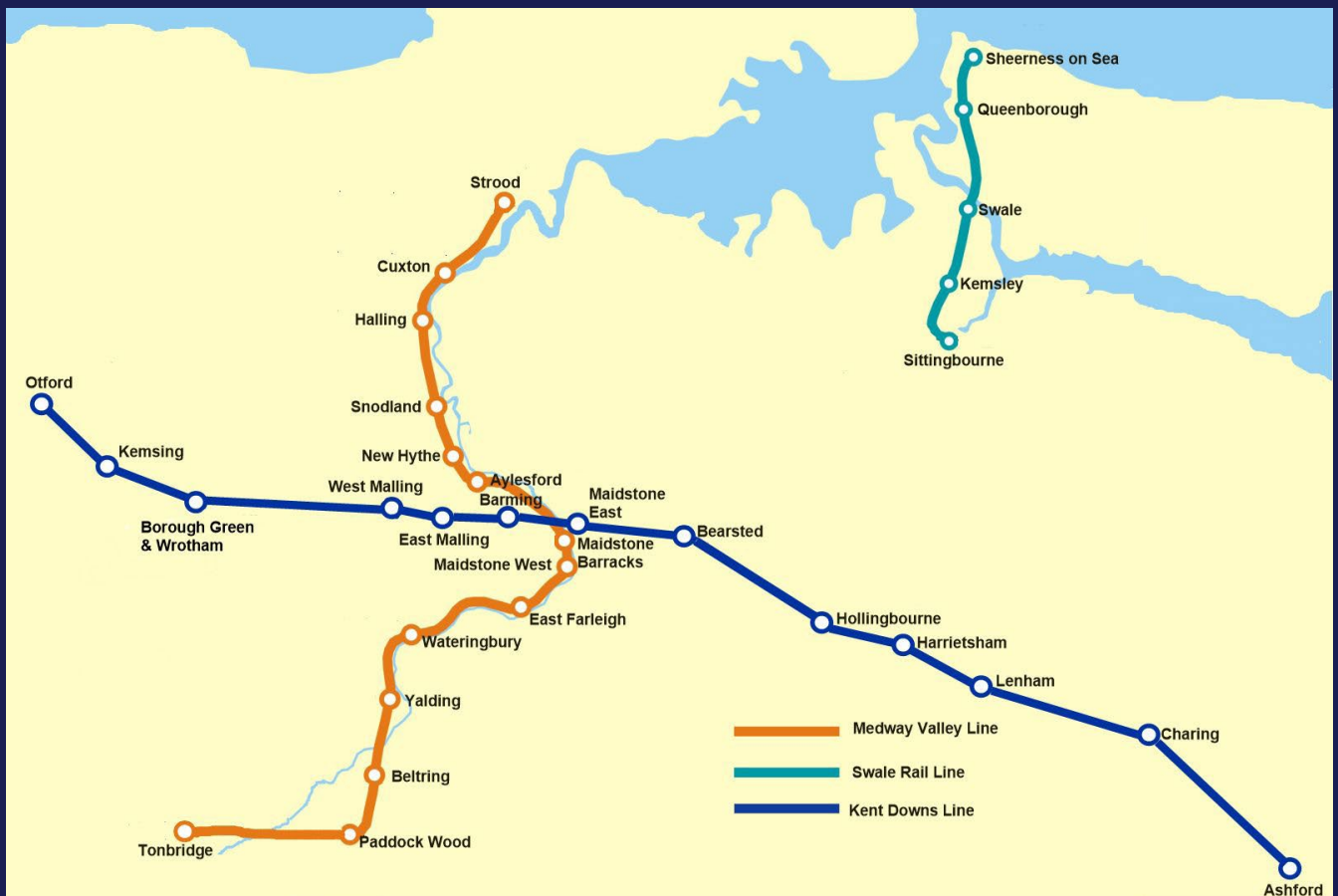




Kent Community Rail Partnership



Annual Report April 2021 - March 2022



Community Rail
Accredited Partnership

Community Rail Development Strategy

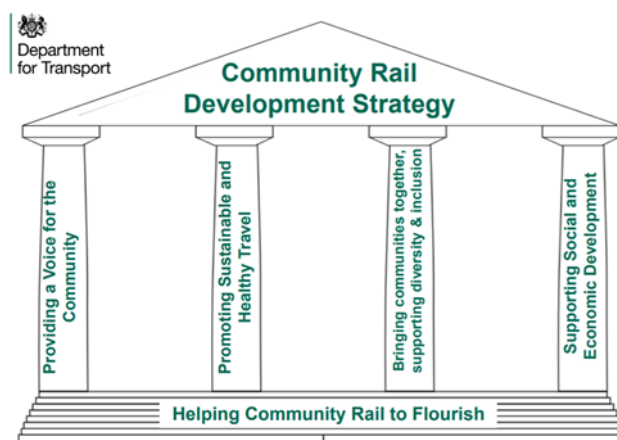
A short insight into Community Rail and its strategy

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

This year's report was produced during a very difficult time for everybody and the Community Rail Partnership and especially the passengers were impacted. Now there are positive signs that we are seeing the removal of most mandatory restrictions and can start to see the return of passengers and the ability to meet face to face with each other again. However, the removal of mandatory restrictions does not reduce the need to continue taking care as we continue to live with the pandemic.

Southeastern has continued to be a great supporter of our Partnership and is our main funder even during challenging times exacerbated by the reduction in passenger numbers and needing to take pandemic precautions, while their staff was not immune from the personal impacts themselves.

Alongside the day-to-day operation, the government published the Williams/Shapps Review and their intention to reorganise the rail industry with impacts on the train operating companies and potentially on the future responsibilities, support and funding of our own partnership. Although there are a lot of supportive words for Community Rail in the review, the practical details of funding and responsibilities will need to be ironed out. With the pressures of the pandemic and wish to focus on the cost of the rail industry funding and organisation proposals, we will need to continue to justify the positive benefits of our activities – a challenge that we continue to accept. We have had early notice of the type of changes to expect as the Department for Transport (DfT) decided to terminate the direct arrangements with Southeastern and change to a directly DfT operated model, so our funding and accountability are now more directly controlled by them.

Over the last twelve months, the partnership has continued to deliver despite the restrictions of the pandemic and details are provided in this annual report. Thanks go to the Sustrans team for continuing to deliver and our three-line groups for keeping up involvement with their communities. The Kent Downs Line has become established alongside the Medway Valley Line and Swale Rail Line during the last year with the Kent Downs communities stepping up, with our support, to connect with their local stations and the partnership. As usual, much has been achieved with even more lined up in the future.



10km walk from Charing Station along the North Downs Way to Lenham Station.

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

Kent CRP has been accredited since 23rd 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.



Community Rail
Accredited Partnership
2021-22



Train services on all three lines run trains directly to London and are operated by Southeastern, the trading name of SE Trains Limited.

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.

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 the Grow 19 planters at Cuxton, new community boards, a mural at Snodland and Sheppey College planting projects at Sittingbourne and Kemsley.

Financial Notes

The unallocated funds are both a contingency to cover unexpected costs and funds available for future projects. Approximately £31,518 will be carried forward into 2022/23 (accounts prepared end of Feb). The expenditure underspend is partly due to Covid restricting our events and activities. Officers spent a greater proportion of their time recruiting station adopters, developing the website and conducting social media campaigns, particularly during the first part of the year.

Core Funding & other income	Actual	Budget	Balance
Kent County Council	£25,845	£23,290	
South Eastern Rail Income	£75,000	£75,000	
Parish Council & Grant Income	£675	£1,000	
Medway Borough Council Income	£6,000	£6,000	
Community Rail Network Grant Income	£3,044	£2,793	
Carried forward from 2020/21	£28,276	£28,276	
To Carry Forward into	-	-	
Total income	£138,840	£136,359	£2,481
Expenditure	Actual	Budget	Balance
Staff Costs & Overheads	£103,505	£104,075	
Events & Marketing	-	£25,584	
Materials Sheppey College Project	£2,469	£4,600	
Materials Five Acre Wood Project	£2,731	£2,500	
Community Rail Network Awards	£728	£1,00	
Volunteer Expenses	£74	£600	
Office Admin	£547	£500	
Total Expenditure	£107,323	£136,359	- £ 29,037
Deferred Into 2022/23	£31,518	-	

Note: deferral will be lower due to March expenditure not yet included. This statement does include staff costs to end of March 2022

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 www.kentcrp.org

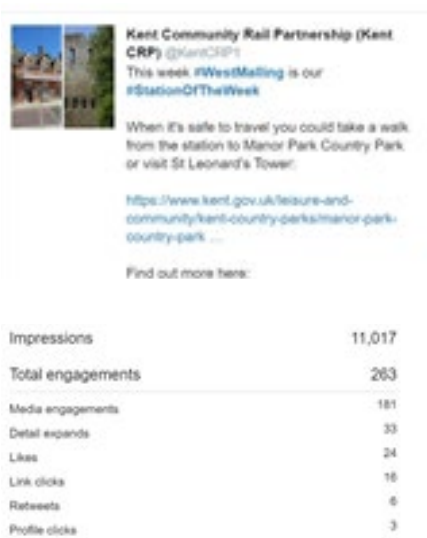
1. Providing a voice for the community

- Community Rail Network Awards 2021 – Nominated for 3 awards:
'Involving Diverse Groups', students from Grow19 (students with learning difficulties) were provided with the opportunity to work with a group of retired locals to construct 4 planters at Cuxton station. 'Best Community Engagement Project', the establishment of the Kent Downs Line with over 350 community members managing or participating in 15 projects focused across 8 stations. 'Best Communication', increasing social media output, developing website content and launching a logo competition whilst in lockdown, to keep our members and our wider community informed and engaged.
- Nineteen members of the Partnership surveyed the stations along the KDL to inform future projects, station improvements and opportunities.
- Students from Strood Academy co-designed a mural with local street artist Graham Upton to showcase Strood's attractions. The mural has brightened the pedestrian underpass at Strood station.
- The Kent CRP action planning process seeks projects and activities from our members and the wider community, the members then vote to determine which projects and activities are undertaken throughout the year.
- Annual Stakeholder meeting where ideas are shared and incorporated into the activities of the CRP.

Community Rail Awards Dec 2022 Shortlisted Certificates



Example of engagement on the KDL: Competition to design the logo



KDL Station Audits



Strood Mural

2. Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel

- Delivering group travel training sessions for year 6 pupils from schools on each of our 3 lines St. Edwards school on the SRL, Cuxton school on the MVL and Heath Farm School on the KDL. The pupils enjoyed these train travel sessions and for many it was the first time they had travelled on a train. It is hoped that some will use the train to travel to secondary school.
- Considerable work has taken place this year to recruit station adopters resulting in 6 new station adoptions. Four being established on the KDL at Charing - Ashford bound (Charing Parish Council), Charing - London bound (Heath Farm School), Harrietsham (Sunrise Day Nursery) and Hollingbourne (community group). Two being established on the MVL at Aylesford (Aylesford Parish Council) and Cuxton (Friends of Cuxton Station). This results in over half of our 31 stations now being adopted.
- A cycle rail project has been presented to and approved by Southeastern's Facilities Board to place cycle rails on stations along the Medway Valley Line where cyclists would otherwise need to carry their cycles up and over bridges to reach various platforms. A project is in the planning for the same along the Kent Downs Line.
- Pop ups have taken place at Otford, Maidstone East, Ashford and Tonbridge stations. Each pop up promoted active travel to stations and travelling by train for work and leisure.
- An increased social media presence through Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Multiple messages are posted each week and until Nov we had a 6th Form student from Invicta Girls Grammar School producing messages each week to inspire travel 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 416 followers, Twitter has 628 followers and our Instagram account has 168 followers. This is an impressive following increase of 16% 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 and projects the Partnership is undertaking.
- The publication of 4 seasonal newsletters to encourage train travel and to share the work of Kent CRP.
- Presentation at the Kent County Council Annual Rail Summit.
- Sheppey College students cleared 11 bags of leaves and 3 bags of rubbish from Kemsley station during their community week.



St.Edwards School



Charing Station Adopters



Tonbridge Pop-Up



Quarterly Newsletter

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.
- Continuation of the prestigious Volunteer of the Year Award at our annual Stakeholder Meeting. This was presented to Norman Kemp in recognition of Norman's participation in the numerous areas of Kent CRP; a well networked, long standing and active member of MVL and now also of the KDL who often informs the partnership of valuable insights. Norman provided and drove the bus for the KDL audits and is a positive promoter of all things community rail and public transport related.
- Grow 19 students (students with learning difficulties) and retired locals constructed and planted up 4 planters to brighten up the platforms at Cuxton station.
- The launch of the KDL began with a ribbon cutting at Maidstone East station followed by a train trip to Charing station to see the adoption plans and hear about the other projects along the line as each station was passed. The day was combined with our Annual Kent CRP Volunteer Day and so after a buffet lunch members enjoyed hearing about the projects on the MVL and SRL interspersed by a Kent CRP related quiz.

- Sheppey College students constructed planters at Sittingbourne station and promoted positive mental health by displaying positive messages at Sittingbourne and Queenborough stations.
- The refurbishment of unused station rooms at Harrietsham into a space to store and display Harrietsham's historical artifacts for public viewing.
- Travel discussion with a group from University of the 3rd Age on Isle of Sheppey to establish and overcome barriers to train travel.



Cuxton Planters



Launch of the KDL



Volunteer Day Quiz



**Volunteer of the Year
Norman Kemp**



**Planters at Sittingbourne
Station**



**Signs Displayed at
Queensborough**

4. Supporting social and economic development

- Promotion of numerous local events and businesses via our social media channels e.g. our #DaysOutByRail# campaign which included Maidstone Elmer Trail, Tonbridge Castle, Historic Rochester, Kent Downs AONB, scenic walks/cycles, Sheerness beaches and tourist attractions and numerous farmers markets etc. Also our Christmas and Valentines #HelpKentBuyLocal campaign featured messaging from 'Produced in Kent'.
- Arranging events which promote awareness and tourism along the lines. 2 Officers have graduated as North Downs Way (NDW) Ambassadors after passing on-line and practical training and testing by North Downs AONB. The Officers managed the launch walk for Maidstone Borough Councils Heart of Kent Walking Festival by leading a walk of 30 participants from Charing station to Lenham station across the NDW. Officers are now planning walking events on the NDW throughout the year to bring tourists into the area by train promoting active travel, sustainable tourism and offering opportunities for walk participants to spend time in the local area and thereby boost the local economy. The walking routes will be available as 'self-walk guides' on our website.
- Re-messaging Southeastern's and Network Rails messages e.g. line closure on the KDL, hands-face-space and other safe to travel messages, flexible season tickets and storm warnings.
- Promoting businesses local to our stations on our website particularly if they will enhance the visitor experience – here's an example. 'When visiting Hollingbourne why not start or finish your walk with a delicious coffee/snack at Woods of Hollingbourne?' <https://www.woodsofhollingbourne.co.uk>
- Refurbishment of Hollingbourne's derelict station building into a community hub and community café. This will become a valuable meeting place for the community of Hollingbourne.
- 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 can positively impact on transport plans e.g. at Barming station and Aylesford station.



Passenger Numbers on our Lines

Journeys to / from station (Southeastern trains serving specific CRP route ONLY)

2020 saw a reduction in passenger numbers of 53.2% as an average across all 32 Kent CRP stations. This reduction in passenger numbers was mainly due to the impact of Covid with the Government urging everyone in the UK to stay at home and only travel by train for essential journeys. 2021 saw a moderate average increase of 18.3% with some passengers returning to their daily commute however, it is recognised that many will continue working from home at least for part of their week so pre Covid figures are unlikely to be reached for some time.

CRP	Station	2018	2019	2020	2021	2019 vs 2018	2020 vs 2019	2021 vs 2020
KDL	Ashford (Kent)	285,910	306,554	147,386	227,660	7.2%	(51.9)%	54.5%
KDL	Barming	136,986	153,902	67,245	99,190	12.3%	(56.3)%	47.5%
KDL	Bearsted	352,357	363,747	143,222	133,821	3.2%	(60.6)%	(6.6)%
KDL	Borough Green & Wrotham	402,056	408,990	165,802	176,759	1.7%	(59.5)%	6.6%
KDL	Charing	66,936	73,834	33,835	33,276	10.3%	(54.2)%	(1.7)%
KDL	East Malling	93,693	98,274	38,060	34,318	4.9%	(61.3)%	(9.8)%
KDL	Harrietsham	78,101	89,562	36,776	38,945	14.7%	(58.9)%	5.9%
KDL	Hollingbourne	54,068	63,002	29,025	29,890	16.5%	(53.9)%	3.0%
KDL	Kemsing	20,477	19,336	6,898	7,215	(5.6)%	(64.3)%	4.6%
KDL	Lenham	71,305	78,731	34,501	35,897	10.4%	(56.2)%	4.0%
KDL	Maidstone East	1,384,832	1,438,268	579,028	620,635	3.9%	(59.7)%	7.2%
KDL	Otford	244,218	248,622	103,125	99,435	1.8%	(58.5)%	(3.6)%
KDL	West Malling	770,152	791,645	307,517	312,280	2.8%	(61.2)%	1.5%
MVL	Aylesford	101,454	110,910	48,135	53,449	9.3%	(56.6)%	11.0%
MVL	Beltring	7,971	7,831	2,420	3,406	(1.8)%	(69.1)%	40.7%
MVL	Cuxton	43,008	46,241	23,218	26,792	7.5%	(49.8)%	15.4%
MVL	East Farleigh	25,159	27,703	11,757	12,329	10.1%	(57.6)%	4.9%
MVL	Halling	83,752	83,555	42,162	44,213	(0.2)%	(49.5)%	4.9%
MVL	Maidstone Barracks	75,077	83,194	35,197	41,992	10.8%	(57.7)%	19.3%
MVL	Maidstone West	353,047	370,111	151,518	186,579	4.8%	(59.1)%	23.1%
MVL	New Hythe	88,879	99,181	47,089	52,096	11.6%	(52.5)%	10.6%
MVL	Paddock Wood	92,697	93,691	44,715	73,216	1.1%	(52.3)%	63.7%
MVL	Snodland	194,040	220,369	101,480	115,289	13.6%	(53.9)%	13.6%
MVL	Strood	128,211	139,249	76,803	90,107	8.6%	(44.8)%	17.3%
MVL	Tonbridge	52,156	51,440	26,380	38,239	(1.4)%	(48.7)%	45.0%
MVL	Wateringbury	48,348	46,648	21,155	27,828	(3.5)%	(54.6)%	31.5%
MVL	Yalding	22,037	26,772	13,056	15,530	21.5%	(51.2)%	18.9%
SRL	Kemsley	113,144	130,840	70,334	82,157	15.6%	(46.2)%	16.8%
SRL	Queenborough	118,166	128,299	58,591	84,473	8.6%	(54.3)%	44.2%
SRL	Sheerness-On-Sea	315,809	315,038	144,588	202,963	(0.2)%	(54.1)%	40.4%
SRL	Sittingbourne	109,113	112,091	68,819	80,010	2.7%	(38.6)%	16.3%
SRL	Swale	2,953	4,911	2,528	3,830	66.3%	(48.5)%	51.5%
						8.2%	(53.2)%	18.3%

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 contact 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 – contact details on the last page.

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 lines on Kent's Rail Network.

Funders 2021-22

- Southeastern
- Kent County Council
- Medway Council
- Cuxton PC
- Wrotham PC
- Yalding PC
- Community Rail Network
- Network Rail
- Swale BC



Partners

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

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Steering Group

Chair: Chris Fribbins | **Deputy Chair:** Tom Shelley

Kent Downs Line

Chair: James Lehane

Deputy Chair: Vacancy

Medway Valley Line

Chair: James Willis

Deputy Chair: Paul Harper

Swale Rail Line

Chair: Linda Brinklow

Deputy Chair: Jonathan Fryer




**Kent Community
Rail Partnership**



@kentcrp1



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partnership**

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

Kent Community Rail Partnership , Maidstone West Station, Station Approach,
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