



Kent Community
Rail Partnership

Autumn 2026

NEWSLETTER



Class 375 at Gillingham station
Courtesy of AV

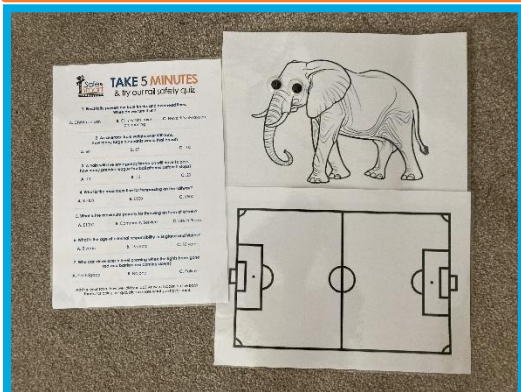


Premier at the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway



Class 395 at Gillingham station
Courtesy of AV

Travel Training with 4th Milton Regis (St Mary's) Cubs & 8th Sheppey Cubs



Two cub packs visited Swale Rail stations to learn about rail safety and had an adventure travelling along the line. We helped 42 cubs to understand why they should Keep Off The Tracks and what the dangers of misbehaving on the railway can be. Onboard the train the cubs received pens, activity sheets and a station themed wordsearch. Cub leader Antonia said, "Thank you for session, it was great for the Cubs to experience something different whilst learning about rail safety." We would like to thank Sittingbourne station manager Luke Wood and supervisor Jake for their help.

Rail Safety Week, Paddock Wood Pop-Ups

Assisted by volunteer, Vincent Jasper, we set up a stall at Paddock Wood station, where we engaged with 18 passengers about how safe they feel when travelling by rail and the things that make them feel less safe. We were able to raise awareness of the British Transport Police 61016 service and reassure people that reporting suspicions is the right thing to do. Reporting enables BTP to consider your concerns in the light of other information they may have received. They can then decide what action is appropriate and act accordingly to make the railway safer for everyone.



The Lenham School Wellbeing and Kindness Event



Six students from a variety of year groups from Lenham School gave out 48 bags of sweet treats, with wellness and kindness messages inside and wished commuters a good evening. The aim was to promote kindness and positive wellbeing. Commuters were left feeling happy and cheered with dozens of "thank yous" from passengers for the students' kindness.

New North Downs Way Information Boards on the Kent Downs Line

On Tuesday 18 August our stakeholders and partners joined together to launch the boards at Hollingbourne station. Working in collaboration with Kent County Council, we aim to increase sustainable tourism along the North Downs Way, by promoting rail to trail routes between Charing, Lenham, Harrietsham and Hollingbourne stations along the Kent Downs Line.

We are very grateful to Community Rail Network for funding the design and production of the four station map boards at a cost of £7,840 and to Southeastern for installing them at Hollingbourne, Harrietsham, Lenham and Charing (coming soon!) stations. This is part of a wider £16,603 project part funded by Farming in Protected Landscapes which included print media, radio ads, the landing page on Explore Kent, and Facebook advertising; all of which has supported sustainable tourism in the area and extended the typical summer tourist season to all year round.

Many people who have attended our taster walks to promote the rail to trail routes have since undertaken several independent days out by train with friends and family, to explore the rail to trail routes between stations evidencing our aim has been achieved.

“Community Rail Network is proud to provide funding for the station map board now on display at Hollingbourne station. It provides a valuable resource for those wishing to explore the area and take advantage of the wonderful local area for walking and cycling. The Rail to Trail initiative is a great way of promoting the local area while using the train which is such a sustainable form of transport and benefits so many across local communities” – Colin Burcombe, Community Rail Support Officer.



Parliamentary Launch of On Track to Opportunity Report



Chris Fribbins, volunteer Chair of Kent CRP and Clare Dowling, Senior Project Manager, Active Journeys South and East at our hosts Walk Wheel Cycle Trust were honoured to attend the Parliamentary Reception to mark the launch of the 2026 South Eastern Railway, “On Track to Opportunity” report.

The report outlines how the railway is focusing its efforts on residents in deprived areas, with a programme of activity aimed at improving access to jobs, education and essential services. This includes targeted improvements in connectivity, clearer pathways into rail careers, and partnerships with local organisations to remove practical and financial barriers. Steve White, Managing Director of Southeastern, said: “Railways have a vital role to play in connecting people with opportunities and reducing regional inequalities.”

Southeastern Team Away-Day With Kent Community Rail Partnership



Working with the North Downs Way National Trail 'Putting Down Routes' project, Kent CRP managed a 4 mile guided walk from Harrietsham to Hollingbourne. 21 members of Southeastern's Communications Team attended as part of a team building day. Prior to the walk some time was spent at Harrietsham station with Rob Hall, Station Manager and Caroline Williams, Communications and Engagement Manager, Putting Down Routes who discussed the programme and the benefits to those provided with guided walks. Therese shared the Harrietsham History Society's plans for their station adoption including display boards for the shelter on platform 2 and a map board illustrating a history walk around the village.



As we walked, Therese shared points of interest including farming methods, fauna and flora, history and pilgrimage. We met a few walkers heading in the opposite direction, the most notable were a couple from Canada who were walking the whole 153 miles of the trail.

Everyone said they enjoyed the Rail to Trail, some adding that they would like to return to walk other sections of the North Downs Way.

Swale Rail Line Trip With Community Rail Network

At the end of August, we were joined by Karen Bennett Education and Youth Engagement Advisor at Community Rail Network and Luke Wood, Southeastern station manager for a trip along our Swale Rail Line. Swale Rail is where Kent CRP began in 2003 and we have built strong connections with local communities, including schools, colleges and youth groups.

The tour was a chance to show Karen where the magic happens and showcase a wide variety of works from station adopters, schools and community groups; including projects featured in case studies, best practice guides and Community Rail Award winners.



Promotional Pop-up at Maidstone Repair Cafe

Maidstone CAN, our Maidstone West station adopters invited us along to their Children and Families themed Maidstone Repair Cafe on Saturday 1st August. We saw an opportunity to provide local support to Community Rail Network's summer Days Out By Rail campaign, bringing along walking and cycling maps for Kent towns, and guides to our ever popular Medway Valley Rail Trails.

We also gave away Southeastern's Summer Reading Challenge packs, colouring in sheets and other activities to keep kids entertained on their rail journeys. With over 240 people through the doors, our officer and volunteers were soon talking about ways to save with Railcards, GroupSave tickets, Kids for a Quid deals and more. We had some great conversations around accessible travel assistance, taking bikes on trains, the work of our station adoption groups and places to visit by rail along our lines. 89 items were brought along to the Repair Cafe in August, the team managed to fix 68 of them.



Ashford College ESOL Students, Train Travel Training and Station Gardening

Kent CRP managed a Train Travel Training (TTT) session from Ashford International with a gardening session at Borough Green & Wrotham station for 19 Ashford College students whose first language is not English and 3 of their tutors. We met Janet and Janice, the long standing station adopters who provided us with our gardening tasks. Some students planted 4 large plants and 12 smaller ones into the bank on platform 1; these plants will provide ground coverage in blue and white. Thank you, Toni, our very supportive station manager for providing encouragement, water and the plants. The rest of the students worked with Janet and Janice to weed a large area of the platform 2 beds. For this first visit we just stayed the hour between trains however, it was remarked that this was over 20 hours of weeding and planting which would have taken several days for Janet & Janice to achieve.

The students seemed a little reluctant at first which was not surprising as the weather was windy and very drizzly however, they soon started making great progress with the tasks and large bags of weeds and shrub cuttings were being removed from the platform.

Students gained confidence in travelling by train during this trip and previous trips, some of whom are now independent train travellers. All said they enjoyed participating in the gardening despite the weather and would like to return for more gardening! Train Travel Training is a valuable tool to bring students onto the railway enabling them to have greater access to education, employment and leisure.

Tutors said, "I'm always amazed at how the students get involved in things outside. They were keen to get on as it was hands on despite the weather." Tutors are now trained to provide independent TTT.



Yalding Station Adoption



At the beginning of August, Derek received his rail safety briefing from Southeastern to adopt Yalding station. In collaboration with some of his neighbours, Derek will be arranging regular litter-picking and planting up a small, grassed verge on the approach to the station this Autumn. The aim is to add some colour and show that Yalding station is valued by the local community. Once established the Friends of Yalding station will consider what other opportunities there could be to brighten the space.

We're looking forward to seeing their plans move forward.



Keep up to date, visit our website: kentcrp.org

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