



It's getting better—things are happening!

Third Edition

April 2005

SwaleRail

The Kent Community Rail Partnership

New Kent Franchise should bring improvements to the Sheerness branch

In January the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) issued the train specification document for the new franchise.

Good News!

The good news is that the present service level of two trains per hour daytime Monday to Saturday will be maintained, and as a bonus most trains will be extended to serve Faversham Canterbury and Dover direct.

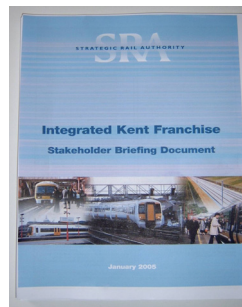
Good Defending!

The KCRP played its part in defending present service levels by carrying out a passenger count to demonstrate usage and demand, and by referring to the 2001 census showing a high number of households along the rail corridor without

cars. We were pleased to support the campaign run by the local newspaper, the Sheerness Times Guardian, which collected many signatures from local people.

2009

The down side is that the new timetables won't become effective until the new high speed trains can run between Kent and London's Stratford and St Pancras stations. That could be as late as 2009. The existing timetable pattern remains in force until then. Also it is proposed to close Swale station altogether, but that can be fought as a separate issue. The KCRP believes this station has an important future in the areas of tourism and



integrated transport once the new bridge is completed.

KCRP part of the picture

The other piece of good news is that the SRA's specification states that the bidders must demonstrate how they are prepared to work with the KCRP. See also item on the SRA's Community Rail Development Strategy, page 2. The new franchisee should take over in October this year.

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Special points of interest:

- Achievements and successes during our first year, see pages 2 & 3.
- A great summer (and autumn!) of events to enjoy in Swale (page 4)
- Making the railway a safer and more pleasant travelling environment (see page 2)

CLEAN LINE DAY / National Community Rail Day SATURDAY 14TH MAY

GIVE US A HAND AND LET'S SHOW EVERYONE WE CARE

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READ ALL ABOUT IT ON PAGE 2 - - ALSO SHOWING DETAILS OF THE NEXT WORKING GROUP MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 13TH APRIL

Making the railway a safer and more pleasant travelling environment

What has SwaleRail achieved in this direction?

- Live CCTV camera for Kemsley (due May)
- Brokered a deal between SET and SBC for the Community Wardens to travel by train, thus giving a uniformed presence. In due time it may be possible to target the wardens onto specific services.
- Supported projects aimed at engaging young people to care for the rail environment
- Drawn public attention to the ways in which action can be successfully achieved

So just what *can* you do? →

Anti-social behaviour

Report this to the Council on 01795 417850. If it goes unreported the statistics do not show a problem.

Vandalism & threats to staff

Report this to British Transport Police on 0800 40 50 40

Criminal activities, especially if there is risk to life

Call the police on the usual number

999

Reporting problems helps to ensure that available resources are directed where they are most needed.



A typical SBC live CCTV camera as seen throughout the Borough. 24-hour live pictures, monitored in Sittingbourne, have helped bring about a large number of prosecutions.

CLEAN LINE DAY SAT 14 MAY

Litter is a major problem on our branch. Help us to raise the profile of the problem so we can encourage people not to drop litter in the first place.

Stations and Trains

Saturday 14th May is our Clean Line Day with volunteers helping to keep the stations and trains attractive and clear of litter throughout the day.

In addition to South Eastern Trains we have a group of Brownies with us and a number of regular volunteers, but the more help the better. We would also like to have other attractions going on at the three main branch stations; for example, Sheppey College plan to have

WORKING GROUP MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 13TH APRIL AT THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, GUILDHALL QUEENBOROUGH STARTING AT 2 P.M.

an exhibition on station improvements at Sheerness.

Can YOU help?

If you would like to help either come along to the next line working group meeting or call Nigel Whitburn, number on page 4. Please note that for health and safety reasons you won't be able to simply turn up on the day—we need your details in advance.

Maybe your school, business or commu-

nity group might be interested in helping in some way to draw attention to this anti-litter campaign? Give Nigel a call.

WE CAN WIN THIS ONE!

National Community Rail Day

The 14th is also Community Rail Day with most of the 40+ partnerships running special events. We are hoping for plenty of national and local news coverage.

Community Rail Development Strategy launched in November

Government minister, Tony McNulty, launched the new strategy at the "Head of Steam" (bottom right) on Huddersfield station last November. Contrary to media misconception it is NOT about closing lines but about KEEPING THEM OPEN. It is not a new idea, it has been developed because so many EXISTING partnerships have shown that the concept CAN WORK. It is not based on the "one size fits all" idea and allows for every degree of flexibility. Have a look around the Association of Community Rail Partnership's website (www.acorp.uk.com) and explore some of the links to the various partnerships. See what others have been up to and achieved. We heart-

ily recommend viewing www.bitternline.com, one of the most successful partnerships. Passenger traffic has doubled since the CRP came into being on this Norfolk Branch. The idea really can work!

Tony McNulty is quoted as saying "I am no Dr Beeching, I want to see rural lines becoming vibrant, well-used services for the community."

Here in Swale the community, as detailed in this newsletter, has demonstrated its commitment to making the Sheerness branch truly successful. We are grateful to ACoRP and the Strategic Rail Authority for sponsoring this edition.



Improving station décor and making the railway part of the community it serves

COMING SOON TO A STATION NEAR YOU!

Projects are under way or ready to roll at the three main stations on the branch.

Queenborough—Cheyne Middle School have already provided excellent paintings for the redundant upstairs windows, and are turning their attention to the booking hall. We will have sponsored floral hanging baskets again in 2005, and work may begin on land-

scaping the approach road.

Kemsley—Sittingbourne Community College are embarking on a programme of landscaping and décor improvements, with longer term plans for arts-related projects.

Sheerness—Sheppey College will be providing colourful displays in the short term, and working on the Sheppey Map in time to come. Arriva will be providing bus information on the platform.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Some of the principal successes

The Partnership is justifiably proud of its achievements to date, even if the more visual effects have not yet appeared.

So what successes can we point to?

Persuading partners, KCC, to carry out a footfall count that helped support the successful submission to the Strategic Rail Authority on the Kent Franchise proposals.

Brokered arrangements aimed at providing a safer travelling environment (see page 2).

Obtained commercial sponsorship for a number of projects, and the interest and support of the business community.

Encouraged partners South Eastern-Trains to direct more resources into

train and station cleaning.

Supported the development of real time information at the branch stations.

Engaged local schools and colleges in station improvement programmes (see above).

Had a strong input into Swale Borough Council's developing Footpaths and Cyclepath strategy.

Been part of the Local Transport Plan process.

Delivered 6,000 questionnaires to homes on Sheppey.

Supported the introduction of pioneer permanent and easy to find rail-replacement bus stop signs (for use in

THE SHEPPEY QUESTIONNAIRE

We received nearly 500 replies almost all supporting the community rail approach to improvements. The questionnaire pointed out that the key issues of litter, station décor, security and information were being tackled (see items throughout this newsletter) and therefore asked other questions about usage. Initial analysis shows a large number of journeys made for leisure and shopping purposes, and most importantly that the line is needed for travel in connection with employment and education.

The principal reasons given for non-usage were that own car was more convenient, and the stairs at Sittingbourne station presented a "barrier" for those with heavy luggage or push-chairs, or who had difficulty walking. The prize draw was won by a lady from Alma Street in Sheerness.

We are grateful to enthusiastic youngsters Alison, Harry, Molly and Emily for (with a little help from Dad!) getting our questionnaires delivered throughout Queenborough and Rushenden. In common with all young people who get involved they will be honoured as "Line Ambassadors"

emergencies and when there is engineering work).

Attracted funding and commercial sponsorship (worth over £5,000) that otherwise would not have been available directly to the rail industry.

Spreading the word—getting more people involved

The Partnership has been busy spreading the word! Last August, for example, we ran a special public event at Kemsley attended by Swale Housing (SHA), Neighbourhood Watch, Sittingbourne Community College and Swale Forward (SBC). Kemsley residents had the opportunity to come and find out what SwaleRail was all about. We recently held a meeting at the Sheppey Healthy Living Centre in Sheerness, and our questionnaire to nearly 6,000 homes on Sheppey helped raise awareness of the

issues we've been tackling. The newspaper, the Sheerness Times Guardian, has been particularly supportive on Sheppey and has run many stories. And, of course, this is our third newsletter. In between times we have given many talks to clubs, societies, parish councils and school pupils. Our presentations are absolutely FREE. We've called on all sectors of the community including businesses (a number have provided project sponsorship), schools and even HMP Stanford Hill.



Youngsters from the Swale Youth House (SHA) launching the Kemsley event

