



Press Release

Release date: 26th April 2016

Fantastic start to 2016 Season

Passenger figures for the first month of Sittingbourne's Steam Railway's 2016 season have been fantastic!

The Season started on Good Friday which saw record passenger figures for this century! About 500 passengers travelling on that day alone and a total of over 1,300 over the four days of the weekend - this is 82% higher than last year!

The April, Teddy Bears Picnic event also had a great turnout with almost 240 passengers enjoying a picnic, story telling and crafts at Kemsley Down.

Last season, saw a rise in passenger figures to almost that of 2007, the year before the Railway was forced to close for a year, so this has been a strong and robust recovery since the Railway reopened in part in 2010 and in full 2012.

Trains will be running every Sunday and bank holiday Monday until the end of September. Normal return fares for 2016 are:

- £7 for adults
- £5 for concessions
- £3 for children aged 3-13 years
- Under 3s travel free

- £19 for a family ticket (2 adults and up to 4 children)
- Other fares, such as single or rover, are available
- Special fares apply for the Steam & Beer and Art in the Park events.

There are special events held each month, forthcoming events are:

- 1st-2nd May - Jack the Station Cat & Edward Bear Weekend
- 12th June - Community Day, come along for The Big Lunch to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's 90th birthday
- 2nd-3rd July - Steam & Beer, a selection of real ales and ciders from across the UK will be accompanied by live music on the Saturday and family entertainment, in the shape of the Railway's Captain Jack Sparrow lookalike, on the Sunday
- 16th July - Art in the Park, the Railway has teamed up with The Friends of Milton Creek Country Park to provide Park & Ride services to this popular event
- 28-29th August - Ivor the Engine Weekend, the famous Welsh engine visits again for live action story telling at Kemsley Down - what mischief will he get up to this year?!
- 24-25th September - End of Season Gala Weekend, playing trains at the end of the season and some night running on the Saturday to reenact the Railway's 24 hour operations of the past with staged photographic opportunities.

A return trip can take as little as an hour but on event days it is recommended that you allow at least two hours for your visit.

For more information on the Railway visit www.SKLR.net or call the Talking Timetable on 01795 424899, email info@SKLR.net, follow [@SandKLR](https://twitter.com/SandKLR) on Twitter or see our Facebook Group at www.Facebook.com/groups/SandKLR

Sittingbourne Viaduct station has free parking opposite McDonalds and behind KFC in Sittingbourne Retail Park and the pedestrian entrance is behind Pizza

Hut, follow the amazing mural. Sat. Nav. users should use ME10 2XD or The Wall as their destination.

The station is atop a high embankment with 22 metal steps to climb. The ticket office can be found close to the top of the steps. Please arrive at least ten minutes before departure time as there can sometimes be a queue at the ticket office to buy tickets.

The first kilometre of the journey is on Milton Regis Viaduct, this reinforced concrete structure consists of 118 spans and six bridges. Constructed a hundred years ago, the Railway has invested a further £20,000 into maintenance of the structure during winter 2015/16.

Kemsley Down is the main base of the Railway, here you will find the Footplate Café, shop, toilets, picnic area, museum, displays, wildlife garden and see the other steam locomotives at the engine shed as well as two standard gauge locomotives.

The Railway's SOS Campaign has an aim to raise at least £75,000 to provide decent staff and visitor facilities at Sittingbourne Viaduct station including an access ramp. Donations can be made regularly or one-off at www.justgiving.com/SKLR and UK tax payers can contribute even more by choosing to Gift Aid their donation as the Railway is a registered charity. The Railway is also keen to hear from any companies who would like to sponsor it, please contact info@sklr.net to offer your support.

The fundraiser to return steam locomotive Premier back to its 'as built' condition is progressing well, with 55 of the 70 boiler tubes sponsored - visit www.sklr.net/Premier for more information.

(End)

Information for the media:

1. The Railway is rare in the preservation world as it was donated by the then mill owners, Bowater's United Kingdom Paper Co Ltd, in 1969 for preservation and still uses original locomotives, equipment and buildings. The SKLR is now the longest continuous operator of the railway and is operated and maintained entirely by volunteers.
2. Following a fire in June 2014, the last of the Railway's usable buildings was destroyed at Sittingbourne Viaduct, prompting the relaunch of the Railway's SOS Campaign - this time to Sort Out Sittingbourne - with the aim of raising £75,000 to improve visitor and staff facilities at Sittingbourne Viaduct station.
3. The SKLR is a registered charity, number 1057079. Postal address: SKLR, PO Box 300, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 2DZ.
4. Photographs of the Railway can be found on the Press Officer's website: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stopem/> . To download images – click on the photo, click on 'ALL SIZES', 'Original' and then 'Download the Original size'. Feel free to use them without a fee but please credit 'SKLR'.
5. The Press Officer is available for interviews and recording sessions at the Railway or studios. Other members may be requested for interview through the Press Officer.
6. Media enquiries to Paul Best, Press Officer, telephone 07973 192938 or email stopem@stopem.net