
Swale Rail

To: **Swale Joint Transportation Board**

By: Rhiannon Mort – Principal Transport Planner, KCC Environment, Planning and Enforcement

Date: 7 September 2015

Classification: For recommendation

Summary: This report updates Members on the activities of the Kent Community Rail Partnership, in relation to the “Swale Rail” line between Sittingbourne and Sheerness - on - Sea.

1.0 Introduction and Background

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides background and an update on the activities of the Kent Community Rail Partnership in relation to the Swale Rail Line.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Kent Community Rail Partnership (CRP) was established in 2003, to support less frequently used rail lines in Kent, including the Medway Valley Line and Swale Rail.

2.2 The Swale Rail extends from Sittingbourne to Sheerness - on - Sea providing a half hourly service to passengers. The Medway Valley Line extends from Strood to Paddock Wood, with the extension to Tonbridge currently being considered.

2.3 The Kent CRP aims to bring together widely varied partners in order to bring social, economic and environmental benefits to the communities served by rural and secondary rail services.

2.4 Core funding is provided by Kent County Council, Medway Council, Southeastern and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. The partnership is also supported by a number of public and private sector organisations.

2.5 In 2014 Sustrans were appointed as the host organisation. Two part time officers currently work on behalf of the Kent CRP; a Project Officer and Engagement Officer.

2.6 The Swale Rail Line Group meet on a quarterly basis to bring together local stakeholders to help drive forward Kent CRP initiatives for the Swale Rail Line

3.0 Activities

3.1 The Kent CRP undertakes activities to promote the use of rail by local residents, businesses and visitors through community and school engagement work, marketing and communication.

- 3.2 The Partnership’s work focuses on promoting improvement to station environments and surroundings, seeking to improve integration of rail services with other means of sustainable transport.
- 3.3 New initiatives to raise awareness of the Medway Valley and Swale Rail Line have included pop up hub events, which provided information and activities to engage existing and potential rail users.
- 3.4 In the last year events on the Swale Rail Line have included two cycle rides, connecting the National Cycle Route to Swale Rail Line and a “walk and talk” event from Queenborough Station. Pop-up Hub events were held at Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway’s Community Day and at the Knauf factory at Kemsley Fields Business Park
- 3.5 Through a Smarter Journey Programme, the Kent CRP has worked with Year 6 pupils to encourage active and sustainable travel, including confident use of the railway line in preparation for Secondary School. Murston and Queenborough Primary schools have both been involved in the programme this year.
- 3.6 Interest from schools in participating in the Smarter Journey Programme continues to increase.
- 3.7 During 2015, the schools engagement programme will continue to grow, with the 2015/16 Kent CRP Action Plan including the development and implementation of a Transition to College Programme and Safety in Action programme.
- 3.8 Kent CRP’s engagement with businesses on the Medway Valley Line and Swale Rail has also been identified as a priority during the next year.
- 3.9 Alongside community and school engagement work the Kent CRP provides information online through its website (www.kentcrp.org.uk), Facebook page (Kent Community Rail Partnership) and Twitter account (@kentcrp1)

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 Financial contributions to the Kent Community Rail Partnership during 2015/16 are shown as follows:

Southeastern	£40,000
Kent County Council (Local Sustainable Transport Fund)	£25,000
Medway County Council	£5,875
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	£4,000

- 4.2 Whilst Southeastern have committed £40,000 per annum over the next 3 years, contributions from Kent County Council, Medway Council and Tonbridge & Malling are under annual review.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 To request the Kent Community Rail Partnership to seek further improvements to the operation of ‘Swale Rail’ by continued close partnership working with rail industry stakeholders, through which the franchise operator Southeastern is encouraged to further improve the quality of the service on ‘Swale Rail’ to better serve rail passengers travelling to and from Sheppey.**

6.0 Contact Officers

KCC Contact Kent CRP Contact Officer:	Rhianon Mott – Principal Transport Planner Guy Schofield – Project Officer
Reporting to:	Joseph Ratcliffe – Transport Strategy Manager

<i>Annex 1</i>	Kent CRP Annual Calendar 2015-16
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