



Kent Community Rail Partnership

# Summer 2024

# NEWSLETTER



**Javelin at Maidstone West**  
Courtesy of Dominic Noades



**Electrostar at Swale station**  
Courtesy of Dominic Noades



**Networker at Maidstone East**  
Courtesy of Dominic Noades

## Paws on the Platform



Paws on the Platform highlighted the practical barriers that people with visual impairments must overcome when travelling by train.

The event brought people with a visual impairment together with Southeastern's management team to share their experience of accessing rail services, to increase understanding of the difficulties that those with a visual impairment encounter when travelling by train and begin a discussion about how that experience can be improved.

The event was organised in collaboration with the Maidstone Fundraising Group of Guide Dogs, Maidstone Guide Dogs Community Team and Southeastern.

Guide Dogs staff, volunteers, local guide dog owners and a long cane user were at the heart of the activities. They agreed to be shadowed by members of Southeastern's management team for the journey and share their lived experience of using rail services with them.

Cllr Gordon Newton, Kent County Councillor Shelina Prendergast and other guests were blindfolded and accompanied by a trained "My Sighted Guide" through their own rail travel experience.

At Hollingbourne Guide Dogs volunteers worked with the Signal Box Cafe to provide everyone with an afternoon tea.

Diane Proctor, a member of the Maidstone Fundraising Group of Guide Dogs said: "Travelling by train can be incredibly challenging for people with sight loss as it can be difficult to know which platform to board the train and when it has reached the right station. Paws on the Platform offers a unique opportunity for key decision makers to be guided through a blindfold train journey experience to help them understand the difficulties that those with a visual impairment encounter when travelling by train and how that experience can be improved. We are delighted to be working with Kent Community Rail Partnership on this consultation event with support from staff at Southeastern."





## Annual Stakeholder Event



Our event began with our stakeholders, partners and volunteers meeting at Maidstone West station for a trip north along our Medway Valley Line.

As our train made its way north, Gary shared details of Kent Community Rail Partnership's work both past and present at each of the stations that we passed through.

Upon reaching Strood we took a tour of the subway murals which were co-created with students from Strood Academy, our bus stop waymarking and the site of last year's successful community litterpick.



The afternoon saw us gather in Maidstone Town Hall for presentations summarising our achievements over the previous year and setting out our ambitious Action Plan for 2024/25.

Chris Fribbins presented certificates of appreciation to our dedicated volunteers, in recognition of the work they do to connect people and communities with their local stations and promote the benefits that rail travel can bring to everyone.

Steve White presented our Volunteer of the Year award to Dominic Noades for his involvement in a



phenomenal number of our projects and wider advocacy for Community Rail across Kent, a much deserved award.

A lively "Open Platform" question and answer session followed, with representatives from Community Rail Network, Southeastern, Network Rail and Sustrans. Our panelists offered to continue discussions with members over some of the more specific points raised.

The achievements of Kent Community Rail Partnership have volunteering at their heart, we could not do it without you.

## Faversham Festival of Transport

It was a very busy weekend with over five hundred people through the doors. Bags, pens, stickers, colouring in pages and puzzle sheets flew off the shelves; spreading our branding around the town.

There were lots of conversations about taking "Days Out By Rail Adventures" on a "Go Green By Train" journey with cycle maps of Sheppey and our new [tourism brochure](#) for the island's attractions proving popular.

We introduced many people to [Railcards](#), families were informed of the "[Kids for a Quid](#)" scheme, "[GroupSave](#)" and other offers that can make "Days Out By Rail" more affordable.



An enormous thank you to all our volunteers for making it such a fabulous event, it would not have been possible without their commitment and support.

We were proud to be share how Community Rail is about "More Than A Railway" as we celebrated "Community Rail Week".

## Lakes and Marshes Rail Ramble



Our guided walks seek to connect people with nature to improve their well-being, promote sustainable rail travel and bring tourist spend to the local economy. We were joined at Snodland station by eleven people from across the county, with nine arriving by rail.

Our walk began with a view of the Pilgrims Way stone in the wall outside All Saints church. There is debate over where medieval pilgrims crossed the river, the likelihood is that they would have used many different routes. A formal ferry at Snodland does not appear in records before the 1800s.

Muddy footpaths took us around the edge of the Kent Wildlife Trust nature reserve for views from the riverbank and of the second world war pillbox that would have defended the river and hampered any invasion. Across the river bank we were able to see the memorial stone commemorating the battle of the Medway in AD43. It is believed that the Roman legions forded the river at Snodland before defeating the British tribes under Caratacus in a battle near Cuxton.

Leybourne Lakes Country Park was the second half of our trip, including a welcome break for some light refreshments at the lakeside cafe.

We saw many dragonflies as we walked onwards to New Hythe station.

We hope we've inspired you to plan your own Days Out By Rail adventures.



## Station Adoption Meetings



We are working with community groups in Bearsted to develop plans to adopt their station.

We met with tutors from Valley Park School to begin an adoption of Maidstone East by their students. Lenham school will be adopting their station too.

They will all be joining the Community Rail Network station adoption scheme.



## Ashford College Travel Training



Tutors and students from Ashford College joined us for travel training trips to Maidstone East in April and Charing in May.

The trips grew confidence to use the railway safely and students helped our station adopters at Charing.

## Dates for your diary

- **27<sup>th</sup> July** Maidstone River Festival
- **10<sup>th</sup> September** Heritage Open Days Led Walk, Watlington - Yalding
- **11<sup>th</sup> September** Heritage Open Days Led Walk, Lenham – Hollingbourne station café.



Keep up to date! Visit our website: [www.kentcrp.org.uk](http://www.kentcrp.org.uk)

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Kent Community Rail Partnership encourages greater use of the Medway Valley, Kent Downs and Swale Rail lines by local people and visitors and aims to improve station environments and facilities on offer. Kent Community Rail Partnership is hosted by Sustrans. 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