

news



High Speed comes to Maidstone

A new High Speed train service linking Maidstone West with London St Pancras is set to commence on Monday May 23rd, putting Maidstone on the High Speed map.

Journey times to London are as short as 47 minutes. After the disappointment in Maidstone at the recent loss of direct services to the City this new high speed initiative is welcome news indeed.

The new trains will run at peak periods on Monday to Fridays (excluding Bank Holidays) and will be non-stop between Maidstone and Strood, thereafter stopping only at Gravesend and Stratford en route to St Pancras.

Departure times from Maidstone West are 06.56, 07.26, 07.56 and 19.13 with journeys from St Pancras at 06.25, 17.14, 17.44 and 18.14. The day return fare to St.Pancras is £37.50, but normal fares apply on journeys to Strood and Gravesend.



The new High Speed service

Whilst this new facility will particularly appeal to those commuting to London, it will also be very useful for those making longer rail journeys, particularly where onward travel from London St Pancras or adjacent Kings Cross is involved.

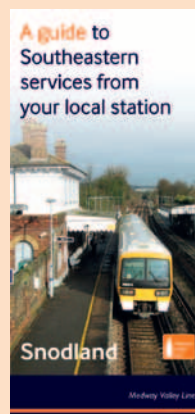
Station Guides for rural stations

Following the successful roll out last year of three bespoke station guides to communities near rural stations, we have produced four more editions for door-to-door distribution this Summer.

So if you live in Cuxton, Snodland, Aylesford or Yalding areas you can expect one to be popped through your letterbox in May or June.

These guides give details of station facilities, train frequencies and sample fares, as well as ideas on places to visit along the line and some useful contact information.

Please do let us know if you find these useful. We are grateful to Southeastern, Network Rail, ACORP and the Department for Transport for financial assistance with this initiative to take rail information out into communities whose local stations are unstaffed.



Leisure opportunities with High Speed Rail

Maidstone's new direct High Speed link to London opens up opportunities for leisure trips to London, giving a longer day out in the City and easy access to the more northerly part of London with its own attractions.

Remember also that Medway Valley Trains to Strood continue to provide good onward

connections at Strood with the High Speed Service throughout the day and at weekends. By travelling after the morning peak the cost of journeys can be reduced by off-peak fares and by Group Travel discounts, whereby 3 or 4 travelling together can travel for the price of 2 (Terms and Conditions apply).

Why not explore the area close to St Pancras and get a different take on London? The fully refurbished St Pancras station is now

becoming known as a destination in its own right and nearby are the St.Pancras Lock and Basin on the Regents Canal and the Camley Street Natural Park run by the London Wildlife Trust. Camden Market and Regents Park Zoo are not too far away.

Southeastern have a 2for1 booklet offering special discounts at many attractions and eating venues in London. These are obtainable from all Southeastern manned stations.

East Farleigh station

East Farleigh is a picturesque station retaining many original features and is an ideal candidate for a community scheme to add a little local landscaping colour - if there is local interest to get involved. Network Rail have agreed to the potential use of an area behind the Maidstone bound platform that could benefit in this respect.

If any local group would like further information, please contact the Partnership using the contact details given on the back page.



Maidstone West Station receives Community Rail Award

Southeastern, Network Rail and the Kent Community Rail Partnership were jointly awarded 2nd Prize in the "Station Development" Category at the ACORP Community Rail Awards held in September at Southend. This award recognised the extensive refurbishment of Maidstone West, including the installation of two station murals commissioned by the Rail Partnership.



Bus meets train

A new Bus Link was introduced by Arriva from 9th January, linking New Hythe Station and Leybourne with West Malling Station, thus providing a useful connection between the Medway Valley Line and the Maidstone East to Victoria line.

Bus no.76 runs on Monday to Friday in the morning and evening peak periods. Whilst fares for the journey can be purchased on the bus, there is a reduced "add-on" bus fare available when purchasing a combined rail/bus ticket from a Southeastern Ticket Office.

We are pleased to see this type of transport integration introduced to the Medway Valley Line and it is hoped it will help to reduce car movements at busy times along the line of route.



Rails to Rambles

Getting out into the country doesn't always have to mean jumping in the car to get to your start point.

Why not use the Medway Valley Line to access your walk? The Kent Community Rail Partnership have teamed up with the Valley of Visions Landscape Partnership Scheme to produce a good quality walk pack giving you all the information you need to enjoy a relaxing and scenic walk from each of the Medway Valley Line stations from Strood through to Paddock Wood. Make up a four-some and four then travel for the price of two. (Terms and conditions apply)

It's all there on the walk-cards – length, distance, time and terrain – as well as a listing of our sponsors without whom the production of this pack would not have been possible. The pack even contains contact details for train information and a feedback form for you to tell us how you got on! Make the most of not driving and maybe try out a rural pub en-route.

The packs are being officially launched on May 9th and will thereafter be made available to download from our website and the Valley of Visions Website. Hard copies will be available upon request from selected local community outlets along the Medway Valley Line as well as from some local staffed Southeastern stations. In the event of difficulty, please contact the Partnership using the details given at the end of this newsletter.



Medway Valley Rail Trails

Explore the stunning countryside and rich heritage of the Medway Valley through a series of walks from train stations.

Grab your boots, get on a train and explore the fascinating trails around the local countryside, towns and villages from train stations along the Medway Valley line.

There are 13 distinctive trails catering for a range of interests and abilities.

Download the trails from:
www.railkent.org.uk
www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent
www.valleyofvisions.org.uk

Alternatively pick up your free Rail Trail pack from local community outlets throughout the Medway Valley. The nearest outlet is:

In the event of difficulty, please contact the Community Rail Partnership on 01303 813790 to request a Rail Trail pack.

Valley of Visions, Kent Community Rail Partnership, Explore Kent, Rail Kent

Would you like to become a 'Parish Champion'?

When your local village station is unmanned, it can be difficult to access information regarding train times and news of developments and improvements to services.

The Community Rail Partnership endeavours to deliver copies of each new rail timetable, Partnership Newsletter and other literature of interest to some forty

odd community outlets along the line. To help make the best use of our limited resources we are seeking a volunteer "Champion" for each community who would be prepared to take delivery of timetables and newsletters and distribute them to local community buildings such as libraries, post offices and pubs – topping up supplies as necessary.

Do please contact us if you feel you would like to get involved in this initiative.

Snodland station gets mural lift

The ambience at Snodland Station was certainly lifted last year with the installation of colourful community artwork designed and produced by three students from the nearby Holmesdale Technology College - Rachel Wilson, Chloe Johnston and Gabrielle Sutton. The project followed the previous installation of artwork at Maidstone West, and has certainly improved what was a rather bland platform outlook. Representatives from Holmesdale college, Southeastern and The Community Rail Partnership were joined by Tracey Crouch the new local MP and other interested parties for the official mural launch.

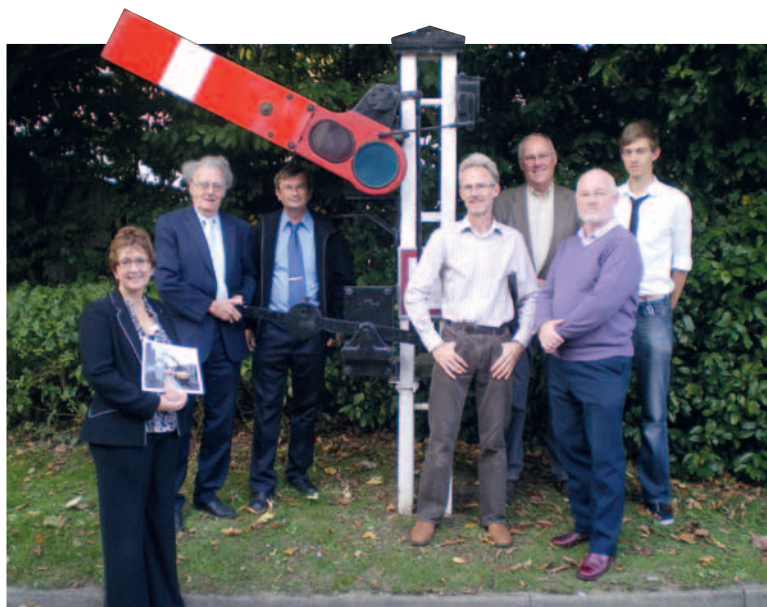


Launch event signals progress for Waterringbury Station Partnership.

Dave Mitchelmore, promoter of the Waterringbury Station Partnership, has formally launched the installation in Waterringbury School grounds of two redundant semaphore signals from the village station.

He was joined on September 20th by representatives from the school, the Medway Valley Community Rail Partnership and others. Network Rail replaced the signals at Waterringbury with new coloured light versions and kindly donated them to the school following an approach by the previous Headmaster, Richard Arnold.

The Station Partnership is taking steps to improve the station environment by planting bulbs and installing a number of planters on the platform.



Contact us

Medway Valley Line Community Rail Partnership

Chairman: Cllr. Mike FitzGerald - Vice Chairman: Bob Ratcliffe
email: mikefitzgerald@maidstone.gov.uk

Line Officer: Ian Paterson **07917 841005** or on **01303 813790**
email: ian.paterson@ruralkent.org.uk Website: www.ruralkent.org.uk

Partners include Southeastern, Network Rail, Kent County Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Medway Council, Maidstone Borough Council, the town councils for Paddock Wood and Snodland and the Parish Councils for Aylesford, Barming, Cuxton, East Farleigh, East Malling and Larkfield, Halling, Nettlestead, Yalding and Waterringbury.

The Kent Community Rail Partnership is hosted by the registered charity Action with Communities in Rural Kent, The Old Granary, Penstock Hall Farm, East Brabourne, Ashford, Kent TN25 5LL Tel: **01303 813790**.
Charity No. 212796.

For more copies of this newsletter or for a larger text version, please contact Ian at the above address.

Travel by Train Events

We are again pleased to detail a few suggestions to give you an opportunity to get out and about on your local railway line.

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| 22 May | New Hythe Station Walk (Free)
01732 847415
Leave New Hythe Station at 14.30 – back by 17.00. Around 3 mile walk. Leader: David Thornewell. |
| 28 May | Proms in the Park – Whatman River Park
01622 758611
Alight at Maidstone West or Barracks. Picnics from 4pm, proms at 7.30pm Fireworks at 9pm. |
| 3 – 5 June | Dickens Festival 01634 843666
Festival of music, dance, drama and street theatre. Alight at Strood and cross river bridge to Rochester. |
| 10 July | Leybourne Lakes Wildlife Day. A day of themed activities for all the family with Rangers from The Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. Phone the Rangers on 01634 243394 for more information. 5 minute walk from New Hythe Station. |
| 30 July | Maidstone River Festival 01622 688945
Alight at Maidstone West and cross river by bridge. |
| 28 August | Halling Funday 01634 241551
Lower Halling Recreation Ground.
3 minutes walk from Halling Station. |

And don't forget – with Group Travel, 3 or 4 people travelling together go for the price of two. (Terms and Conditions apply.)

More details on these and other events can be found on our website – www.ruralkent.org.uk

By working together we aim to encourage greater use of the line by local people and visitors and to improve the station environments and facilities on offer.

Other useful contacts

- For National Rail Enquiries call **08457 48 49 50** or visit www.nationalrail.co.uk
- For local bus information call **0871 200 2233** or visit www.traveline.org.uk
- For details of engineering works visit southeasternrailway.co.uk
- For travel facilities for disabled passengers call the Assisted Travel Line on **0800 783 4524**
- For Southeastern customer service phone **0845 000 2222**

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