

Train Times

AC:RP
New life for local lines

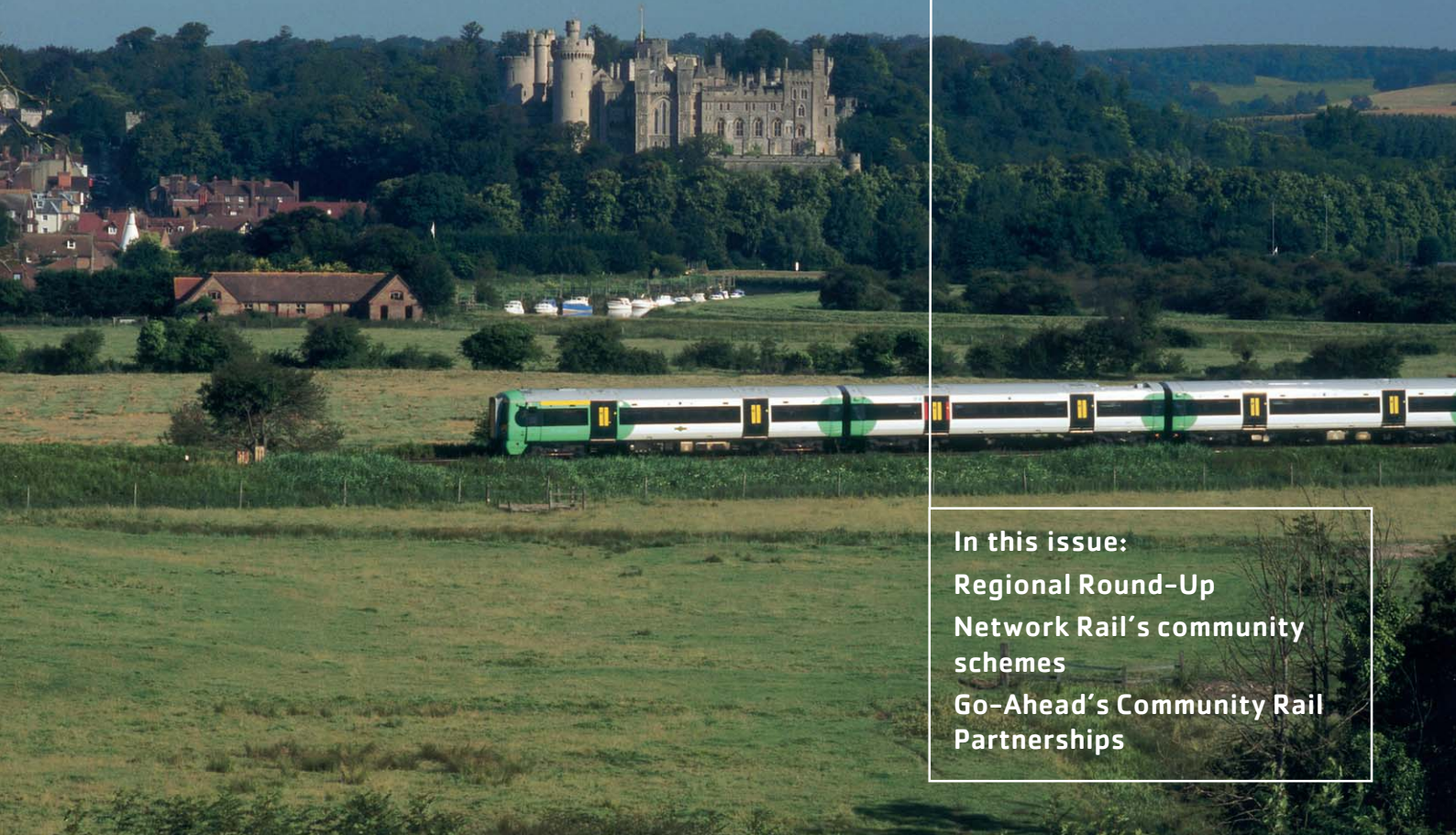
News, views and features from the world of Community Rail

No.61

Summer 2011

Sussex CRP Revealed ...

Taking a closer look at
Community Rail Down South



In this issue:
Regional Round-Up
Network Rail's community
schemes
Go-Ahead's Community Rail
Partnerships

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Go-Ahead

In this issue...

Page 2	Hello and Welcome
Page 3	Sponsor's Spotlight
Pages 4/6	Regional Round-Up
Page 7	Network Rail's Community schemes
Pages 8/9	Go-Ahead and Community Rail
Page 10	Station Adoption Seminar
Page 11	Community Rail Awards and Festival
Pages 12/13	Partnership Profile - Sussex
Page 14	Arrivals and Departures
Page 15	Community Rail Partnerships
Page 16	Community Rail Diary

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Contributors

This edition of Train Times was edited by Nigel Barber (Nigel@quillpower.co.uk) and designed by Philip Jenkinson (phil@acorp.uk.com).

Special thanks go to Lucy Tennyson and all of our contributors for their ongoing hard work and support.

Front cover picture – A Southern service on the Arun Valley line (Gatwick -Chichester) with Arundel Castle in the background.

Hello and Welcome...

The Big Society is a phrase we're rapidly getting used to and it seems that government and others are beginning to recognise that Community Rail *is* the Big Society! Nothing new for us though - we've known it for years and what better way to highlight that than by taking a look at our heroic band of station volunteers. Our report on the Value of Community Rail



Volunteers estimated that around 4,000 people were offering help on a voluntary basis, bringing an incredible £27m added value to the railway industry. This is no small change and I'm always humbled by the fantastic results achieved by this largely unsung group of individuals who care enough about their local stations to put in this level of commitment.

Merseytravel has always been a great supporter of the Community Rail concept and definitely puts its money where its mouth is as far as its local stations are concerned. It was also kind enough to support our recent conference on station adoption held in Liverpool. Not only did delegates have an opportunity to share best practice and meet other adoptees, but were treated to a splendid pre-event tour around the city - now that's real generosity!

As if that wasn't enough, we have our Annual Community Rail Awards in September, once again celebrating all that is good in Community Rail. Here at ACoRP, we felt it was about time we invited you to our home patch, so this year's event will be held in Sheffield's splendid City Hall. The awards are always the highlight of my year, as it gives me a chance to meet and congratulate all the people who *really* make Community Rail happen - and that includes ACoRP's fantastic staff and many other supporters from within government and the rail industry. I've always felt that being involved with ACoRP makes me part of a wonderfully diverse 'family' and, although I know times are hard, I really hope you'll try and come to this event, because, like a big family, it's the one time we can all be together.

The McNulty report has been kind to us too and I'm gratified to see that there's a real will to recognise that Community Rail *is* a different beast and that opportunities could exist to operate and maintain local railways in a different, more cost-effective way. At the recent National Rail Conference, the report's author, Sir Roy McNulty, suggested that the industry needed to identify where rail subsidy was going and what it was buying. As far as Community Rail is concerned, I think we've done that already with our Value of CRPs study and there certainly seems to be an acceptance that elements of the rail subsidy are buying the survival and well-being of local and rural communities - not just a transport resource. 'In which case' I asked a senior rail figure, 'shouldn't other government departments, like DfBIS, DfE and DfH be supporting these rail services too?' 'Hmm, *interesting...*' came the thoughtful reply!

The times may be a-changing - see you in Sheffield!

Sponsor's Spotlight

Why Community Rail matters



David Brown – Group Chief Executive of this issue's sponsor, the Go-Ahead Group.

I am delighted that Go-Ahead is sponsoring this edition of *Train Times*. Businesses have a huge responsibility to take an active role in the communities that they serve. Strong businesses are the ones that take the time to understand and engage with passengers. As a group we already do a great deal, but it is something we plan to grow and develop in the years ahead. As such, I welcome the opportunity to outline some of the Community Rail activity Go-Ahead's three UK based train companies are involved in.

Southern, Southeastern and London Midland carry over one million passengers a day. Many of our passengers are daily commuters and our 10,000 staff work hard to ensure people get to where they need to be.

But our networks are also very diverse and include many rural routes. These routes are vital to the communities they serve and a number of Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) have therefore thrived.

Our philosophy of operating our businesses with a strong local and community focus fits well with ACoRP's desire to improve local railways, deliver better station facilities and services and integrate rail with other forms of transport. We share the same goals and concerns.

Each of our train operating companies has well established partnerships – the Abbey Line and Marston Vale at London Midland; SwaleRail and the Medway Valley Line at Southeastern and the Sussex



CRP on Southern. The Abbey Line has seen the installation of new shelters, signage and information systems and Marston Vale has experienced consistent passenger volume growth over the last year, as a result of focused marketing.

In Kent, passenger numbers have increased by 25% in the last five years due to concerted efforts to encourage local residents to use the Medway Valley service. CRP officers actively seek opportunities to speak to local councils and forums to promote station adoption. Southern launched its new Station Partnership Scheme with the Sussex CRP at the start of its new franchise in 2009, which has proved a huge success. For example, at Plumpton station a new partnership was established in June 2010 and has since become a pivotal part of the station community, with 20 active volunteers who have cleared the station environment of litter.

Many of our CRPs are award winning, regularly featuring on the roll of honour at ACoRP's annual Community Rail Awards. Staff in each of our businesses do excellent work liaising with enthusiastic and dedicated CRP volunteers and local authority representatives. They all work in partnership at a local level to develop and deliver a range of schemes which benefit passengers and communities and increase ridership. These strong relationships are key to the success of our CRPs. I very much look forward to seeing the continuation of these partnerships and fruitful relationships.



Passengers exploring the Abbey Line, care of London Midland...

Regional Round-Up

What's going on in your neck of the woods . . .

New report could help transform local lines

ACoRP has welcomed the McNulty report into the future of the UK's railways, which it says could act as a catalyst to transform the way local rail routes are run.

Titled 'Realising the Potential of GB Rail' and published in May, the report rules out rail closures but highlights the levels of support going into regional franchises, which are higher than for other parts of the railway. The proposed changes for local and rural railways include:

- Piloting more differentiated approaches for both infrastructure and operations, which can maintain safety but which can reduce the costs of less intensively used networks;
- Benchmarking routes with different characteristics to develop these principles;
- A trade-off between flexibility in the use of rolling stock and the ability to provide bespoke low-cost solutions that involve a different approach;
- A greater degree of local decision-making by PTEs and local authorities, more closely aligned with budget responsibility and accountability.

Welcoming the report, ACoRP General Manager Neil Buxton said: "These recommendations reflect an approach long advocated by ACoRP to reduce unit costs and boost ridership. We are keen to work with DfT and the new Rail Delivery Group to put some of these ideas to the test."

Bittern cracks the code

The Bittern Line Partnership is making the most of modern technology to trial the use of a new form of bar code, which helps give immediate internet access.

The partnership is using the codes – known as QR codes – on the back of its new line guides, jointly published with the Wherry Lines CRP. Like a conventional bar code, the QR codes can be read by a laser scanner, taking the user to a variety of locations such as website, e-mail, Facebook page or Twitter feed.

Many modern mobile phones already come equipped with laser readers, though the relevant software is readily available for use with Android or Apple devices.

Community Rail Norfolk's Ian Dinmore explained: "The codes can be shown on printed publicity and websites or Facebook pages to link to almost anywhere you want to take your audience."



Medway, Maritime and Derwent Valley celebrate passenger increases

The Community Rail movement is celebrating success on the Medway, Maritime and Derwent Valley routes, all of which have seen increases in passenger numbers.

On the Truro-Falmouth Maritime Line, nearly one million journeys have been made by passengers in the two years since the train service was doubled with the opening of a passing loop at Penryn station. This is almost two thirds more than the 579,081 journeys made in the previous two years.

Richard Burningham, Manager of the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership, commented: "It is fabulous to see the success of the improved service on the Maritime Line. Local people have responded in big numbers to the doubling of the train service which, among many other benefits, is helping take cars off the busy roads."

On the Medway Valley Line, which runs between Strood and Paddock Wood via Maidstone West, passenger numbers rose by 7.5% during 2010/11, with a 25% increase since the CRP's formation in 2006.

And on the Derwent Valley Line, the success story continues, with a 13% increase in passenger journeys at local stations on the line during the last year, with an incredible 94% increase over the last three years.

This significant growth in passenger journeys follows the successful introduction in December 2008 of the hourly train service between Matlock, Derby and Nottingham, with an average of 93% of trains running to time during the course of the last 12 months.

The Falmouth branch has seen substantial increases in ridership over the past two years



New era for Essex and South Suffolk

The Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership (ESSCRP) has entered a new era with a new office and website.

Based at Manningtree station, the office has been provided by National Express East Anglia, with a dedicated CRP officer also based at the station.

In addition, the ESSCRP is launching a new, improved website, helping to promote the Community Rail lines in the area, providing train service information and dedicated station pages about local events and places to visit.



Essex County Council's Dominic Lund-Conlon demonstrates the website he has developed for Essex and South Suffolk from the new office at Manningtree.

Community makes an impact at Alsager



Getting ready for a clean sweep at Alsager

Pupils from Alsager School led the way for a community makeover at Alsager Station on the Crewe-Derby line.

Organised by North Staffordshire CRP, the event saw the youngsters working alongside the local 'Friends' group, staff from East Midlands Trains and the British Transport Police to carry out a variety of tasks including gardening, weeding, litter picking and painting.

The project was the latest in a series of very successful 'Community Days' held at stations on the route, with the aim of involving a number of agencies to improve the whole station environment for the benefit of passengers.

Flowers at Alnmouth Station

It's blooming beautiful at Alnmouth Station on the East Coast Main Line, where local volunteers have helped bring some colour to the site.

The Friends of Alnmouth Station created a summer display of geraniums, lobelias and veronicas in containers built with timber donated by Northumberland Estates.

And the group's handiwork received the royal seal of approval when HRH the Queen paid a visit to the station in June.



Planting up at Alnmouth Station

Evening discounts on the Derwent Valley

This summer, passengers on the Derwent Valley Line can take advantage of bargain evening train fares and special discounts on food and drink in Matlock Bath and Matlock.

East Midlands Trains is offering a range of special evening fares for passengers travelling between Matlock, Derby and Nottingham, starting at just £3 return. Additionally, passengers using these evening fares to travel to Matlock Bath or Matlock can enjoy a range of discounts on traditional pub meals, fish and chips, curries and ice cream at 15 local businesses.

These special evening fares will operate throughout the summer until 3rd September.

Waiting room refurb at Leamington

May saw the official opening of the refurbished waiting rooms at Leamington Spa Station.

The local Friends group has been campaigning for the improvements for some years, with a particular emphasis on heating and journey announcements.

The refurbished waiting rooms include special replica mirrors and framed posters of destinations which can be reached from Leamington Spa, all paid for by the Friends.



The refurbished 'up' waiting room at Leamington Spa

Combined bus and rail for Aberystwyth and Machynlleth

An improved '2-4 -1' initiative for people using public transport has been introduced between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth.

Launched by the Cambrian Railways Partnership, the scheme features Arriva Trains Wales, Arriva Bus Wales, Lloyds Coaches and Express Motors, who will work together to provide passengers (with valid 'return' tickets between the two locations) more flexibility, more convenience and more choice on how to get back to their original destination.

Gainsborough gets its own guide

Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership has unveiled its new guide to the 'Gainsborough' line (Marks Tey – Sudbury).

The guide – aimed at visitors, tourists and residents frequenting this very special corner of the Suffolk/Essex border - features information about the stunning towns and villages along the route, suggestions for station-to-station walks, plus a copy of the timetable.

Celebrating the West Highland Lines

The Friends of the West Highland Lines have unveiled their new 2011 postcards. Produced in partnership with ScotRail and HIRANS, the new cards come on the back of the very successful 2009 postcard run. Customers travelling on West Highland Lines trains will be entitled to one free post card. Additional cards may be purchased at a cost of £2 per pack including postage from Glenfinnan Station Museum, PH37 4LT or by calling 01397 722495.

Handforth flies the flag

The Friends of Handforth Station have teamed up with Wilmslow Grange School to create a new flag for the village.

Mounted on one of the station's three flag poles, the finished design incorporates a railway theme with the Honford Star (symbol of Handforth and the School) and Wilmslow Grange blue.

Commented Wilmslow Grange Headteacher Joanne Ashcroft: "We were incredibly proud to have been asked to design a flag for Handforth Station and children from all classes suggested ideas for what should be included."



Garden party 'thank you' for station partners

Train operator Southern and Sussex CRP staged a special 'thank you' garden party for station adopters in June.

Held at High Beaches Gardens near Haywards Heath, the event, which is set to become annual, was in recognition of those taking part in Southern's Station Partnership Scheme, many of whom have lent their green fingered skills to help brighten up their local stations.

Those enjoying the cream tea and company included the Goring and Emsworth Partnerships, Hassocks and Uckfield.



Southern's garden party guests

Community Schemes in London

Guest contributor Mike Franklin – Network Rail’s Community Rail Executive – looks at the company’s community schemes in and around the capital

By way of an introduction, Network Rail’s ‘Community Scheme’ began in 2008, with a view to encouraging local people to ‘adopt’ non-operational land belonging to us and work their magic on it.

Three years down the line, the scheme goes from strength to strength and is now making an impact on the capital, where a number of initiatives have taken hold. At West Dulwich, five miles from central London, a botanic garden has been established! Started three years ago on the embankment around the station access by Vinnie O’Connell - flowering plant evangelist and co-ordinator of charity ‘New Leaf’ - the garden employs young people on ‘Community Reparations’, some of whom have acquired Vinnie’s zeal and found jobs in horticulture. Now the embankments are a blaze of spring bulbs, with the shop (rented from a local resident) doing a roaring trade in bedding plants. You can find out more at the charity’s website - www.new-leaf.org.uk

The prize for first community scheme in London however must go to Hither Green Triangle nature reserve. Hidden away between two running lines and a Network Rail depot, the scheme was the brainchild of Tertius Beneke, then Environment Manager for Network Rail’s South East territory, with volunteers first joining forces in October 2008. Current projects include a ‘loggery’ for stag beetles and habitats for song birds such as the whitethroat, with plans to open up the site to be visible to passengers waiting on Hither Green station.



The community scheme must be infectious as just around the corner the Hither Green Community Association led by Joanne Deverson has transformed the embankment down to Springbank Road into an oasis for wildlife, creating an amazing backdrop to the station.

And only a mile away, another group of residents are developing a site above a tunnel, unused for many years because the tunnel lining is close to the surface. Now it’s becoming ‘Thornville Street Community Garden’ - a wildflower meadow in the middle of Deptford. A major challenge for the dedicated volunteers has been determined dog walkers who have cut the fence to exercise their animals. But the group, led by Jo Munro and Frances Currie, is undaunted and is bidding for local authority money to supplement Network Rail’s work to provide a tougher fence.



Above: Hard at work at Homerton

Left: The Springbank group

The ultimate challenge to Lewisham’s monopoly of wildlife on Network Rail land has to be Homerton, North London, where a complete wildflower meadow has been created on embankments behind the station platforms, providing not only a wonderful sight for station-users but also a rare habitat for insects. The group had a heart-stopping moment when Network Rail needed to rebuild one embankment, but by June last year commuters were greeted with the sight of snowdrops, bluebells, cowslips, wild daffodils, primroses, greater stitchwort, red campion, ox-eye daisies, meadow vetchling, poppies and many more! The achievements of the 45 volunteers, led by the indefatigable Sue Phillips, have received official recognition, with awards including Hackney in Bloom and Volunteer Team of the Year. To find out more, please visit www.friendsofhomerton.org.uk.

Go-Ahead and Community Rail

Across its three train operating companies – Southern, South Eastern and London Midland – this issue’s sponsor Go-Ahead is involved in a wide range of Community Rail related activity, working alongside a number of partnerships to actively promote the benefits of localised rail networks.

At London Midland, the Watford-St Albans ‘Abbey Line’ was one of the UK’s first official Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs). Since its inception in 2005, there has been a 22% increase in patronage on the route, with current growth running at a healthy 11%. This has been driven by a combination of marketing the service, improving the passenger experience and carrying out major station infrastructure works, including the regeneration of St Albans Abbey Station and the trial of the new easier access platform, known as ‘the hump.’

This past year has seen an unprecedented level of partnership investment in terms of station improvements on the Abbey Line, with £30,000 from the Abbey Line CRP, £67,000 from Hertfordshire County Council and £740,000 from London Midland helping to fund new ‘real-time’ customer information systems and help-points at every station, along with a host of other additional improvements. Underpinning all of this investment is a dedicated team of volunteers, actively supporting the work of the CRP.

Explained London Midland’s Ged Burgess: “Volunteers are the backbone of the Abbey Line, supporting our station team, regularly attending and tending the station and ensuring nothing goes unnoticed or is neglected.”

The Marston Vale line, which runs from Bedford to Bletchley, was officially designated a Community Rail route in November 2006. Over the last year there has been consistent growth, with family events such as the Halloween Ghost Train, Santa Special and Easter Eggspress attracting

Boarding Marston Vale CRP’s Easter Eggspress. Picture supplied courtesy of the Milton Keynes Citizen.

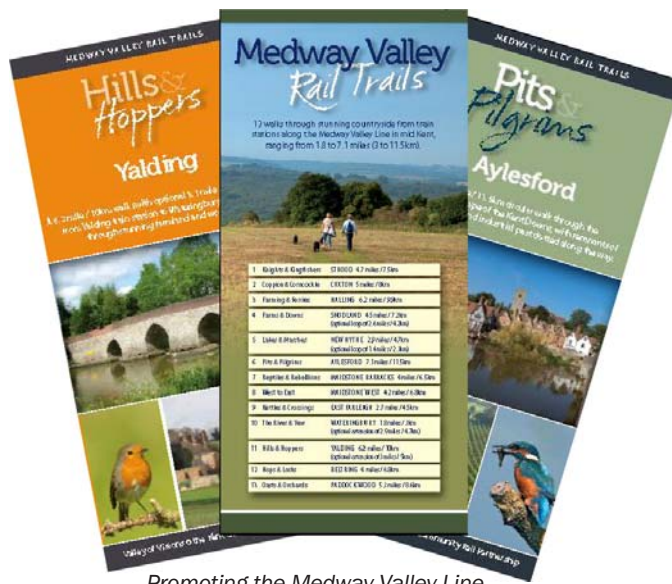


large numbers of passengers - over 40% of whom had not used the service before.

The Marston Vale CRP actively works alongside London Midland, distributing timetables and promotional material, facilitating passenger counts and helping monitor ticketless travel. It also co-ordinates station adoption groups at Millbrook, Bow Brickhill and Fenny Stratford and is leading the scheme to restore the original 1846 Grade II listed station building at Ridgmont for community use.

Over on train operator Southeastern’s patch, Community Rail came to the fore in 2003 with the formation of the Kent CRP, initially focusing on SwaleRail - the Sittingbourne to Sheerness branch line. In 2005, a second line partnership was established for the Medway Valley (running from Strood to Paddock Wood), which has seen a 25% increase in passenger numbers. Designated a Community Rail route in September 2007, the line is dual tracked throughout and serves some significant tourist and leisure destinations. With the CRP focusing its efforts on the development of local traffic, the Medway Valley route has benefited from a much greater “buy-in” from local authorities and communities, in particular Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and a number of town and parish councils.

Across Kent, the CRP’s officers actively seek opportunities to promote “station adoption” and not just on CRP lines. The partnership also responds to consultations on



Promoting the Medway Valley Line

transport issues and regeneration proposals to ensure that due account is taken of the services on the CRP routes. Looking ahead, Kent County Council has included a significant Community Rail element in its bid to the DfT for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. The bid (for £90,000 over four years) will fund a further part-time post if approved, enabling improved marketing and publicity and potentially extending the promotion of station adoption beyond the two lines.

As the last of the three Go-Ahead train operators, Southern works closely with the Sussex Community Rail Partnership (CRP) - an umbrella group working across three Southern railway lines, each with their own line group - the Uckfield/East Grinstead route, the Marshlink line between Ashford and Hastings and the Arun Valley line from Horsham to Chichester.

Each line group works closely with its local partners, linking into Local Authority implementation plans and Southern's franchise objectives. Activities include:

- The design and production of dedicated 'line guides';
- Community liaison including attendance at town/parish councils/passenger and community group meetings and the circulation of promotional materials;
- Key involvement in Southern's Station Partnership scheme, where 25 stations are now supported by volunteers;



Volunteers from Uckfield Community College at Eridge Station

- Organising Community Rail Day events at or near stations;
- Supporting/delivering educational rail safety programmes for children and young people along the line of route, working in partnership with Southern, Network Rail, British Transport Police and local schools;
- Organisation of special trains to help encourage off-peak travel and introduce first time users to the railway e.g. magic and face painting trains during school holidays and seasonal specials such as Santa trains;
- Working in partnership with Tandridge District Council and Southern to provide new cycle racks at Hurst Green in response to local demand;
- Promoting travel to young people in West Sussex with



A Southern service calling at Rye on the Marshlink line.

Boarding the Nutfield Noggin - a special "commentary" train from Maidstone West to Redhill, giving passengers an insight into local history and points of interest along the line.



- a specific leaflet aimed at secondary school children;
- Launch of a 'car share' poster campaign, working with partners including East Sussex County Council and Southern;
- Developing an Arun Valley - Gatwick Airport promotion with Southern for airport workers, offering two free trial days;
- Promoting rail information leaflets for the local community with Southern Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB), piloted at Crowborough;
- Working on the 'adoption' of Network Rail land at Uckfield;
- Encouraging community groups to provide Christmas trees and sing carols at stations (Crowborough, Rye, Ham Street, Ashford).

Emphasising Go Ahead's commitment to Community Rail, Group Chief Executive David Brown said: "Across our three train operating companies, we clearly recognise the importance of community involvement and actively seek to work with our local communities to promote and improve the services that we offer."

Station Adoption Seminar in Liverpool

The 21st July saw Station Adopters from far and wide converging on Liverpool for ACoRP's second annual Station Adoption Seminar.

The event was hosted by Merseytravel and Merseyrail, who also entertained delegates on the previous evening with a evening at the Beatles Experience and an open top bus tour of Liverpool.

The seminar itself kicked off with a presentation by ACoRP General Manager Neil Buxton about *Community Rail and the Big Society*, and how the work of Station Adopters and friends pre-dates the Coalition government's programme and indeed complements it. He was followed by Mike Franklin from Network Rail who covered the *Network Rail Community Scheme*, its successes and traumas, and how you can move on such projects with the careful use of metaphoric garlic! The scheme gives access to Network Rail land for community groups to develop where appropriate. Details of all the projects can be found on the Network Rail and ACoRP websites and a review of the London projects can be found on page 7.

ACoRP's Sue Miles MBE covered the *Community Stations Initiative* which ACoRP hosts and deals with the rehabilitation of redundant station buildings, bringing them back into use for the community. Details again can be found on the ACoRP website.

Insurance and other matters was covered by Brian Barnsley from ACoRP, who warned of the need to take safety, briefing and paperwork seriously.

Finally in the morning session, our good friend John Yellowlees of First ScotRail covered the subject from a train operator's point of view. John gave a very entertaining review of the Scottish experience, where station friends' groups are the main thrust of Community Rail. Gardening is the main activity for many groups, as in England and Wales; however many of these



Keeping the flowers watered at Maghull



Strathleven Artizans at work at Renton

groups have roots in existing community organisations such as at Renton, of which more later. John concluded by outlining the rail industry's outcomes from Station adoption: proud communities, less vandalism and lower SQUIRE fines, respect for staff and services, more young people attracted to rail. All well worthwhile.

The afternoon sessions were given over to best practice presentations from established groups.

The first were the Strathleven Artizans, who have taken over the station buildings at Renton on the Glasgow to Balloch line. Renton has long connections back to the first king of Scotland, Robert the Bruce. The Artizans had been looking for a home for their collection of artefacts for many years and approached ScotRail about using the redundant station buildings. This was granted and the group took over the station in 2010, slowly extending their activities ever since. The station is now a thriving visitor centre and ScotRail have a very well looked after station.

Next was Nigel Winchester from the Maghull Station volunteers. Maghull is on the Merseytravel Northern line, served by four electric trains an hour. The volunteers have transformed the station and interchange with many fabulous looking planters; they have taken over a former crossing keeper's cabin, which they have restored and is now a store for equipment. They have carried out improvement work on the station frontage replacing a low wall. On-going plans are to forge close links with as many local groups as possible, strengthening their position as one of the leading Station Adoption groups on Merseyside.

After the formal sessions the meeting broke up into small groups to discuss in detail Station Adoption. Feedback from this session along with the presentations from the day will be available on the ACoRP website.

Community Rail Awards and Festival 2011

Community Rail Awards 2011

**Gala Dinner and Presentation evening
Friday 23rd September, City Hall, Sheffield**

Another reminder (as if any was needed) of the impending ACoRP Community Rail Awards, which this year will be held at Sheffield City Hall.

The highlight of the Community Rail Calendar, the awards celebrate the very best from the world of the rural and local rail network, paying particular attention to the efforts of the hundreds of volunteers who support the cause across the UK.

Commented ACoRP General Manager Neil Buxton: "Every year it never ceases to amaze me the lengths people go to in support of their local railways. The Community Rail movement is indebted to them and these annual awards are in some small part our way of saying 'thank you.'"

Since their inception in 2005, the awards have evolved each year and run alongside the Community Rail Festival, with the awards held on the Friday and the festival (organised by the local Community Rail Partnerships) taking place on the Saturday, in this case 24th September at Sheffield Station.

This year's awards see entrants competing in 15 categories, which are as shown in the panel. The Welsh Government has also sponsored a 'Showcasing Wales' feature as an integral part of the Awards ceremony and, as always, there will be an award for the overall winner, which this year is sponsored by Network Rail.

Guest presenters for this year's awards will be Tim Shoveller, Managing Director of East Midlands Trains and Northern Rail's Deputy Managing Director Steve Butcher.

If you wish to attend ACoRP's 2011 Community Rail Awards and gala dinner but haven't yet booked a place, contact Events Manager Hazel Bonner as soon as possible as places are now very limited. Hazel can be contacted at hazel@acorp.uk.com or on tel: 01484 848671.

Community Rail Festival

**Saturday 24th September,
Sheffield Station**

As mentioned above, this year's Community Rail Festival will take place at Sheffield Station. As part of the celebrations, the Penistone Line Partnership will be staging a short guided walk, introducing people to the heritage of the lower Don Valley between Meadowhall and Sheffield via the Five Weirs walkway.

The walk will start at 11:00am from Meadowhall and follow the River Don into Sheffield, where participants will then be encouraged to browse around the many stalls and exhibits on the station concourse.

There will also be a variety of stalls on the day, as well as a small railway themed Beer Festival at the Sheffield Tap, along with musical entertainment.



Award

Involving Young People
Community Art Schemes
Local Transport Integration
Best Station Garden or Floral Display
Best Station/Train Retail Outlet
Station Development
International Award
Photo Competition -
Best Community Rail People Image
Best Marketing Publication
Best 'Community Rail' Event
Outstanding Volunteer Contribution
Best Station Adoption Group
Outstanding Railway Staff Contribution
Outstanding Teamwork Award
Passengers Matter

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Railway Heritage Trust
Abellio
Northern Rail
First Great Western
Go-Ahead
Merseyrail
National Express East Anglia
Network Rail
Network Rail
First Transpennine Express

Partnership Profile



This issue the spotlight falls on the Sussex Community Rail Partnership. Lucy Tennyson takes up the story

The Sussex Community Rail Partnership is in many ways in an enviable position. Unusually among CRPs, it has been set up as a company limited by guarantee with an independent structure. It also has secure funding from train operator Southern for five years, running until the end of the franchise in 2015.

The results of this long-term relationship with the operator are already bearing fruit. Smart Turbostar Class 171 units have been introduced and all stations have upgraded infrastructure such as CCTV, cycle racks, live information boards and shelters.

But whilst Community Rail Officer Sam Bryant's patch currently covers an area stretching around 100 miles, from Chichester in West Sussex to Ashford in Kent, there is little shortage of willing volunteers to share the load, with a number of station partnerships throughout the area providing welcome support.

The lines themselves run through the commuter belt of East and West Sussex and Kent, linking a string of small towns exuding the kind of community spirit beloved of David Cameron's 'Big Society.'

However, Sam, who took up her post in 2006, points out a number of challenges ahead, including steering the partnership through a period of continuing growth in passenger travel. Commuter traffic continues



The Spa Valley Heritage Railway and Southern trains meet at Eridge.

to grow at such a rate that capacity is fast becoming a problem at peak times. Explained Sam: "We are still striving to meet passenger needs by calling for such improvements as later services, an earlier service on Sunday on some lines, improving access to stations, getting disused buildings back into use for community activities and promoting Station Partnerships."

Ironically, the fact that the CRP hasn't had large amounts of local authority funding makes it less vulnerable to current spending cuts. Sam does receive local authority support, but mostly on a project basis. For example, she is currently delivering the rail element of a sustainable school travel programme to 13 schools for East Sussex County Council. The focus of her work has also shifted from promoting the line for travel to and from work to tourism and leisure. As such, Sam is now working on promoting the lines for day trips out of London to the area's many attractions including Arundel and Hever Castles, Rye and Romney Marsh and the coastal resorts. In addition, the newly created South Downs National Park also offers huge potential for sustainable travel initiatives.

The dedicated Community Rail Officer is well aware of the challenges in covering such a large area, which includes over 40 stations. "We are concentrating on linking up with other groups and their events," says Sam, who travels to festivals throughout the summer promoting the route. "For example, at the Eden Valley Festival we had an open morning at the station with activities for children. We also take advantage of national events, such as Fair Trade Fortnight, when we got the station cafes involved."

Factfile

Sussex CRP was formed in 2003 as part of a rural transport partnership, which has since gone. Train operator Southern were instrumental from the start, providing funding and office accommodation at Eridge. Today, the partnership consists of the following three key routes:

- The Uckfield and East Grinstead lines, which begin at Oxted, a commuter town at the foot of the North Downs in Surrey, dividing at Hurst Green. Both are single track and there are 13 stations in total. From Uckfield in East Sussex, the typical off-peak service is one train per hour to London Bridge. Whereas Uckfield remains diesel, East Grinstead has been electrified and has on average two trains an hour to London Victoria.
- The Arun Valley line is the longest in the partnership, running over 30 miles southwest from Gatwick Airport to the coast at Bognor Regis and Littlehampton and Bosham via Chichester. There are 17 stations in total, many still retaining short platforms. The line has been electrified, with on average two trains an hour to London.
- The Marshlink Line runs through Kent, linking Ashford, which has high-speed connections to London and Europe, to Bexhill, Hastings and Eastbourne on the East Sussex coast. The line, which remains diesel, crosses Romney Marsh and runs via Rye to the coast.

For Sam, marketing is a key activity. Three new fold-out line guides have just been published and she is also a keen user of Twitter as a marketing tool, letting her followers know of coffee mornings and fetes, as well as keeping in touch with local news organisations.

With funding only sufficient for one other post - a part-time officer for the Arun Valley line (Gatwick - Chichester) - volunteers are key and much of Sam's time is spent on managing the Station Partnership scheme with train operator Southern, helping encourage volunteers to look after their local stations.



Learning how to be a ticket office clerk at Edenbridge open day.



Community Rail Officer Sam Bryant with rail artwork for a local art festival.



Volunteers John Kellett and Bob Jeal work on restoring the Spa Railway waiting room and ticket office at Eridge on the Uckfield line.



Brighter Uckfield volunteer Stuart Woodham clearing rubbish around the new modular station building.

Supporting Fairtrade Fortnight coffee morning at Edenbridge Town Station Café



“The Marshlink line has station adoption groups at Rye, Three Oaks and Winchelsea, where they have been working hard for some five years to make their station part of the community. It is a tough job as it is a mile from the town and they only had three trains a day until recently, but now they have two hourly services and are working hard with us to promote these,” explains Sam.

It's that interaction which Sam believes is so important, as well as rewarding. “That's what I love about this job. For me it's not about the trains, but about the people - it's the community side that makes it so worthwhile.”

Arrivals and Departures

This issue we welcome John Kenny, who joins the Crewe-Manchester CRP as its new officer, following the departure of Nick Matuszcak in March.

John's role will see him promote the use of the train between Crewe and Manchester, working with key partners including Northern Rail, Cheshire East Council and Manchester Airport to support the volunteers and 'Friends of station' groups along the line.

Previously, John had spent almost a decade in transport policy with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, working on a number of European funded transport related projects, as well as freight, community transport and more recently, the development and introduction of electric vehicles and charging points in Stockport as part of the Greater Manchester 'Plugged in Places Project.'

Also based within Stockport Council is David Huber, who has taken responsibility for the newly formed South East Manchester CRP, which includes Marple, Romiley and Hyde.

Network Rail has a new Chief Executive in the shape of David Higgins, formerly Chief Executive of the Olympic Delivery Authority.

Commenting on his appointment, David Higgins said: "My priorities are to drive further a culture of safety, to get even better value for money for the British people and to be more attuned to the needs of our customers and passengers. I also want people to associate these

words with Network Rail: Open. Transparent. Accountable. Responsive."

David Brown becomes new Group Chief Executive of Go-Ahead Group (this issue's sponsor – see page 3), taking over from the departing Keith Ludeman. David, who was Chief Executive of Go-Ahead's Bus Division from 2003-2006, rejoins the group after taking on the role of Managing Director, Surface Transport for Transport for London.

Richard Morris takes over at the helm of the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line (FoSCL). Richard replaces Mark Rand, whose five-year tenure as Chairman took FoSCL to new heights, with the group gaining recognition as a respected deliverer of projects and lobbying organisation both inside and outside the rail industry.

This month also sees Chris Wood start his new role as CRO for Community Rail Norfolk, with responsibility for the Bittern and Wherry lines.

On the departures front, Amy Owen has left her role as part-time Community Rail Officer at Sussex CRP, with responsibility for the Arun Valley Line. The CRP will be announcing Amy's replacement in the near future.

Also leaving the Community Rail fold is High Peak and Hope Valley's Martin Smith who is retiring and Anita Ruffle, who hands over her role as Chair of the Poacher Line (Nottingham-Skegness) CRP to Vanessa Strange at Lincolnshire County Council.

Keeping track of Train Times

How to ensure your stories find their way into Train Times.

Guidelines for contributors

To ensure consistency and assist the editorial process, all written material submitted for *Train Times* should be sent as a Word document, using Arial as the font in point 12 text. All grammar should be checked before submission.

Images

Photographs/images should be sent as high resolution JPEG files at 300 dpi. Where this is not possible, please send hard copies (which can be scanned) to the Editor at 12 Woodland Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 6HE.

If you require the images back, please include a stamped addressed envelope.

And finally...

Please send your contributions for *Train Times* to the editor at: nigel@quillpower.co.uk. To ensure inclusion, please submit your material before the deadline.

Thank you to all those who contribute material to *Train Times*.

What is ACoRP?

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships is a federation of rail partnerships and rail promotion groups. We are an organisation of 'do-ers', focused on practical initiatives which add up to a better, more sustainable railway. Improved station facilities, better train services and improved integration with other forms of transport are central to the work of ACoRP and its members.

What ACoRP does

- Works with decision-makers at a local level to ensure that local rail's rôle is fully recognised;
- Helps identify innovative solutions for local railways; disseminates examples of good practice;
- Works with local stakeholders to develop new partnerships;
- Supports its membership with conferences and training sessions;
- Maintains a lively, user-friendly website and encourages people to think outside their trains!

Become an ACoRP Associate

Anyone can become an ACoRP Associate and in return for an annual subscription receive *Train Times* and any other publications we produce, as well as being able to claim discounts on attending our events. See our website or contact the office.