

Press release | **For immediate release: 6 October 2017**

From the Association of Community Rail Partnerships | [news@acorp.uk.com](mailto:news@acorp.uk.com)

## **Kent based community rail partnerships scoop national award for community engagement event**

Kent Community Rail Partnership, Swale Rail Community Rail Partnership and the Historical Group of Sittingbourne have taken a top award at the annual Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) Community Rail Awards gala dinner, held in Derby on 5<sup>th</sup> October.

They beat off strong nationwide competition to win the category of ‘Best Community Engagement Event’, on a showcase night for the community rail movement, with their project to commemorate the ambulance trains that departed from Kent during World War One.

Their ambitious event involved 21 local community groups, and took place during the World War I 100th anniversary remembrance period in November 2016. Thought-provoking, respectful and interactive activities were organised across seven locations, explaining a little-known role played by the railway during the war, while promoting understanding and pride in local railway lines. Activities on the day included:

- a dedicated “Poppy-branded” Javelin High Speed train to transport people between locations, used for the first time on SwaleRail;
- World War One Memorial Service at Queenborough Parish Church, with readings from WW1 children’s diaries by local schoolchildren;
- re-enactment of disembarkation of wounded personnel, met by nursing staff from “ships” at All-Tide landing, Queenborough;
- train ride on Ambulance train to Sittingbourne with poems and reminiscences.;
- Closing ceremony at Sheerness War Memorial, with Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent, who took the salute on behalf of the Queen.

The Community Rail Awards, now in its 13th year, recognises the important and often unsung work carried out by community rail partnerships, station friends and other community rail groups across the country. The awards shine a light and reward the breadth of important work happening across this substantial grassroots movement, helping to share good practice, spread the word about community rail’s contribution to mobility, sustainability, prosperity and wellbeing, and encourage more people to get involved.

The Awards were hosted by ACoRP chief executive Jools Townsend and managing director of East Midlands Trains Jake Kelly, and were attended by more than 400 community rail officers, chairs, volunteers and partners, plus senior government and rail industry figures.

**Jools Townsend, chief executive of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, said:**

“We are delighted to present this award to our members in Kent and their partners for their inspirational and thought-provoking community engagement work. The ambulance trains commemorative event was an ambitious and exciting example of community rail in action –

engaging people across a number of localities, raising awareness about the role of railways in local history, and promoting pride and pleasure in local railways. This epitomises what community rail is all about – bringing people together and helping communities to get the most from rail – so it’s a deserving winner of this national award. It’s just one important aspect of community rail in Kent, which plays a wider role in promoting mobility and sustainable travel and ensuring communities have a stake in the development of our railways, as well as appreciating their part in local heritage.”

**The full list of award winners can be found at**

<https://acorp.uk.com/eventsawards/cra17/cra17winners/>

**ENDS**

## **Notes for editors**

**Community rail** is all about ensuring communities get the most from their railways, and promoting rail as a key part of sustainable, healthy travel. There are more than 50 community rail partnerships around Britain, working at a grassroots level along railway routes to connect the community with the train operator and other local partners. They deliver a range of activities to engage and benefit local people and support the development of the railway. More than 1,300 smaller community rail groups, such as station friends, work locally, often involving volunteers in ensuring the station is a welcoming and productive hub for the community. [Read about the value of community rail.](#)

**The Association of Community Rail Partnerships** is the membership body for community rail partnerships, representing over 80 community rail lines, and more than 1,300 local groups. ACoRP works to empower, support and champion the community rail movement, helping community rail partnerships and groups to:

- Enhance the railways’ contribution to local sustainable development and community wellbeing, including by maximising access to and use of the railways
- Ensure the community has a voice and plays a part in the development and improvement of our railways, so this meets community needs and aspirations and delivers maximum social benefit
- Communicate the development and importance of our railways to local communities, enhancing understanding and pride, and promoting rail as a key part of sustainable, healthy travel.

See [www.acorp.uk.com](http://www.acorp.uk.com), [follow and tweet us @ACORPoffice](#), or [find us on facebook](#).

**Kent Community Rail Partnership** - <http://kentcrp.org/>

**For further details, images and comments, including to be put in touch with the winners, contact Nik Schofield (Communications & Marketing Manager) on [news@acorp.uk.com](mailto:news@acorp.uk.com) or 01484 548926 or 07376 124964.**