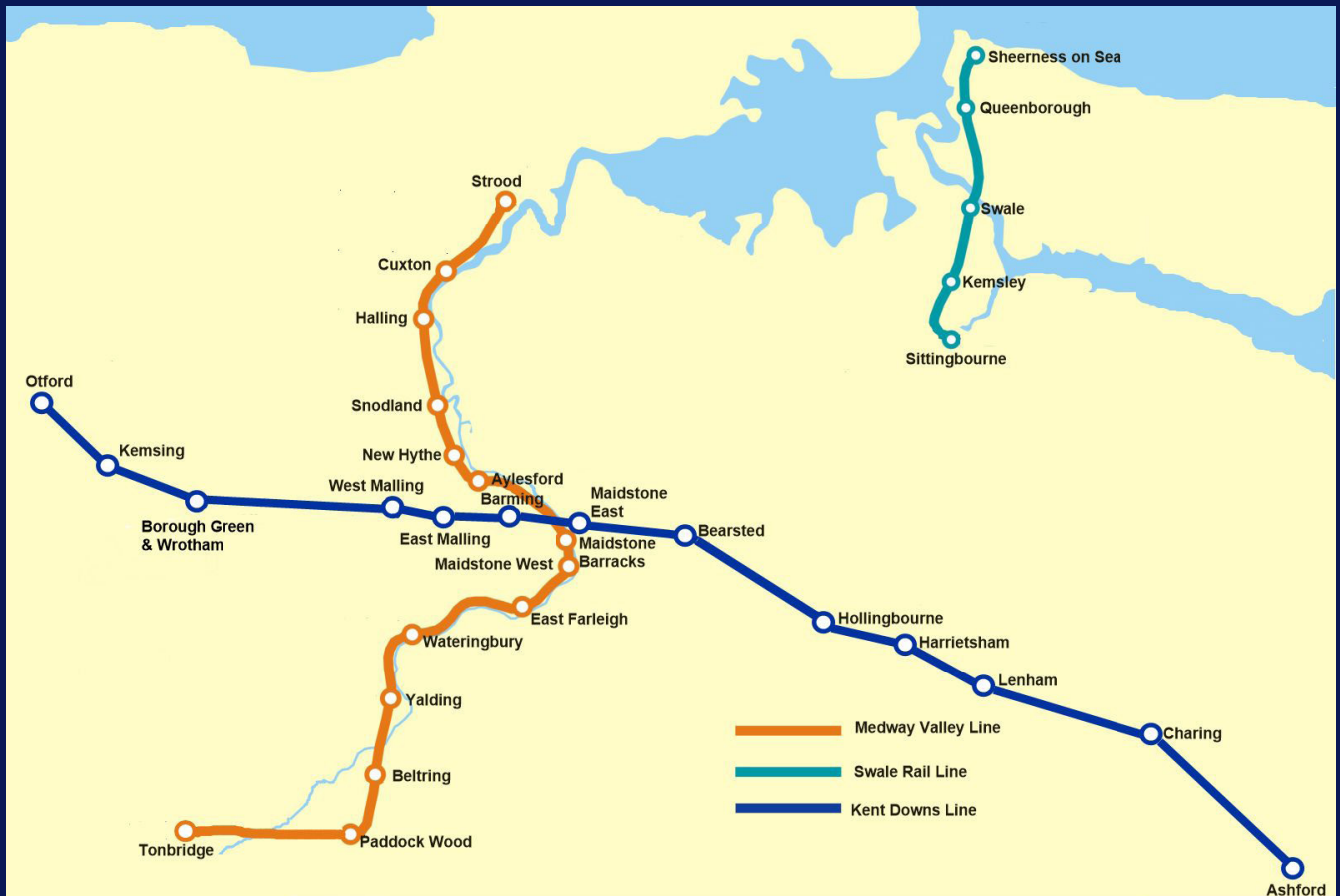




Kent Community Rail Partnership



Annual Report

April 2022 - March 2023



Community Rail
Accredited Partnership

Community Rail Development Strategy

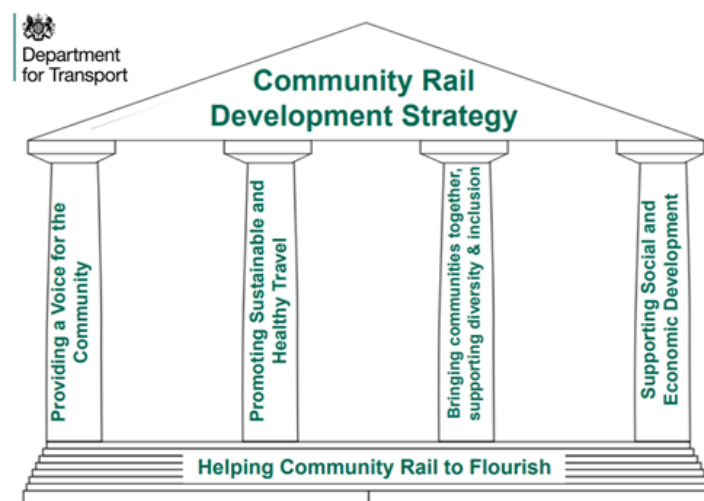
A short insight into Community Rail and its strategy

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, well-being 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 well-being. 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 benefiting 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

I welcome the opportunity to introduce the latest Annual report on the activities and ambitions of the Kent Community Rail Partnership (KCRP). As in previous years we are indebted to the KCRP team, hosted by Sustrans, and the many volunteers that help keep the partnership moving forward and delivering for the local communities along our three line partnerships.

2022 was a challenging year, with the country coming out of the pandemic restrictions that prevented many of our regular activities from taking place and leading to the use of ZOOM / remote meetings. KCRP was up for the challenge

of encouraging passengers 'back to rail' and growing the leisure use of our lines. However, it was frustrating to end the year with industrial disputes and days with little or no train service on our lines. We continued to ask all sides in the dispute to get together and resolve their issues.

After the previous year's National Community Rail Award nominations, it was great to return to winning ways with two awards this year. Apart from the need to catch-up on some of the regular work and projects, there has been a lot of new ones to keep the KCRP busy.

In reporting on the past year, you will see how much has been delivered again and the scope for future collaboration with our communities, also helping them deliver as well.

The core team of Therese Hammond, Gary Outram and Andy Place continued their key roles, but some uncertainty with our core funding continues to cause difficulties for securing Officer employment and planning future activities. Andy has moved back into working in IT in a local authority, we thank him for all he delivered while he was with us. Once the finances are confirmed for 2023/24 we will be able to recruit a replacement for him and thanks to Therese and Gary for covering some of his hours in the meantime.

Finally, a special thanks to **Southeastern Railway**, and in particular Matt Fraser for core funding and support for much of our work. **Kent County Council** and **Medway Unitary Authority** have also provided key financial support at a time when there are considerable financial pressures as well, we also appreciate the financial support and involvement of District and local Parish/ Town Councils and hope to expand this in the future. The national **Community Rail Network** have also helped many of our projects and provided important support and advice - and also carry out the detailed annual review of our operation as part of the national Department for Transport accreditation process.

What is Kent Community Rail Partnership?

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) encourage communities to support their local railway lines and stations. There are approximately 85 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. Our members/volunteers dedicated approximately 1,907 hours to Kent CRP activities over the last 12 months (over 25% increase on last year) 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 first achieved accreditation on 23 March 2020 and has retained the status each year since.

“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 the Government. Accreditation should provide assurance to others, including potential funders and partners, that the CRP operates to high standards of governments 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 as 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 SE Trains Limited, part of the DOHL.

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 CRN's "Community Rail Network Development Fund", which has supported our Ashford College sculptures and vinyls project and Rail Heritage Trust for part funding the flooring at Hollingbourne station community café and hub.

Financial Statement for 2022/23

Core Funding & other income	Actual	Budget	Balance
Kent County Council	£15,000	£23,290	
Southeastern Rail Income	£76,565	£75,000	
Parish Council & Grant Income	£2,200	-	
Medway Borough Council Income	£6,000	£6,000	
Community Rail Network Grant Income	£2,166	£2,793	
Rail Heritage Trust	£11,470	-	
Carried forward from 2021/22	£35,754	£35,754	
To Carry Forward into	-	-	
Total income	£149,154	£142,837	£6,317
Expenditure	Actual	Budget	Balance
Staff Costs & Overheads	£104,835	£109,592	
Unallocated Costs	-	£26,083	
Events and Marketing	£1,333	£1,862	
Community Rail Network Awards	£772	£800	
Volunteer Expenses	£551	£700	
Office Admin	£620	£500	
Materials Sheppey College	£4,392	£3,300	
Hollingbourne Station Flooring	£11,470	-	
Maidstone Barracks Mural	£500	-	
Ashford Station Pots	£2,166	-	
Total Expenditure	£126,638	£142,837	- £ 16,199
Deferred Into 2022/23	£22,516		

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 2022 – Winners of two awards.

'Small Project Award' first place. We worked with Five Acre Wood SEN School to produce a beautiful sunflower mural to highlight hidden disabilities. The mural was inspired by Southeastern's sunflower lanyards and is displayed at Snodland station.

'Involving Children and Young People' third place. We have engaged 34 community groups and over 1800 young people through numerous projects and activities this year including colleges, SEN, primary and secondary schools. We have facilitated activities including various station art projects, train travel training, rail safety events and real life experiences of event music, catering, construction and landscaping. Our Jubilee event alone involved bringing together 26 community groups to produce 64 Jubilee picture panels for Ashford station.

- We manage an action planning which seeks projects and activities from our members and the wider community, the members then vote (if necessary) to determine which projects and activities we undertaken throughout the year.
- Our Annual Stakeholder meeting is where ideas are shared and incorporated into the activities of the CRP.
- We worked in collaboration with the Dawn Patrol group of Rotary International in Maidstone to engage rail travellers to provide feedback on their perceptions of safety at stations on the Medway Valley line. A report based on these surveys and inspections of each station environment was presented to Southeastern, to inform future station improvements.



Community Rail Awards Oct 2022 - 2 Winning Certificates

Five Acre Wood sunflower mural



Ashford College students sharing their barriers to train travel



Ashford Station 64 Jubilee panels



Sheppey College students' construction and planting at Kemsley station

2. Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel

- We delivered group travel training sessions throughout the year for those who may find it difficult to access train travel. We supported adults from Diversity House with English as an Additional Language to be confident to use the National Rail App, showed them how to identify which platform to await the train and which carriages are designed for accessible travel needs all of which aimed to assist them in travelling independently.

We arranged for 17 students from Ashford College to join us on a train journey where facilitators teased out their views around train travel for their age group, these included rail accessibility, rail safety, sustainability and barriers to inform future projects, activities and events. We also undertook travel training with Meadowfield primary school to Southeastern's Travel Safe Travel Smart Safety Centre in Margate where they were enlightened to all aspects of travelling safely.

- We facilitated the fitting of cycle rails on six of the stations along the Medway Valley Line where cyclists would otherwise need to carry their cycles up over bridges to reach various platforms. We have presented a similar project to Southeastern for 8 stations to receive cycle rails along the Kent Downs Line. When the KDL cycle rails are fitted cyclists will be able to wheel their cycles to all but one of our 31 stations as one of our station bridges is unsuitable to have the rails fitted. "A major bonus to interrogation of cycling and rail journeys." Duncan Edwards - Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum.
- We ran another successful smoothie bike pop-up during the summer at Maidstone CycleFest 2022. Riding and walking to railway stations was promoted and we encouraged cyclists to take their cycles on the train for their end to end journeys. It's surprising how many people do not realise they can take their cycles on trains! We provided cycling and walking maps for local towns including Maidstone, Ashford and Tonbridge. The smoothie bike was very popular being in almost constant use by passers-by intrigued to try it out!
- We facilitated pop ups at Maidstone West, Tonbridge station and Ashford stations. These pop ups promoted rail safety, active travel to stations and travelling by train for work and leisure. We attended the Faversham Festival of Transport and Swale Sustainable Transport Festival, promoting Kent CRP, use of the railway and healthy travel choices for the first and final stages of rail journeys.
- We are increasing our social media presence through Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Multiple messages are posted each week. We regularly post promoting engagement with the website's news, events and get involved pages. Annual events that could not traditionally take place at stations became social media events during periods of industrial action e.g. Rail Safety Week. Our Facebook account has 523 followers, Twitter has 732 followers and our Instagram account has 220 followers. This is a massive following increase of 22% 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.
- We publish four seasonal newsletters to encourage train travel and to share the work of Kent CRP. These are available on our notice boards at our stations, on our website and promoted via our social media platforms.



Ashford Station pop-up



Maidstone West Station pop-up



Ashford College 'Try the Train'



Cycle Rails at Yalding Station



CycleFest 2022



Diversity House - Travel Training

3. Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion

- We facilitated three active community rail line partnership groups who each meet three times a year - The Medway Valley Line Partnership, The Kent Downs Line 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.
- We continued the prestigious Volunteer of the Year Award at our annual Skateholder Meeting. This was presented to Maria Domican in recognition of Maria's contribution to the Hollingbourne Hub project. A partnership between Southeastern, Kent CRP and the Hollingbourne community is delivering a community cafe/ hub from the Hollingbourne ticket office which has been derelict for 32 years. Maria had been instrumental in engaging the community to form a Community Interest Company (CIC) to progress this project.
- We have provided considerable resources this year in support of our 19 station adoption groups. Activities have included working party days and station art to enhance the station environments for our passengers. Charing Parish Council, adopters of Charing railway station held their first working party where we supported them in bringing together many members of their community. Members of the PC, led by Cllr Susan Easun were joined by members of the local community, students from Heath Farm School (SEN) and Ashford College (Afghanistan refugees and SEN), Southeastern and Sustrans to plant up to three large barrels, four window boxes and to paint the 'Charing Stones'. We have supported the newly formed Aylesford Station Adoption Group to put in a bid for funding from Community Rail Network to install history boards and rail safety messages at the station. These will be created by students at Aylesford School, fostering a sense of ownership of the station.
- We facilitated our Sheppey College students to design mural panels for Swale Halt - one of their adopted stations. The equalities, diversity and inclusion panel was designed by Lacie.
- We managed Ashford College students to bring festive fun to the foyer of Ashford International with an afternoon of music, festive foody favourites and seasonal art. £117.39 was raised in donations between their community week pop ups and their Christmas event for Railway Children Charity.
- Kent CRP Officers and volunteers managed Southeastern's Santa Express onboard event, running in the morning for the public and afternoon for staff - some of whom entertained us with Christmas carols along the way. Fun was had by all and £721.47 was raised for Railway Children Charity.



**Volunteer of the year 2022
Maria Domican**



Team Elf - Santa Train 2022



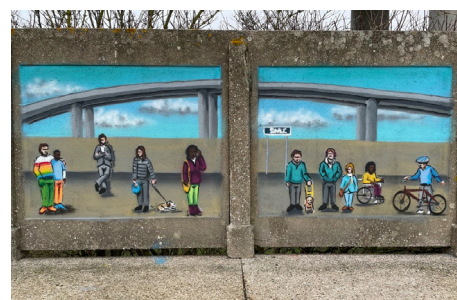
**Maidstone West
Station Adoption**



**Santa Train leaving
Maidstone West**



**Ashford College
Christmas Event**



**Lacie's EDI Mural - Sheppey
College Student**

4. Supporting social and economic development

- We promote numerous local events and attractions via our social media channels e.g. our #DaysOutByRail and #GoGreenByTrain messaging supported campaigns by Community Rail Network and Southeastern. These included Jane Austen walks in Tonbridge, Historic Rochester, Kent Downs AONB, science walks/ cycles, Sheerness beaches, tourist attractions and business along all our lines.
- We arrange events to promote awareness and tourism along the lines. Kent CRP Officers guided 7 North Downs Way walks this year. The Officers planned, managed and led the walks some of which formed part of Maidstone Borough Council's Heart of Kent Walking Festival. The popular guided walks brought tourists into the AONB by train promoting active travel, sustainable tourism and offering opportunities for walk participants to spend time in the local area after the walk and thereby boosting the local economy. Participants are encouraged to return with friends and family to undertake the walks and enjoy overnight stays in the villages near our stations. The walking routes will be available as 'self-walk guides' on our website.
- We promote sustainable tourism local to our 31 stations via links on our website and through our social media to encourage visitor spending in the local economies.
- This year we facilitated the refurbishment of Hollingbourne's derelict ticket office into a community hub/ cafe. The building has undergone a transformative renovation funded by Southeastern and Heritage Rail Trust and a Community Interest Company (CIC) has been formed to manage it. We undertook large community engagement activity resulting in the forming of the CIC who are now planning fund raising events, such as a cinema night and Heritage event for the interior facilities and launch event. This will become a valuable meeting place not only for the community of Hollingbourne but also a destination cafe for walkers and cyclists.
- We continue to develop good 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 influence transport plans at or near our stations.



Guided Walk Charing to Lenham



Guided Walk Halling to Cuxton



**Hollingbourne Station
Community Hub & Café**



Passenger Numbers on our Lines

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

2022 saw a increase in passenger numbers of 40.6% from 2021 as an average across all 32 Kent CRP stations (including Otford). This increase in passenger numbers was mainly due to recovery post Covid. It is an improvement on the 2021 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 and so pre Covid figures are unlikely to be reached for some time.

CRP	Station	2019	2020	2021	2022	2020 vs 2019	2021 vs 2020	2022 vs 2021
KDL	Ashford (Kent)	306,554	147,386	227,667	314,920	(51.9)%	54.5%	38.3%
KDL	Barming	153,902	67,245	99,208	156,175	(56.3)%	47.5%	57.4%
KDL	Bearsted	363,747	143,222	133,837	219,721	(60.6)%	(6.6)%	64.2%
KDL	Borough Green & Wrotham	408,990	165,802	176,777	268,180	(59.5)%	6.6%	51.7%
KDL	Charing	73,834	33,835	33,279	57,487	(54.2)%	(1.6)%	72.7%
KDL	East Malling	98,274	38,060	34,322	51,339	(61.3)%	(9.8)%	49.6%
KDL	Harrietsham	89,562	36,776	38,946	59,829	(58.9)%	5.9%	53.6%
KDL	Hollingbourne	63,002	29,025	29,909	38,678	(53.9)%	3.0%	29.3%
KDL	Kemsing	19,336	6,898	7,215	8,564	(64.3)%	4.6%	18.7%
KDL	Lenham	78,731	34,501	35,909	56,217	(56.2)%	4.1%	56.6%
KDL	Maidstone East	1,438,268	579,028	620,753	970,898	(59.7)%	7.2%	56.4%
KDL	Otford	248,622	103,125	99,439	161,117	(58.5)%	(3.6)%	62.0%
KDL	West Malling	791,645	307,517	312,309	511,693	(61.2)%	1.6%	63.8%
MVL	Aylesford	110,910	48,135	53,451	65,419	(56.6)%	11.0%	22.4%
MVL	Beltring	7,831	2,420	3,409	4,833	(69.1)%	40.9%	41.8%
MVL	Cuxton	46,241	23,218	26,792	37,206	(49.8)%	15.4%	38.9%
MVL	East Farleigh	27,703	11,757	12,329	19,633	(57.6)%	4.9%	59.2%
MVL	Halling	83,555	42,162	44,215	48,600	(49.5)%	4.9%	9.9%
MVL	Maidstone Barracks	83,194	35,197	41,995	59,471	(57.7)%	19.3%	41.6%
MVL	Maidstone West	370,111	151,518	186,591	254,461	(59.1)%	23.1%	36.4%
MVL	New Hythe	99,181	47,089	52,109	66,590	(52.5)%	10.7%	27.8%
MVL	Paddock Wood	93,691	44,715	73,219	91,782	(52.3)%	63.7%	25.4%
MVL	Snodland	220,369	101,480	115,301	110,641	(53.9)%	13.6%	(4.0)%
MVL	Strood	139,249	76,803	90,112	115,439	(44.8)%	17.3%	28.1%
MVL	Tonbridge	51,440	26,380	38,239	50,599	(48.7)%	45.0%	32.3%
MVL	Wateringbury	46,648	21,155	27,848	46,338	(54.6)%	31.6%	66.4%
MVL	Yalding	26,772	13,056	15,532	20,410	(51.2)%	19.0%	31.4%
SRL	Kemsley	130,840	70,334	82,159	103,678	(46.2)%	16.8%	26.2%
SRL	Queenborough	128,299	58,591	84,476	101,117	(54.3)%	44.2%	19.7%
SRL	Sheerness-On-Sea	315,038	144,588	202,987	267,589	(54.1)%	40.4%	31.8%
SRL	Sittingbourne	112,091	68,819	80,010	88,905	(38.6)%	16.3%	11.1%
SRL	Swale	4,911	2,528	3,830	6,775	(48.5)%	51.5%	76.9%
						(54.9)%	18.8%	40.6%

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 and Gary Outram for the Medway Valley Line and Swale Rail 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 deliver the number of projects and activities which bring new life to our lines on Kent's Rail Network.

Funders 2022-23

- Southeastern
- Kent County Council
- Medway Council
- Community Rail Network
- Heritage Rail Trust
- Barming Parish Council
- Cuxton Parish Council
- East Malling and Larkfield PC
- Halling Parish Council
- Iwade Parish Council
- Sheerness Town Council
- Swale Borough Council
- Yalding Parish Council



Partners 2022-23

- Ashford College
- Aylesford Parish Council
- British Transport Police
- Charing Parish Council
- Explore Kent
- Five Acre Wood
- Grow 19
- Heath Farm School
- Hollingbourne CIC
- Hollingbourne Parish Council
- Kent Downs AONB
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Network Rail
- North Kent Rail User Group
- Nu-Venture Coaches
- Paddock Wood Town Council
- Rail Future
- Rotary Dawn Patrol
- Maidstone
- Sheppey College
- Tonbridge & Malling BC
- Visit Kent

Contact Us

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Lead Officer for Medway Valley Line



Vacancy

Project Officer

Lead Officer for Swale Rail Line

Website: <https://kentcrp.org/>

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: Clive English

Swale Rail Line

Chair: Linda Brinklow
Deputy Chair: Jonathan Fryer



**Kent Community
Rail Partnership**



@kentcrp1



**kentcommunityrail
partnership**

Kent CRP is hosted by Sustrans 
sustrans
JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Sustrans is a registered charity in England and Wales (326550) and Scotland (SC039263) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (1797726) at 2 Cathedral Square, Bristol, BS1 5DD.

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