

Medway Valley Line

Community Rail Partnership

News

Spring 2006

The Medway Valley Line Partnership - What is it?

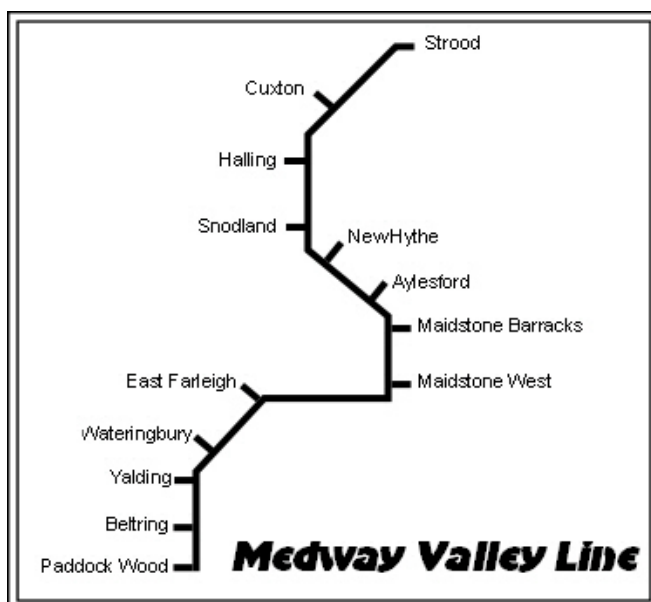
Set up in September 2005, the Medway Valley Line Partnership brings together representatives of local councils, bus operators, the train companies as well as other interested bodies and individuals who together aim to improve services and facilities on the Medway Valley Line.

The line runs from Strood to Paddock Wood and councils who are actively involved with the Partnership include Kent County Council, Medway Council, Maidstone Borough Council and the Town & Parish Councils of Cuxton, Halling, Snodland, Aylesford, East Farleigh, Watringbury and Yalding. By working together we will be able to be more effective than acting independently.

marketing the line to local people as well as visitors to the area. The Medway Valley Line is an underused asset and we intend to make the line play a more vital role in future.



Maidstone West before repainting



The MVL Partnership is one of two run by the Kent Community Rail Partnership. The other is SwaleRail, the Sittingbourne to Sheerness line.

We also have strong links with our colleagues in East Sussex who have two line partnerships that run into Kent. For more details on all these lines have a look at our web pages at www.ruralkent.org.uk.

However, The Partnership will not run the service. The train operating company are still in charge of that and Network Rail still own the line. Instead we will work with them to achieve our common goals.

The Partnership will initially seek to find funding for small scale improvements to station environments and also use different methods of

We hope you find this newsletter of interest. Watch out for future editions in the coming months.

Kent Community Rail Partnership

Wave Goodbye To Semaphore Signals

Regular travellers may have noted the intense activity that was occurring during the autumn when new colour light signalling was being installed along the full length of the line.



Old signals at Aylesford

This has meant the end of the semaphore signals that have helped give the line a "heritage" feel in recent years. This modernisation is good news for the Medway Valley Line as it represents a major investment in its future.

The new colour light signals are much brighter, more reliable and offer the opportunity of the line benefiting from the AWS safety system (preventing trains from passing signals "at danger") in the future.

The signal boxes remain in use and whilst many old signals soon disappeared, plans are being discussed to transfer some of those left to a museum and a preserved railway.

Happy Birthday

2006 sees the 150th anniversary of the opening of the line between Strood and Maidstone. We hope to mark this occasion with a special event later in the year. Watch out for further news!

Govia win Integrated Kent Franchise

The Govia consortium have won the Kent rail franchise and will be the new operator of most train services in Kent from April 1st. The subsidiary set up to operate the franchise is the London and South Eastern Railway (LSER). It will run services for six years, with a further two year extension if performance targets are met. Govia already runs the neighbouring Southern franchise that operates mainly within Sussex and Surrey.

Some of the pledges made by Govia to improve the train travel experience in the south east include:

- ▶ A major timetable review in 2007 to improve punctuality and deliver more services
- ▶ Investment of £18 million on upgrading trains, including new seat covers, toilets and passenger information on trains
- ▶ CCTV on all trains
- ▶ A station improvement scheme with better accessibility, information systems and more CCTV. All stations to be repainted within 3 years
- ▶ Removal of graffiti from trains within 24 hours of being reported

Govia have pledged to put reliability, punctuality, safety and security at the heart of its operations. Under a government formula fares will rise each year at 3% above inflation from 2007.

The Medway Valley Line Partnership looks forward to working with Govia to help develop and improve facilities on our local line.

Riding The Line - By Bus!

Members of the Line Partnership recently undertook a tour of the whole Medway Valley Line - not by train, but by road!



Some of the Partnership members brave the cold weather outside Maidstone West station

Courtesy of Partnership member, Norman Kemp of "Nu-Venture", we visited every station on the line in order to be familiar with their individual characteristics and problems. They were also able to see how proposed works could improve local facilities.

Doing the tour by road meant it was also possible to see how the stations were located in relation to the local communities and how well they were signposted. We are very grateful to Nu-Venture Coaches for their assistance with this trip.

Some Recent Improvements Along The Line

- A bench seat has now been installed on the south bound platform at East Farleigh Station
- A derelict phone booth has been removed from the southbound platform at Aylesford station.
- A general tidy up at Halling Station has included some platform work and cleaning or replacement of some station signs as well as tidying of areas adjacent to platforms.
- Maidstone West Station has been redecorated.
- New improved self service ticket machines have been installed at the three staffed stations – Strood, Paddock Wood and Maidstone.



Ian Paterson tries out the new seat at East Farleigh



- Rail Replacement bus stops have been introduced in the vicinity of most stations, showing intending passengers where to wait for buses when lines have to be closed for engineering work or other reasons.
- The old listed station building at Aylesford (now in private hands) has been receiving extensive exterior renovation in recent months, so should help improve the environment at this location. A ragstone wall and wooden fencing adjacent to the station road crossing have been completely renewed by Network Rail and the privately owned ex crossing keepers cottage has also been recently decorated as well!

Bringing Old Buildings Back Into Use



The Partnership is keen to bring unused station buildings back into use.

Currently **Cuxton** (above) and **Yalding** are empty. At **Halling** a planning application to convert the station building into an office has just been approved by Medway Council.

The Partnership will be happy to help potential users of these buildings get in contact with the rail companies and agents. See our contact details on the back page.

Local Timetables Being Distributed

As the majority of stations on the Medway Valley Line are unstaffed, they are unable to offer any literature to take away giving details of the train service on offer.



As part of our drive to improve information and publicity we are distributing customised timetable and information leaflets to community along the line. Watch out for a copy coming through your letterbox in the next month or so! We hope to have additional copies available at local outlets in each village served by the railway.

This local initiative complements rather than replaces the full South Eastern Trains pocket timetable that provides a more detailed timetable and includes information of connections for onward travel. These remain available from staffed stations, some Tourist Information Outlets and can be downloaded from the South Eastern Trains website.

We welcome feedback as to the design and content of our new timetable leaflets.

Thank You

Kent CRP would like to thank South Eastern Trains for funding this first edition of the Medway Valley Line newsletter. We are very grateful!

Find Us On The Web



The Medway Valley Line Partnership has dedicated pages on the “**Action with Communities in Rural Kent**” website at www.ruralkent.org.uk

Copies of this newsletter can be downloaded from the site and you can also find out about other Kent Line Partnerships.

The pages are being updated regularly, so please have a look and let us know what you think. What would you like to see on them?

Who's Who



Councillor Mike Fitzgerald is an Independent member of Maidstone Borough Council. Previously a member of the Cabinet, he is currently Deputy Mayor of Maidstone. Mike is Chairman of both the Kent Community Rail Partnership and the Medway Valley Line

Partnership Steering Group. He can be contacted on 01622 743270 or at mikefitzgerald@maidstone.gov.uk

Nigel Whitburn is the **Kent Community Rail Partnership Officer**. He is responsible for Kent CRP, the individual line partnerships and other projects with which the CRP is concerned. Employed by “Action with Communities in Rural Kent”, Nigel has also been concerned with rural transport issues in Kent & Medway. He can be contacted on 01303 850816 or at nigel.whitburn@ruralkent.org.uk



Station Adoption - The Future For Small Stations?

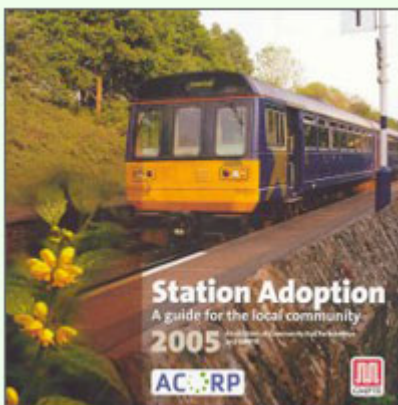
Railway stations aren't often orphaned - but they can be neglected. One way to overcome this is to “adopt” your local station and we are keen to see an adoption scheme introduced to Kent.

If you would like to know more about “Station Adoption” please contact Ian Paterson or Nigel Whitburn as shown on the right hand side of this page.



Ian Paterson has recently joined Kent Community Rail Partnership as a **CRP Project Officer** on a part time basis. He works mainly with the Medway Valley Line partnership.

He too can be contacted via “Action with Communities in Rural Kent” on 01303 850816 or at ian.paterson@ruralkent.org.uk



Useful Websites

- South Eastern Trains:** www.setrains.co.uk
- National Rail Enquiries:** www.nationalrail.co.uk
- Kent Community Rail Partnership:** www.ruralkent.org.uk
- Association of Community Rail Partnerships:** www.acorp.uk.com
- Traveline Public Transport Information:** www.traveline.org.uk
- Go-Ahead Group:** www.go-ahead.com
- Nu-Venture Coaches:** www.nu-venture.co.uk
- Arriva Buses Southern Counties:** www.arrivabus.co.uk