

Medway Valley Line Partnership Meeting October 15th 2020

Chair. James Lehane, (Normally Vice Chair)

14 participants

Agenda pages were shared where relevant. This allows everyone to see the agenda as the discussion proceeds but reduces the numbers of video faces visible to 6 at a time.

Most planned events have been cancelled due to Covid.

Sites for a mural. One will be done at Snodland.

Fencing a footpath as suggested at a previous meeting would cost around £200,000.

James Lehane: "£8 million has been offered for cycling and walking but it's quite difficult to access and there are all sorts of caveats."

Rail Trail leaflets. Explore Kent has produced them as an app. <https://explorekent.org/rail-trails>. (These do not seem to be available as downloadable mobile phone apps but only as pages from the paper leaflets which are very hard to read on a mobile phone). There are 14 set of leaflets which "Cost quite a lot to produce." It was not thought to be a good time to be handing out leaflets at stations.

They still have printed rail timetables available at main stations. "The timetables have changed more than we usually do."

Therese Hammond talked about plans to put up Christmas decorations at stations. Looking for ideas. SouthEastern a producing a leaflet to attract volunteers. A Kent CRP volunteer opportunity page is now on the Sustrans website. <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/volunteer-vacancies/community-volunteer-medway-valley-and-swale> .

Most of the signal boxes are still in use and likely to remain so. One has just been decommissioned. Are residents of new houses being informed about the existence of the Medway Valley Line? They are supposed to receive travel packs. James Lehane will pursue.

James Lehane. "We do have funds to do things. Is there any possibility of advertising the Community Rail Partnership in partnership with South Eastern?" Would use social media round the stations and/or leaflets.

The budget is almost entirely provided by SouthEastern Railway, £75,000 with £4,000 from KCC.

The Santa Train had more than 200,000 views.

Plans for planters on Cuxton station. Will use volunteer effort.

There were concerns about lack of plans as to how new householders will get to stations. Paddock Wood has a development of 1,000 houses.

KCC Kent Rail consultation.

<https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/kentrailstrategy2021/consultationHome>

The closing date is Tuesday November 17th.

The Kent Community Rail Partnership is at <http://kentcrp.org>.

Medway Valley Line trains are being well used by school children even though fewer adults are commuting.

There were concerns that most trains terminate at Paddock Wood rather than Tonbridge. You apparently have to get across a footbridge to get to the London trains. Only about 6 people actually get off at Tonbridge. Problem is the need to cross the tracks to get onto the main Up line.

Aylesford Newsprint site. There were questions about the site development. Will this affect level access to Aylesford and New Hythe stations? David Thornewell, Larkfield PC said most of the site is in Ditton but commented that there was no Ditton member at the meeting. New Hythe station: The Strood platform can only be accessed by steps. Could we have a ramp? Opening Bellingham Way would greatly improve access by rail replacement buses.

The Group would welcome any suggestions for any ideas to improve business round railway stations.

James Willis, formerly a Maidstone Borough Councillor, brought up the matter of trying to maintain a green barrier between Maidstone and the increasing urban sprawl on the edge of Tonbridge and Malling. The concept he is promoting is the Medway Ecological Riverine Link, map attached. The aim is to link up nature reserves using foot and cycle paths under the banner, MERLin. Corridor for Nature. Our Aylesford Parish Council contact is Cllr Trevor Walker. Map attached. There will be a Zoom meeting tonight, Wednesday October 21st.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6695791268#success>

Meeting ID: 669 579 1268 and a walk the routes on Sat October 24th 1pm. James Willis says register now to be one of 6 people to join us for a Covid secure walk discussion 1pm. Start car park at Castle Road (next to railway bridge).

Next Medway Valley Line meeting will be Zoom on Thursday February 4th, 1 to 3pm.

Tom Shelley