



KENT'S HERITAGE RAILWAYS ACTIVITY REPORT 2017

Introduction

In 2016, Visit Kent won a major Government funding bid of £75,000 to help promote and celebrate the county's beautiful heritage railways. In partnership with Southeastern, the project was designed to improve links between the main rail provider in Kent and the heritage railways, focusing on the creation of a sustainable partnership in order to plan future concerted action. The funding was also utilised to improve knowledge of and footfall to the heritage railways, whilst amplifying public transport connections. The campaign aimed to join 'the old and the new' by working with Southeastern to improve awareness of the local heritage railways at the nearest mainline stations, including orientation and staff training.

The Heritage Railways are:

- East Kent Railway
- Kent and East Sussex Railway
- Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway
- Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway
- Spa Valley Railway

Campaign aims

- To create a network of five heritage railways to come together under Visit Kent's umbrella to collaborate, share best practice, cross-promote and work on future joint funding bids
- To drive traffic to the Kent Heritage Railways information within the Visit Kent website; a compelling joint digital presence for the railways within the Visit Kent and SER websites, with highly curated content (maps/detailed information) to elaborate on the "last mile" options between the mainline and the railways
- Move all railways to online booking and ticketing, alongside investigating a joint railway pass to be bought online and used across the year
- Enhance awareness at mainline stations of the existence of the railways- Headcorn, Shepherdswell, Sittingbourne, Sandling and Tunbridge Wells – including orientation and product knowledge training for SER staff at key stations
- To research and identify key groups and specialist operators with whom the partnership can work jointly to drive footfall
- To facilitate peer to peer learning and masterclasses to support improved knowledge of basic marketing and social media skills so actions from year one can be continued.

Summary of Results

- Key messaging in Visit Kent's London outdoor advertising campaign in 2016, with one of the railway partners as a lead visual. This campaign saw 26.5 million impressions across outdoor

media, as well as targeted digital promotions receiving 77,800 clicks, with a reach of three million people.

- Campaign posters across 28 stations across the Southeastern network in Kent with a call to action on the Southeastern website
- Dedicated leaflet featuring all railway partners to showcase each destination and 'last mile' information. This was distributed through Southeastern's leaflet network at all the stations on their network.
- Dedicated landing page on the Visit Kent website with over 1,200 page views
- Dedicated newsletter sent out to 39,270 consumers across Kent, London and the wider UK
- Social media competition with over 1,796 entries
- PR coverage generated with a value of £14,325 and reach of 659,945
- Visual identity created to identify the project and its partners to a consumer audience
- Successful launch event held at East Kent Railway with several media partners present
- Customer service training sessions delivered for three railways

Marketing Activity

Our campaign audience was identified as families, empty-nesters and those who were already engaged in or attracted to a railway-themed product. We targeted these demographics at residents based in Kent, London and within a 2-hour drive time from Kent.

We would reach these audiences through a variety of media types including outdoor displays, digital as well as building relationships with tour operators and trade associations.

The main campaign activity took place from March – August 2017 with some activity (the London outdoor campaign) taking place in June – August 2016.

Kent Contemporary – June 2016



For several years Visit Kent has delivered a successful London outdoor advertising campaign, targeted at a London audience to encourage them to challenge perceptions of Kent and inspire them to visit. With the High Speed One rail links into the county, straight out of London St Pancras International, this campaign leveraged this existing activity and a brand-new image of the Spa Valley Railway was used as part of this campaign. This contemporary image was included in the key messaging at overground and underground stations for two weeks in June and was supported by further digital activity on the Visit Kent website and social media channels from June – September 2016.

The outdoor campaign in London delivered 26.5million impressions, while supporting organic and paid social media promotions and digital advertising reached a further 3 million people. According to post campaign research carried out by Visit Kent, the Heritage Railways image had the highest recall rate from the outdoor campaign. A dedicated campaign page was also created on the Visit Kent website, which linked to Kent Contemporary partner pages. From June to September the page received 62,000 visits, and Heritage Railways content on the page had one of the highest click through rates at 13%. In addition to the new Heritage Railways content page, the Spa Valley Railway image was also used as one of the Visit Kent homepage banners. Over the course of the three month campaign the Heritage Railways content page received 6,370 visits.

The Heritage Railways image also had some of the highest click through rates on the digital advertising and social media, showing how the image resonated with people and appealed to the 'superfans' of niche markets (i.e. railway enthusiasts).



Offline Activity – April 2017

Posters

One of the main objectives of the campaign was to raise awareness of the heritage railways at existing mainline stations and to provide the last mile information for consumers. With Southeastern as one of the main stakeholders in this project, a series of consumer-facing posters and leaflets were designed and distributed. A poster was created for each railway partner and placed into the Southeastern branding and was displayed across the network across 28 sites in Kent. These posters have been displayed since June (currently live) and included a call-to-action to visit a themed landing page on the Southeastern website.



Leaflet

Whilst the posters helped to raise awareness of the heritage railways in Kent, a 12-page pull-out leaflet was also produced which detailed the location and last mile information of each of the railway partners. 30,000 of these were distributed across 173 stations across Southeastern's railway network, as well as being made available on their landing page as downloads.



There's something about old-fashioned train travel that never fails to capture the imagination. Choose a day out on one of Kent's heritage railways, and you'll find the journey through the Gardens of England as fascinating as the destinations you visit.

With quintessentially English stations and lovingly-restored steam and diesel engines, Kent's heritage railways offer a range of experiences: they abound the small steam trains of a town or station dating from the 1920s, journey on a light railway built to serve remote rural locations and travel on trains used in the industries that shaped Kent's history.

Kent and East Sussex Railway

From the heart of Kent, the Kent and East Sussex Railway takes you on a journey through the heart of the county. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

Stingborough and Romney Light Railway

Experience the heart of the county on the Romney Light Railway. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

East Kent Railway

Step on board the East Kent Railway and you'll find the heart of the county. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway

The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway is a unique experience. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

Spa Valley Railway

Experience the heart of the county on the Spa Valley Railway. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.



Kids for £1

One adult with a valid ticket can travel with up to 4 children with Oyster or with South Eastern. Book train tickets at www.southeastern.co.uk



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Great days out on
Kent's heritage railways



www.visitkent.co.uk/heritage-railways

1. Stingham and Romney Light Railway

Experience the heart of the county on the Romney Light Railway. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

2. Kent and East Sussex Railway

From the heart of Kent, the Kent and East Sussex Railway takes you on a journey through the heart of the county. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

3. Spa Valley Railway

Experience the heart of the county on the Spa Valley Railway. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

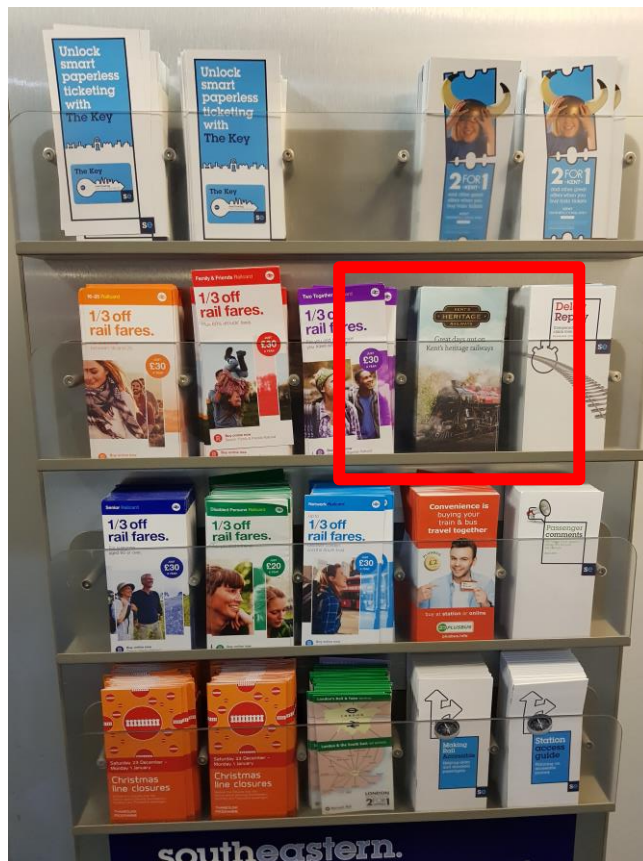
4. Kent and East Sussex Railway

From the heart of Kent, the Kent and East Sussex Railway takes you on a journey through the heart of the county. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.

5. Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway

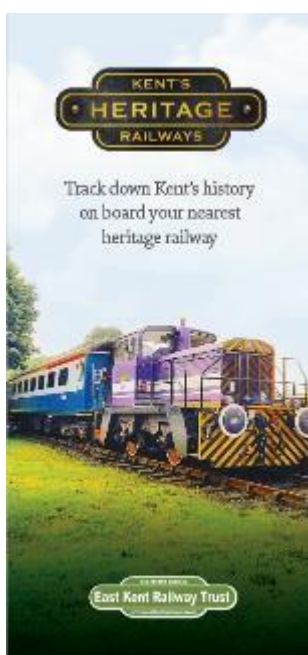
The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway is a unique experience. This is a railway that has been built to celebrate the heritage of the county and the people who have lived and worked in it. The railway is a testament to the county's rich history and the people who have lived and worked in it.





Flyers

To ensure that the last mile information was made clear for each railway, a smaller single DL-sized flyer was also produced for each railway that was stocked at the most local station to that railway, to encourage more visits and provide further support to visitors with their remaining journey. 1,000 of each flyer were printed and distributed across the relevant stations in Kent.



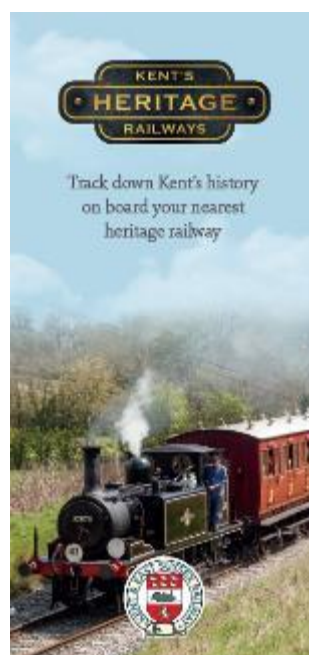
UPCOMING EVENTS AT EAST KENT RAILWAY

The East Kent Railway runs through the former Dover railhead between Shepweath and Aylesham.

DATE	EVENT
Sat 24th - Sun 25th June	Steam Fairs
Fri 14th July	Down The Tracks
Sat 14th July	Down The Tracks
Sat 21st July	Down The Tracks
Sat 28th & Sun 29th August	Down The Tracks
Sat 11th & Sun 12th August	Down The Tracks
Sat 18th & Sun 19th August	Down The Tracks
Sat 25th & Sun 26th September	Down The Tracks
Sat 2nd & Sun 3rd October	Down The Tracks
Weekend in December	Down The Tracks

How to get there
 Getting to the East Kent Railway is easy as
 Southeastern train stop at the Shepweath rail station,
 between Dover and Canterbury, less than 200 metres away.
 For more info call 01304 613042
 Website: www.eastkentrailway.co.uk

East Kent and Dover are proud to support Kent's Heritage Railways.
 Find out more at www.eastkentrailway.co.uk/heritage-railways



UPCOMING EVENTS AT KENT AND EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY

The Kent and East Sussex railway winds through the beautiful Kent coast from the charming town of Faversham to the historic Bodiam Castle.

DATE	EVENT
Sat 27th June	Down The Tracks
Fri 14th July	Down The Tracks
Sat 14th July	Down The Tracks
Sat 21st July	Down The Tracks
Sat 28th & Sun 29th August	Down The Tracks
Sat 11th & Sun 12th August	Down The Tracks
Sat 18th & Sun 19th August	Down The Tracks
Sat 25th & Sun 26th September	Down The Tracks
Sat 2nd & Sun 3rd October	Down The Tracks
Weekend in December	Down The Tracks

How to get there
 To reach the railway using Southeastern train services, you can take a train to Faversham or Ashford International and then connecting bus services (Daycoach 2002 or 28, Kent & Sussex, or 42 or 122, from Faversham) to reach the railway. For more info call 01304 613042
 Website: www.kentandsussexrailway.co.uk

Kent and East Sussex are proud to support Kent's Heritage Railways.
 Find out more at www.kentandsussexrailway.co.uk/heritage-railways

Visit Kent website

A dedicated landing page was created on the Visit Kent website for the campaign, and this was the call to action across all online activity. The webpage featured images and content on each railway, as well as links to their own websites, the downloadable flyers, in addition to information on public transport, last mile content and links to online booking (if applicable).

N.B – The Visit Kent website was re-platformed with a refreshed design layout for landing pages during this period, which was pushed live on 25th May.

From January to June 2017, the page received a total of **1,267 page views**, with peaks during the time of a dedicated newsletter in and a heritage railways competition, which each directed traffic to the webpage (see Fig A and Fig B).

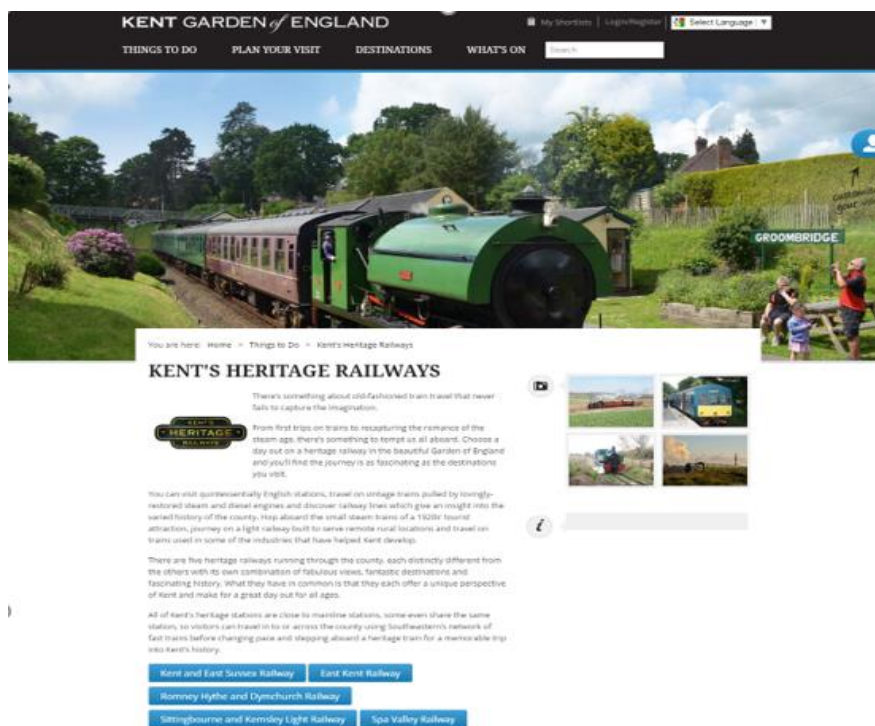
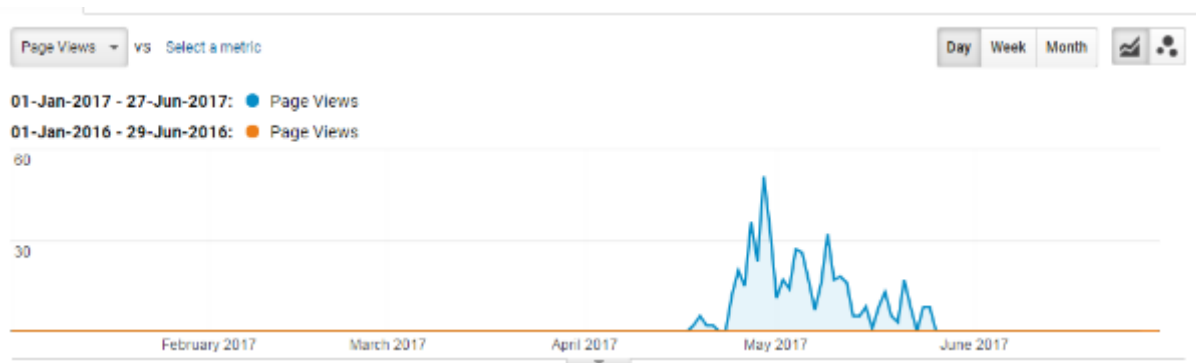


FIG A Visit Kent website: Traffic to the Heritage Railways landing page: January –May 2017



FIG B Visit Kent website: Traffic to the Heritage Railways landing page: May-June 2017



Each railway also received a one week homepage takeover during this activity period, as well as further enhanced coverage across the website through key feature slots and seasonal “top 10s” and itineraries, promoting the railways themselves and their events. Heritage railways received a total 18 additional website features from January to June 2017 (see below examples).





Newsletter

A dedicated Heritage Railways newsletter was built and sent out to 39,270 people on 24th April. The newsletter was sent to Visit Kent's London residents, Wider UK and Kent resident databases separately, each with a slight twist on the messaging for each audience. The newsletter included a feature on each of the railway partners as well as our social media competition. This activity saw excellent open and click through rates, at 25.6% and 4.4% respectively, both well above the industry averages.



Social Media

As well as publishing content across our social media channels to promote the railways, Visit Kent hosted a two week long dedicated campaign competition on Facebook which offered entrants the chance to win one of five family tickets to one of the five heritage railways and a family day pass from Southeastern.

The competition was promoted through organic and paid promotion on social media, a dedicated newsletter to Visit Kent's UK database, a page on the Visit Kent website and a homepage takeover.



Visit Kent are offering you the chance to win one of five family tickets to one of Kent's Heritage Railways! Answer the Choo Choo Tunes questions to be entered into our prize draw for entry to Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, East Kent Railway, Kent and East Sussex Railway, Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway or Spa Valley Railway! For full terms and conditions visit www.visitkent.co.uk/heritage-railways_competition

The competition was hosted on Woo Box. Entrants to answer five train and music-themed questions to be automatically entered into a random draw at the end of the two-week competition. regardless of how many questions they answered correctly.

A record number of engagements were seen with this activity, with 1,796 entries and over 50% of these entries opting in to receive future promotions.

A competition landing page was created on the Visit Kent website to detail the prize elements and to direct entrants to the competition. This page saw over 3,000 unique visits, with most traffic from Visit Kent's social media channels and e-newsletter activity.

The competition was promoted via a number of posts across Visit Kent Twitter and Facebook and was supported by posts, shares and retweets by the five heritage railways (see example promotions below).

Social Media Organic	Reach	Engagement
Facebook	10,990	89

Twitter	13,417	301
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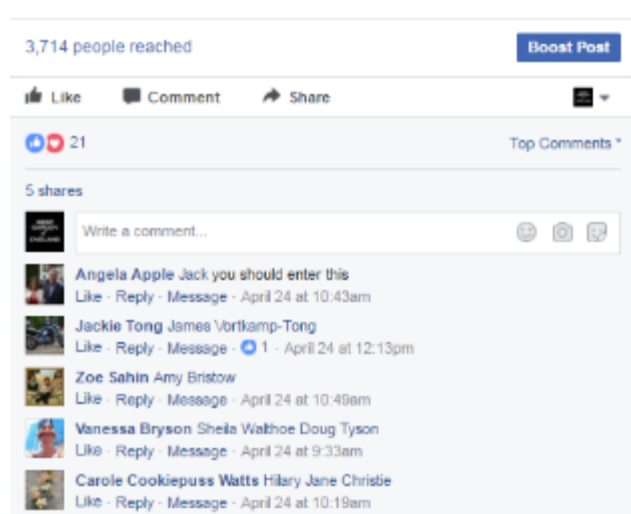
Social Media Paid	Reach	Clicks	CTR	Engagements	Engagement rate
Facebook	35,994	827	2.29%	172	0.4%

Twitter – best performing post



Impressions	4,319
Total engagements	147
Media engagements	53
Link clicks	30
Likes	24
Detail expands	18
Retweets	15
Profile clicks	7

Facebook – best performing post

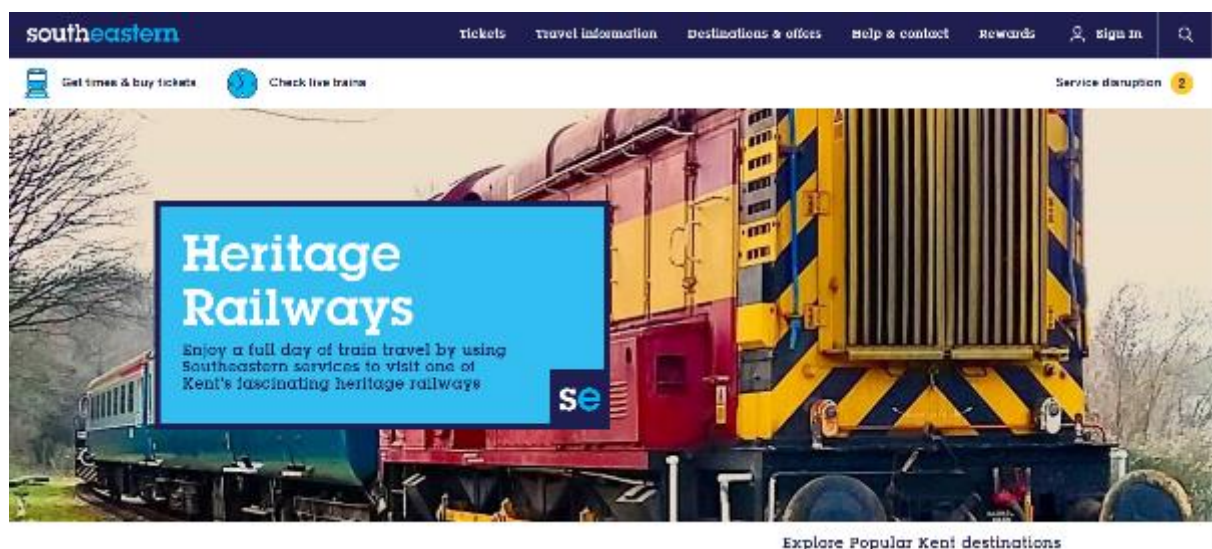


Partner Marketing Activity

As key partners in this campaign, Southeastern also supported the project with messaging on their marketing channels. A dedicated VLOG was created as part of a series of VLOGs that Southeastern worked on to update about the attractions and destinations to be found across their network. This VLOG was hosted on the Southeastern website, featured in Southeastern newsletters and is available on YouTube, and has received 1,246 views to date.



Southeastern also created and hosted a dedicated landing page on their website which provided content on all five heritage railway partners and links to their websites. This page has seen over 383 page views to date.



PR Activity

PR and media campaign activity started in December with an official launch held at East Kent Railway on 9th December. An afternoon tea reception allowed all the stakeholders to meet their project partners and to experience travel on one of Kent's heritage railways. Speakers on the afternoon included Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Mark Dance, and Visit Kent CEO, Sandra Matthews-Marsh MBE.

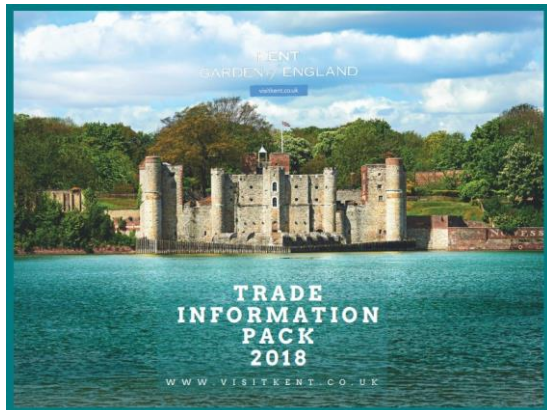


The PR team sent out a total of two press releases dedicated to the Heritage Railway campaign which all received positive media coverage.

The campaign received media coverage, with local media partners profiling the event from early January 2017 through to May 2017. The campaign was covered in 16 publications, and online and print media reached 659,945 people. Total coverage generated an AVE of £14,325.

Travel Trade Activity

Coach and group travel remains a key route for both domestic and international visitors to travel in the UK. As an already huge and steadily-growing market, coach and group business ensures regular and increased footfall throughout the year to attractions and destinations. Visit Kent's dedicated travel trade team have investigated and researched potential operators and started to build relationships required to increase awareness and enhance Kent's heritage railway partners in this sector. A dedicated section in the 2018 Visit Kent travel trade sales pack has been created for the Heritage Railways, highlighting the five partners and includes the services they can provide for coach and group bookings.



Ongoing Visit Kent travel trade activity was used as an opportunity to feature the heritage railways product. The sales team from Dutch tour operator, Buro Scanbrit were hosted in Kent in September 2016, and whilst here they enjoyed a trip on the Kent & East Sussex Railway, in the hope that they were educated on the experience and could introduce and include this on future tours. As with all travel trade activity, the industry works one-two years ahead and we await the announcement of their tour programmes for 2019 and beyond.

Conversations were also had with European Cruise Services and Inter cruises, two of the major shore excursion companies for cruise ships arriving in Dover. The option of a steam train experience as a morning / afternoon half-day excursion was received positively as a possible new product and the team are currently following up with further itinerary and excursion ideas featuring the railways.

Furthermore, initial conversations have been made with several of the large national bodies representing heritage railways, notably the Heritage Railways Association, British Heritage Railways as well as popular railway model brand, Hornby. The conversations have been aimed at potential collaboration opportunities in the future, as well as securing coverage for Kent's Heritage railways in their messaging and marketing channels.



Training and Development

The project featured several strands of activity including staff training, partnership and network development as well as technology and facility improvements at each railway.

Visit Kent has delivered five individual training sessions for all of the Heritage railway partners and their staff / volunteers. This training is delivered under the World Host training for Principles of Customer Service.



The funding from the project also ensured that each railway partner become official members of Visit Kent for two years, enhancing their presence across all of our marketing activity and campaigns, as well as each railway being invited to every networking event and workshop to meet with industry colleagues from the county and further afield.