

Andy Papworth – K&ESR Candidate Statement

I moved to Tenterden in late 2019, and, determined to become part of the local community, volunteered at the Railway. One turn in as a trainee TTI and, behold, a global pandemic hits...

Before all of that I had lived in the suburbs of South East London where most days I commuted to the City (on the 07.36 to Cannon Street to be precise) where I worked in the banking industry undertaking a variety of client facing roles, before eventually specialising in Human Resources.

Anyway, fast forward to June 2020 and I responded to the call for volunteers to help get the railway ready to reopen. That general painting and infrastructure activity (which quickly became the Wednesday Working Group of which I'm still a member) soon morphed into cleaning the trains between services throughout that abridged summer season. This gave me some fantastic insights into the people who visit the railway both as passengers and as volunteers, and I very quickly realised what a vitally important place the railway is for so many people: For every new visitor who was looking forward to escaping the realities of that post-lockdown summer, there was a regular visitor desperate to get back to what they loved. And for the volunteers, I witnessed so many who had missed and needed the friendship and support that the K&ESR often inadvertently provides.

So as the railway began to reopen, I became involved with more areas of activity. From washing up on the Pullman with my wife, to serving in the SCO and buffet, occasionally working in the gift shop, and in 2021 finally completing my TTI training.

In terms of board related activity, I was asked to help set up the Project Assessment Committee of which I am now the chair, and then earlier this year I was co-opted on to the board where I immediately assisted with the GM recruitment activity, drawing on my HR experience and knowledge.

In a very short space of time I have grown to love the K&ESR. If I'm honest, for me it's not about the locos or the carriages, the fishplates or the finials. For me it's about people and the difference that having the railway in their lives makes to them. Tenterden is the place I have chosen as my home and the railway is a hugely important part of the town's identity. If I can help the K&ESR to thrive and survive over the next few years by being part of the board, then I am happy to do so.