West and has 14 stations.

2. The Kent Downs Line (KDL) which runs along the breath taking North Downs connecting Ashford and Otford via Maidstone East and has 12 stations.

3. 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.



Train services on all three lines run trains directly to London and are operated by Southeastern Railway Ltd, part of the Govia consortium.

Financial Report and Funding

Kent CRP is extremely grateful for the continued funding support from Southeastern Railway, Kent County Council and Medway Council. It is also thankful for Borough and Parish Council funding which is carefully spent to benefit our communities. We have received donations in 2019 – 20 from the following:

- Snodland Town Council
- Watlington Parish Council
- Yalding Parish Council
- East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council
- Aylesford Parish Council

Kent CRP has been successful in attracting grants and match funding from elsewhere, we are particularly grateful to the Community Rail Network Development Fund, which has supported our Sheppey College and Five Acre Wood Snodland projects.

Financial notes:

£20,466 was carried forward to 2020/21. Expenditure underspend is partly due to the lower than forecast staff costs and associated overheads. For 2020-21 we have increased FTE with existing staff and recruited an additional officer to support our work along the Kent Downs Line. 2020-2021 Budget report will be available for our April Steering Group and subsequent line group meetings. A more detailed breakdown is circulated within quarterly reports.

Financial Statement for 2019/20

Core Funding & other income	ACTUAL	BUDGET	BALANCE
Kent County Council	£26,000	£26,000	
South Eastern Rail Income	£43,433	£43,078	
Parish Council & Grant Income	£1,800	£2,000	
Medway Borough Council Income	£6,000	£6,000	
Community Rail Network Grant Income	£2,160	£3,000	
Carried forward from 2018/19	£16,620	16,620	
Total income	£96,013	£96,698	- £685
Expenditure	ACTUAL	BUDGET	BALANCE
Staff Costs & Overheads	£67,723	£83,698	
Events & Marketing	£1,416	£5,500	
Materials Sheppey College Project	£1,872	£2,500	
Materials Five Acre Wood Project	£2,731	£2,500	
Community Rail Network Awards	£920	£600	
Volunteer Expenses	£623	£800	
Office Admin	£262	£1,100	
Total Expenditure	£75,547	£96,698	-£ 21,151
Deferred Into 2020/21	£20,466	-	

Review of events, projects and activities

The events, projects and activities have been listed under the 4 Pillars of DfT strategy for Community Rail, greater detail for these projects and activities can be found on our website.

1. Providing a voice for the community

- Community Rail Network Awards 2019 – Third place for ‘Creating a Community Event’ for the over 50’s Sea Folk Sing choir to celebrate the centenary of the end of the First World War, whilst, promoting train travel, engaging people in community rail, reducing social isolation and improving health and wellbeing. Third place for ‘Involving Diverse Groups’ category by providing students with special educational needs from Five Acre Wood Snodland opportunities to have a voice in their community, to promote social inclusion, cohesion, skills and mobility, and to improve their health and wellbeing through station adoption, travel training and line meeting membership.
- Community Rail Network Awards 2020 – First place for ‘Involving Children and Young People’ category by providing students at Sheppey College the opportunity to conduct passenger surveys at the 5 stations they have adopted, design posters and ‘Pop Art’, create a website and video to promote sustainable travel by rail and improve station environments by adding floral displays and building benches, planters, and bird boxes. Community Rail Network used this project for a ‘Looking to the future – an exploration of youth engagement in rail’ case study. Second place for ‘Photo Competition’ a photo of our Five Acre Wood students at Snodland station. Third place ‘Most Enhanced Station’ at Snodland by students of Five Acre Wood special school and Grow 19.
- Logo Competition - Via social media the wider community were invited to take part in 2 logo competitions one for our new Kent Downs Line and an overarching logo for Kent Community Rail Partnership. We received over 60 entrants across these 2 logo competitions.
- Andy and Therese presented the implementation and outcome details of Kent CRP community projects to other CRP’s at the Autumn Community Rail Network Seminar to share best practice.
- Our action planning process seeks projects and activities from our members, the members then vote to determine which projects and activities are undertaken throughout the year.



Community Rail Award 2019



Community Rail Award 2020



Community Rail Award 2020



Community Rail Award 2020



Sheppey College students at Queenborough Station



Five Acre Wood Student Garden



Kent Community Rail Partnership

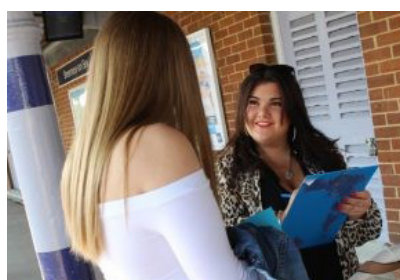
Winning Logo for Kent CRP



Winning Logo for Kent Downs Line

2. Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel

- Delivering group travel training sessions for students of Sheppey College and Five Acre Wood Special School. The students 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 out of their local area for work.
- A cycle rail project has been presented to and approved by Southeastern's Facilities Board to place cycle rails on stations where cyclists would otherwise need to carry their cycles up and over bridges to reach various platforms.
- An increased social media presence with Instagram being added to our Facebook and Twitter accounts. Multiple messages are posted each week and we currently have a 6th Form student from Invicta Girls Grammar School producing messages each week to inspire travel (when safe to do so) as part of her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteering section. Annual events that could not traditionally take place at stations became social media events during periods of Covid lockdown e.g. Rail Safety Week and Community Rail in the City. Our Facebook account has 421 followers, Twitter has 532 followers and our newly launched Instagram account has 92 followers. This is a massive following increase of 28% on last year.
- Our website is current with new pages being added and updated regularly with information promoting sustainable healthy accessible travel e.g. cycle / walking routes to and from stations, the history of stations and news of all the activities we're undertaking.
- The publication of 4 seasonal newsletters to encourage train travel and to share the work of Kent CRP.



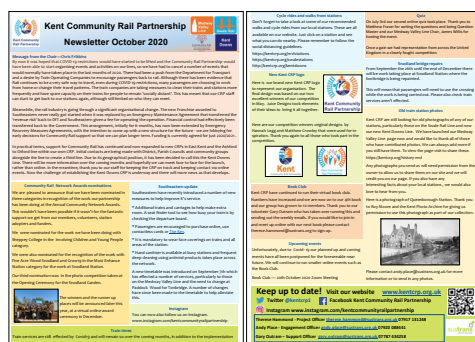
Sheppey Students at Stations



Cycle Rails with Design to Show Their Purpose



Maidstone CycleFest 2019



Kent CRP Quarterly Newsletter

Tweet activity



Impressions	20,726
Total engagements	398
Media engagements	314
Detail expands	56
Likes	13
Profile clicks	7
Retweets	4
Hashtag clicks	3
Replies	1

An example of a Tweet and its engagement

3. Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion

- Facilitating the 3 active community rail partnership groups who each meet 3 times a year – The Medway Valley Line Partnership, The Kent Downs Partnership and The Swale Rail Line Partnership. Members are drawn from the communities served to generate the work of Kent CRP. The meetings also provide a voice for the communities each member represents.
- The Sheppey College landscapers worked with the Minster on Sea Rotary Club to plant 2000 purple crocus bulbs in a roundel to help raise awareness of the eradication of the Polio virus. By the end of February 2020 the crocuses had bloomed and brightened up the mound at the entrance to Queenborough station. 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 our annual Stakeholder Meeting. This was presented to Five Acre Wood School in recognition of the students and tutors considerable efforts in adopting the station and improving the garden area at the front of Snodland station. The Swale Rail 5 station adoption certificates were also presented at this meeting to the students and tutors of Sheppey College.
- Grow 19 students constructed 6 planters to brighten up the platforms at Waterringbury station.
- An on-line book club and film club was launched during Covid lockdown to bring our communities together to share in a mutual interest with the aim of combating loneliness and isolation within our communities. Weekly chatty emails were shared with a Zoom meeting every 6 weeks.
- Three on-line quizzes have been held to bring some fun and social interaction while community members were isolating



Crocus bulb planting at Queenborough



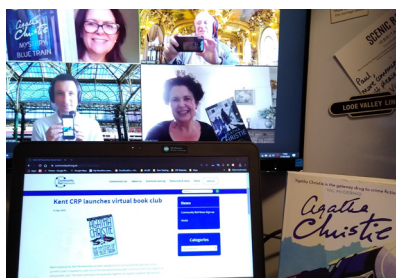
Five Acre Wood student receiving Volunteer of the year award



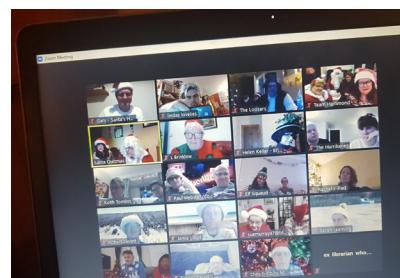
Sheppey College Certificates



Grow 19 Students



Zoom Book Club Meeting



Online Quiz

4. Supporting social and economic development

- Arranging events which promote awareness and tourism along the lines including the Santa Train on the Swale Rail Line in Dec 2019. Families enjoyed visiting Santa on the train whilst enjoying craft activities, having their faces painted, watching magic and being entertained by our fabulous balloon artist. This provided quality time with parents to promote the advantages of rail travel and the local economy.
- Promotion of local businesses via our social media channels e.g. promotion of 3 outlets local to our stations where pumpkins could be purchased. This Halloween event was run in conjunction with 'Produced in Kent'.
- Collaboratively working with Visit Kent, Produced in Kent, Locate in Kent and Explore Kent which has resulted in collaborative working opportunities that we may be able to implement once Covid restrictions are lifted.
- 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



Halloween media photo

Passenger Numbers on our Lines

The last 18 months started well and then from March 2020 the impact of Covid 19 took passengers to unprecedented low levels. The Government urged everyone in the UK to stay at home and only travel by train for essential journeys e.g. for key workers to reach their places of employment. There was a healthy average increase in usage across all 3 lines 2019 vs 2018 of +8.4% followed by an average decrease in usage across all 3 lines 2020 vs 2019 of -54.9%. The focus will be to build back better over the coming years.

Community Rail Partnership	Station	2018	2019	2020	2019 v 2018	2020 v 2019
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Ashford (Kent)	285,910	306,554	147,386	7.2%	(51.9)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Barming	136,986	153,902	67,245	12.3%	(56.3)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Bearsted	352,357	363,747	143,222	3.2%	(60.6)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Borough Green & Wrotham	402,056	408,990	165,802	1.7%	(59.5)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Charing	66,936	73,834	33,835	10.3%	(54.2)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	East Malling	93,693	98,274	38,060	4.9%	(61.3)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Harrietsham	78,101	89,562	36,776	14.7%	(58.9)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Hollingbourne	54,068	63,002	29,025	16.5%	(53.9)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Kemsing	20,477	19,336	6,898	(5.6)%	(64.3)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Lenham	71,305	78,731	34,501	10.4%	(56.2)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Maidstone East	1,384,832	1,438,268	579,028	3.9%	(59.7)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	Otford	244,218	248,622	103,125	1.8%	(58.5)%
Kent CRP - Kent Downs	West Malling	770,152	791,645	307,517	2.8%	(61.2)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Aylesford	101,454	110,910	48,135	9.3%	(56.6)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Beltring	7,971	7,831	2,420	(1.8)%	(69.1)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Cuxton	43,008	46,241	23,218	7.5%	(49.8)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	East Farleigh	25,159	27,703	11,757	10.1%	(57.6)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Halling	83,752	83,555	42,162	(0.2)%	(49.5)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Maidstone Barracks	75,077	83,194	35,197	10.8%	(57.7)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Maidstone West	353,047	370,111	151,518	4.8%	(59.1)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	New Hythe	88,879	99,181	47,089	11.6%	(52.5)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Paddock Wood	92,697	93,691	44,715	1.1%	(52.3)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Snodland	194,040	220,369	101,480	13.6%	(53.9)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Strood	128,211	139,249	76,803	8.6%	(44.8)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Tonbridge	52,156	51,440	26,380	(1.4)%	(48.7)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Wateringbury	48,348	46,648	21,155	(3.5)%	(54.6)%
Kent CRP - Medway Valley	Yalding	22,037	26,772	13,056	21.5%	(51.2)%
Kent CRP - SwaleRail	Kemsley	113,144	130,840	70,334	15.6%	(46.2)%
Kent CRP - SwaleRail	Queenborough	118,166	128,299	58,591	8.6%	(54.3)%
Kent CRP - SwaleRail	Sheerness-On-Sea	315,809	315,038	144,588	(0.2)%	(54.1)%
Kent CRP - SwaleRail	Sittingbourne	109,113	112,091	68,819	2.7%	(38.6)%
Kent CRP - SwaleRail	Swale	2,953	4,911	2,528	66.3%	(48.5)%
					8.4%	(54.9)%

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. Please email kent.crp@sustrans.org.uk, visit our website <http://kentcrp.org/get-involved> or call Therese Hammond for all queries concerning the Partnership and the Kent Downs Line, Andy Place for the Swale Rail Line and Gary Outram for the Medway Valley Line - numbers on the last page.

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 and Partners

Funders

- Southeastern
- Community Rail Network
- Kent County Council
- Medway Council
- Yalding and Beltring Parish Council
- East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council
- Barming Parish Council
- Snodland Town Council
- Wrotham Parish Council
- BJA Civil Consulting
- Railfuture



Partners

- Network Rail
- Aylesford Parish Council
- British Transport Police
- Cuxton Parish Council
- Explore Kent
- Halling Parish Council
- Maidstone Borough Council
- North Kent Rail User Group
- Nu-Venture Coaches
- Paddock Wood Town Council
- Promote Kent
- Produced in Kent
- Visit Kent
- Swale Borough Council
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Kent Downs
- AONB
- Sheppey College
- Five Acre Wood
- Grow 19

Contact Us

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Project Support Officer

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Lead Officer for Medway Valley Line

Steering Group Chair: Chris Fribbins

Deputy Chair: Tom Shelley

Medway Valley Line Chair: James Willis

Deputy Chair: Paul Harper

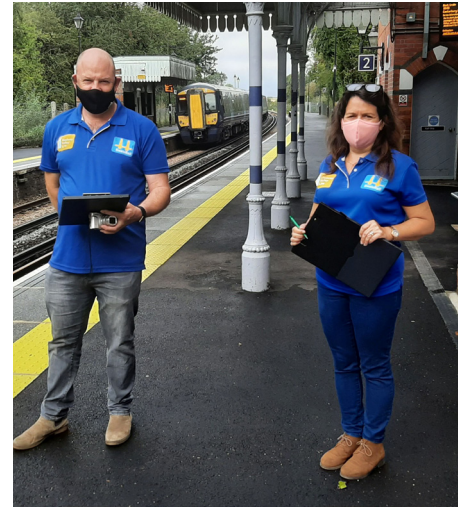
Kent Downs Line Chair: James Lehane

Deputy Chair: Vacant

Please contact Therese if you'd like to apply for this position

Swale Rail Line Chair: Linda Brinklow

Deputy Chair: Jonathan Fryer



**Andy and Therese Undertaking
Station Audits**



Gary Joined Us in Nov 2020

 www.kentcrp.org.uk

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

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