



THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY COMPANY LIMITED

Minutes of the 55th Annual General Meeting

The 55th Annual General Meeting of the Kent & East Sussex Railway was held on Saturday 9th May 2026 at St Mildred's Church Tenterden commencing 13:30.

Directors Present:

Name		Role	Present
Derrick John BILSBY	DJB	Director	Y
Matthew John HYNER	MJH	Director	Y
Ian Campbell LEGG	ICL	Director	Y
Simon Andrew MARSH	SAM	Director	Apologies
David John NIBLOE	DJN	Director	Y
Neil Duncan SIME	NDS	Director	Y
Paul Edward VIDLER	PV	Director	Y
Robin Moira WHITE	RMW	Director	Y

Also Present:

Mark Jenner	MRJ	Company Secretary
Dave Raimbach	DTR	Assistant Company Secretary (Minutes)
Mike Hart	MCH	RVR representative

Chairmans welcome

The chairman welcomed everyone to the 55th annual general meeting of The Kent and East Sussex Railway Company Limited. Live streaming of the meeting has been implemented for the benefit of members who are not able to attend in person (<https://www.youtube.com/live/25qpA99JkqE>).

Online voting was again available to members this year. A minor typo was identified on the online voting page, but this did not detract from 135 members voting.

Derrick Bilsby explained the reason for moving the AGM from November to May to reflect best practice in governance and we can consider last year's accounts closer to the year end.

Since last year's meeting several comments have been raised on the 2025 minutes. The minutes have been corrected and updated and published on HOPS. However, HOPS is not available to all members and therefore not all members had access to the 2025 (or 2024) minutes. Alan Crotty asked how the "armchair membership" managed to view the minutes and stated that this was most unsatisfactory. In future AGM minutes will be published on the KESR website. A member said that he had checked HOPS and the 2025 minutes were in "Draft" ([KESR AGM Draft Minutes 2025 v0.5](#)). It was pointed out that this was correct until they had been approved by this AGM.

1. The first resolution to approve the minutes of the last Annual General meeting held here on 8th November 2025.

Attendees with voting slips were asked to raise their hands. 3 against in the room and 18 abstentions.

Proxies received in favour were 125 and against 1 and 9 abstentions.

The motion was carried.

2. The next resolution to receive and adopt the Annual Report of the Directors and the Audited Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2024.

Ian Legg, the Finance Director, delivered his report which can be found here: https://api.hops.org.uk/file_download.php?ft=4&key1=185409 and summarised in Annex 1. Ian Legg then took questions from the floor:

Steven Neville asked about donations, are they hypothecated or do they go into general pot?

Ian stated that if donations are made for a specific purpose, they are put into a restricted fund. Ideally donations are general which gives the company far greater flexibility.

Alan Crotty. Asked about locomotive 1638, the KESR-owned pannier tank, what is the cost to completion?

Matt Hyner answered that KESR are currently in conversation with Leaky Finders. So, we've renegotiated with leaky finders for them to do the full overhaul and return the engine with a 10-year ticket. Estimate to completion £200,000 thereabouts subject to further negotiations.

Mike Hempstead asked about price elasticity. Is the company agile enough, or do we have systems in place, to be able to perform cost elasticity. For example, if we were scheduled to run a five-coach set but have only sold enough tickets on the day to fill say three coaches, can we drop a couple of coaches to save the costs of running them and save the coal etc.

Neil Sime said that there are a huge number of factors that feed into whether it's cheaper to take two coaches off or to run around with five coaches and it is something we wrestle with on a regular basis. Now we are tending to run with five coaches where probably four possibly even three would do. However, we've had a couple of occasions where a large party has turned up, and we would have been embarrassed with three carriages. We are aware of the cost pressures, and we are not as good with cost elasticity as we are with revenue elasticity. But it is an area we keep under review. There is a cost to shunting in terms of time, people and fuel. Moving vehicles around is a costly exercise.

Terry Coombes asked about donations that are made for a particular purpose which become restricted funds. What happens if the purpose to which they are put is achieved and there is money left over? What happens to residual restricted funds?

Ian Legg replied that technically they cannot be used for anything else, if the purpose of that fund is completely closed. In practice the charity commission do allow a little bit of flexibility in moving it to a similar project to if it is a trivial amount. Preferably we would go back to the original donor, if they're still alive, of course and ask them if they would mind, moving the balance to the general fund.

David Mould asked if the Pannier cost turned out at £280,000 and assuming that the Pannier is back in service, and consequently avoid the need to hire a locomotive, roughly what is the payback period. Do you have a feel for how many years to pay back that repair cost?

Ian Legg estimated that the payback period is about five years.

David Mould thanked Ian for the answer. Based on 5-year payback, give or take, it sounds like paying off loans is probably less important than putting the money into the repair of the locomotive.

George Harman asked about the company's aspiration to put money aside every time we use locomotives to move towards overhauls. But you also mentioned in the slides there that that is the effective job of the depreciation account for the last few years. Where is that money?

Ian Legg said that it is not cash, it is an accounting figure that sits on the books as on the P&L account because on the P&L you do not have capital expenditure. You spend the capital money on elements like PWay, carriages, locos that all then gets depreciated and split over several years, and then that hits the P&L over that period.

Mike Hart said he thinks it is important that we, as members, do rather more than just say yay or nay to what is a lot of hard work by our finance team and we should thank Ian Legg as the finance director, David Nibloe who chairs the finance group, Matsya in the office, and everywhere else. I do not think many of us realise that it is not a couple of evenings during the week that you look after our accounts. It's a full-time unpaid job. So, why don't we make it to adopt the accounts and thank the finance team for all their work.

Attendees with voting slips were asked to raise their hands. None against, no abstentions.

Proxies received in favour were 126 and those against 3 and 6 abstentions.

The motion was carried.

3. The next resolution is to authorise the Directors to appoint auditors to the Company for the year ending 31st October 2025 and to fix their remuneration.

Terry Coombes said that other organisations either list the incumbent auditor or the proposed auditor. Remuneration usually remains somewhat abstract. But on this occasion, nothing is mentioned as to who that person or organisation might be.

Ian Legg stated this is what has been done for a few years now and the simple reason is because of the time scales of AGMs and the process for going through appointing of a different auditor. The company really needs to have the flexibility to be able to change auditors out with the AGM cycle.

Attendees with voting slips were asked to raise their hands. 1 against.

Proxies received in favour were 134 and those against none and 1 abstention.

The motion was carried.

4. As you will know one third of the directors retire by rotation each year. This year Ian Legg, Simon Marsh and Robin White will retire and have indicated their willingness to stand for re-election.

Therefore Ian Legg, finance director retires by rotation and offers himself for re-election.

Attendees with voting slips were asked to raise their hands. 0 against, 1 abstention.

Proxies received in favour were 105 and against 24 and 6 abstentions

The motion was carried.

Next Simon Marsh, a non-executive director, retires by rotation and offers himself for re-election.

Those in favour please show. None against. 4 abstentions in the room

Proxies received in favour were 106 and against 22 and 7 abstentions

The motion was carried.

Next Robin White, a non-executive director, retires by rotation and offers herself for re-election.

Those in favour please show. None against. 1 abstention.

Proxies received in favour were 107 and against 23 and 5 abstentions.

The motion was carried.

Safety Directors Report

Neil Sime delivered the Safety Directors report can be found here:

https://api.hops.org.uk/file_download.php?ft=4&key1=185415 and summarised in Annex 2. Neil Sime then took questions from the floor:

A member asked if Neil could expand on the issue of vandalism? You said vandalism was becoming a problem including line trespass.

Neil Sime said there had been some youngsters trespass around the Tenterden car park at night. No damage but talking to our neighbours at the old dairy to see if we can work together and eliminate the issue and Neil believes there has been an improvement since those conversations took place. There was a catapult issue around Tenterden at the end of last year causing a little bit of damage to rollingstock birthed in the yard. I believe he has been apprehended and there have not had any further we any further instances. Also, one trespass at Northiam last year. It is not a big issue but it's one we need to keep our eye on.

Alan Crotty asked about the Bodiam trees which were rightly chopped down and you said it looks a mess. Is it our job to clear it up or did we only have to make it safe?

Neil Sime said that the company should do the right thing and at least tidy the site up. However, now we have other priorities. There are some other dangerous trees, and we've been very fortunately in the receipt of a of a donation specifically targeted at forestry and conservation. The priority will be addressing the dangerous trees. At some time, as good neighbours, we will go back and do a bit of tidying up. The issue has been the ground conditions down there and removing them from the site was going to cause more damage than leaving the trees there. At the appropriate point they will be removed.

Sarah Tagart asked why are jobs being advertised without salary? We spoke a couple of years ago around advertising jobs out without a salary. When searching for a job you want a salary that is competitive.

Operations Manager and others will be advertised with salary in future.

Chairmans Report

Derrick Bilsby delivered the Chairman's report can be found here:

https://api.hops.org.uk/file_download.php?ft=4&key1=185397 and summarised in Annex 3.

Commercial report

Julie Wilkinson delivered the Commercial report which can be found here:

https://api.hops.org.uk/file_download.php?ft=4&key1=185403 and summarised in Annex 4.

Progress to Robertsbridge

Mike Hart presented the Robertsbridge progress which is summarised here:

https://api.hops.org.uk/file_download.php?ft=4&key1=185412 and can be found in Annex 4.

Questions

Steven Neville asked about the level crossings on the Robertsbridge connection. He believes they are automated and sourced from Switzerland? As they are not manual like the KESR crossings, how are they going to work?

Derrick Bilsby said that part of the requirement in the discussions with the ORR and also the Highways Agency, those crossings have to be fully automatic and will be worked by the trains using modern technology that will include axle counters which will initiate the sequence for the level crossings but it will also count the axles to minimise the amount of time the level crossings are closed. The level crossings are already in storage in the UK. As part of that track laying exercise, the slabs will be laid across North Bridge Street and Junction Road in 2026 or early 2027 with the slab going across the A21 later in 2027.

Steven Neville asked if the speed limits on any of those sections are being changing? He believes junction road is 60. Is there a proposal to slow it down? Also going down the hill out of Tenterden at Rolvenden it is 60 miles an hour.

KESR are talking to multiple agencies; the highways, Rother district council, East Sussex County Council, but I can confirm that the speed on the B2244 Junction Road, will be reduced to 40 miles an hour in the area of the level crossing.

KESR did approach the council and the Highways Authority with a view to extending the 40-mph speed restriction across the level crossing at Rolvenden and across the level crossing at Cranbrook Road and in both cases, it was rejected.

Derek May said a couple of years ago at a volunteers meeting, he brought up the question of safeguarding officers and whistleblowing officers. Policy has never been publicised and certainly I've never known anybody to bring up the question of whistleblowers which is a requirement by the charity commissioners. Is it in the volunteer's handbook as we promised?

Matt Hyner said we do have safeguarding and whistleblowing policies in place on HOPS. It has been used and the instructions of how to use it are in the policy. We also have a safeguarding scheme in place and a policy to go with. Tory Jones is our safeguarding officer. Jeff Culvin and I are splitting the lead for the time being. There is an updated volunteer's handbook also on HOPS that was published at the time that it went out.

Matt Hyner said he take an action to recommunicate the policies.

John Gardner asked a question about abandoned rolling stock. There seems to be a lot of it around, especially at Wittersham Road. Is there anything going to be done? It doesn't give the railway a very good look.

Derrick Bilsby said it is a legitimate question and one that gets raised quite often that on the face of it, seems very simple. Most of these vehicles are owned by individuals, some of whom are accessible, and some of them are not with us anymore. It is an emotive subject and not an easy one to deal with, but it is on our agenda. We are working through it, and the intention is that we do need to clear it because we're very short of space on the railway.

Paul Alford said, can we make more use of the assets we've got? For example, the gentleman that owns the goods wagon outside carriage and wagon was busy maintaining it on Friday. Would it be possible to have them on display with information plaques on some of our assets that tell their story?

Derrick Bilsby said that his view is that if we cannot restore an asset straight away, then what we need to do is we need to keep it and put it on static display for the very reasons that you say. The difficulty that we have now is one of resources. It's as much as we can do to maintain the operating fleet of both locomotives and carriages, let alone start maintaining assets that would be for static display.

Tim Parry asked what is the plan for the pump trolley? Now the pump trolley is out the back of carriage and wagon where nobody can see it. I would like I would like to see the pump trolley used. The issue is that we have to persuade the operating department that that's the right thing to do to use it, the question is where you use it, how you use it, and how you do things safely with it.

Sarah Tagart said we are hoping to use it soon. It's not a case of the operating department against it, we are looking for certain dates to offer it as you've seen it on TV now, come and have a go. I will take a little bit of responsibility for it being at the back of her carriage and wagon as I'm just trying to get a hold of someone in the museum to find where we can put it where it is not rotting away again.

Wendy Furey said she disagrees. She rather enjoys the skeleton coaches at Wittersham Road and thinks that covering them up with tarpaulins would make them look worse. However, she does not like to see builder bags of rubbish all along the side of the track.

I appreciate that and that just emphasizes the difficulty in how you deal with this. But on the second point that you raised about the amount of stuff that there is in bags piled up in various fields, various locations on the railway, that does need to be that does need to be dealt with. Frim will be the first to tell you that, it's finding volunteers to operate the railway safely, and then you've got these peripheral things as important as they are, but they have to take a back seat.

Catherine Motley said in the absence of Tori, how successful she thinks the young people have been that have been coming in and helping in certain parts of the railway, mostly on the platforms, but they are really enjoying their time on the railway. Are there ways for the future, can we channel the involvement of schools like Homewood and other schools within the area to encourage younger members?

Derrick Bilsby said we want to do more, but it's making sure that we can find environments where we can do that where we can do that safely. KESR are working with the Terrier Trust now to bring schoolchildren from deprived areas such as Tower Hamlets, but not just in East London, there are parts of Kent and parts of East Sussex where it's exactly the same. We are currently talking through the Terrier Trust with East Sussex County Council, Hastings where there are also areas of deprivation where some of the children in those areas do not have the opportunities that some of the children have from richer areas in our community.

Matt Hyner said that as the only young trustee, it would be nice to see young more young people coming up into leadership roles on the railway. We have plans to expand the junior volunteer group, so hopefully from August to August as a kind of a year program, the plan is to get another program of young people volunteering next year.

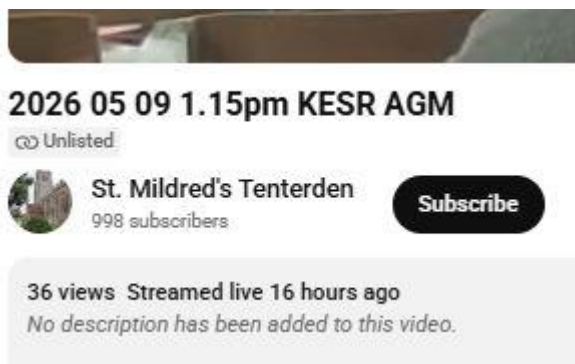
A member asked why the connection to the mainline at Robertsbridge was such a zigzag link the way the rails are laid?

Mike Hart said that we blame it on British railways. Historically the trains that stopped at Robertsbridge were six car length. It was the electric trains that came along later which were longer and so the crossover point had to move towards London.

A member asked with bringing young people onto the railway under the safeguarding requirements surely staff dealing with them must be CRB checked. I think we've lost one volunteer because he was criticised for befriending somebody and helping them on the railway platform. Is the railway going to CRB check all the volunteers and anybody who comes in touch in touch with the young people or will that be another cost to the volunteer to make sure that they're legally binding?

Derrick Bilsby said all members of staff or volunteers that are dealing with youngsters are checked and we are quite rigorously ensure that they are monitored because it's not just the people that are looking after them, it's the way in which the public might treat them as well. Safeguarding is very high up air priority and as the chairman, I'm happy that the arrangements that we've got in place are sufficient. It is not true that we've had someone removed from the railway because they befriended a young volunteer. There was a wider issue with that volunteer. We are not required to have every single person on the railway DPS, or CRB checked, it's only the people who are in direct contact with those young people.

59 members in the room, 36 members watched the livestream online.



Date of Next Meeting

The next KESR AGM will be held on Saturday 8th May 2027 in St Mildred's Church (TBC).

Annex 1: Financial Performance

1. Overall Message

- **Strong year, but caution remains** — the deck frames **2024/25 as positive** while stressing **“no room for complacency.”**
- **Cash improved** — year-end cash rose to **£606k (from £461k)**, helped by **stronger Santa forward bookings** plus **legacy/donation inflows**.

2. 2024/25 Results Snapshot

- **Income growth** — income increased to **£2,651k (from £2,566k)**.
- **Surplus achieved** — year closed with a **£76k surplus**, versus a **£125k deficit** the prior year (**£201k swing**).
- **Debt reducing** — loans declined to **£145k (from £199k)**, highlighting a near **debt-free position** relative to peers.

3. What Drove the Improvement (And Why It’s Not “Business as Usual”)

- **One-off support matters** — the surplus swing is explicitly tempered by major one-offs, including **£101k grant** and **£115k legacy**.
- **Underlying operations are still challenged** — the notes flag that, before funding and depreciation, operations run at about a **£160k loss**, with drivers including:
 - **Insufficient passenger volume and yield**
 - **Higher locomotive hire costs**
 - **Product offer late to market / not compelling enough** in a changing market

4. 2025/26 Outlook & Investment Priorities

- **Tracking ahead of budget** — year-to-date performance (as of March) is described as roughly **break-even on operating income/costs** before funding and depreciation, driven by **tight cost control**, a **good Santa**, and **new summer products**.
- **Planned deficit and higher capex** — the budget anticipates a **£140k deficit** (after **£170k depreciation**) and **£160k capex** (about **triple last year**).
- **Capital spend focus** — significant planned investment is highlighted in **permanent way, carriages (BCK overhaul)**, **solar panels (payback within ~18 months)**, and **locomotives**.
- **Reserve building goal** — a key aim is to **strengthen cash reserves**, including setting aside funds for **locomotive restoration**, to avoid reliance on winter overdrafts.

5. Close / Q&A

- The presentation wraps by inviting **questions and comments** on the **2024/25 accounts**.

Annex 2: Safety Directors report

1. Purpose And Context

- **Annual safety update** covering performance, incident trends, and operational safety priorities for **2025**, presented for the **AGM on 9 May 2026**.
- **Primary focus:** how safety outcomes changed year-over-year and what actions are underway to reduce repeat events.

2. Headline Performance (2024 vs 2025)

- **Accidents:** 17 → 15 (-12%)
- **Incidents:** 42 → 36 (-15%)
- **Implication:** overall movement is positive, but improvement still depends on stronger reporting, investigation quality, and targeted mitigations.

3. Accident Patterns In 2025 (Monthly + Types)

- **Total accidents:** 15 split across **Staff: 8** and **Public: 7**
- **Most common themes:**
 - **Slip/trip/fall:** 8
 - **Personal injury:** 6
 - **Other:** 1
- **Notable flag: October** includes a **RIDDOR** note, indicating at least one event reached reportable severity.

4. Incident Patterns In 2025 (Operational + External)

- **Total incidents:** 36
- **Largest category: Operating irregularities:** 19 (major driver of the year's total)
- **Other contributing categories:**
 - **Trespass/vandalism:** 6
 - **Other:** 5
 - **Tree foul:** 3
 - **Passenger action:** 2
 - **Fire:** 1
- **Regulatory / external markers:** **ORR** involvement in December.

5. Investigation, Reporting, And Resourcing Gaps

- **Investigation timeliness and depth** have sometimes fallen short due to **staff time pressures**.
- **Reporting is improving**, but **not yet where it needs to be**.
- **Capacity response:** active recruitment of additional **volunteer Controllers and Incident Officers** to improve coverage and follow-through.

6. Key Operational Safety Themes

- **Slips and trips** are generally minor but include at least one **serious injury (broken elbow)** and **RIDDOR-reportable** severity.
- **Situational awareness and distraction** are called out as recurring human-factors contributors.
- **Door handle “on catch”** issues persist and are framed as a shared responsibility across staff.
- **Training uplift:** increased emphasis on **Human Factors** and **non-technical skills**.

7. Other Safety Workstreams And 2026 Focus

- **First aid arrangements** are being revised.
- **Fire safety** is being tightened with **seasonal training**, plus a **Fire Brigade exercise planned for July**.
- **Exercise and assurance:** a **Pullman evacuation exercise (1 March)** produced recommendations that are being tracked.
- **Governance and assurance push:** stronger focus on **audit and monitoring**.
- **Priorities for 2026 Workshop safety, risk assessment** and **COSHH** highlighted as key focus areas.

8. Organization And Governance Changes

- **General Manager role eliminated** effective **2 Jan 2026** to manage **limited financial resources**.
- A **“Safety Disposition”** exercise documented revised management arrangements ahead of a planned **Safety Management System review in 2026**.
- **Directors** take **executive responsibility** for departments via an **Executive Support Group** (board sub-committee), with oversight from **non-executive directors**.

9. Closing Messages and Leadership Transition

- Recognition of the **Operating Manager’s retirement (30 April, 25 years service)**.
- **Recruitment of a new Operating Manager** is underway with interim arrangements in place.
- Strong appreciation message for **staff and volunteers** handling supervisory, management, and compliance responsibilities.

Annex 3: Chairman report

Celebrates strong progress in 2025 and thanks volunteers/staff; highlights record Santa Specials performance: £539k revenue (+8%), ~23% of 2025/26 trading income.

Governance and operating model changes:

- AGM moved to May;
- General Manager role removed on financial grounds;
- New Executive Steering Group (ESG) meeting fortnightly with defined executive portfolios;
- Reintroduced Risk & Compliance Committee.

Finances stabilising:

- ~£200k grant support from Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust;
- 2025 delivered a surplus (also helped by legacies);
- 2026 budget excludes legacies and plans ~£140k deficit with increased capital spend on track and carriage fleet (incl. £94k grant carried into 2026).

Cautions:

- Early-year trading ahead of budget, but April revenue down ~10%;
- Contingency plans being built for potential wider impacts (incl. Middle East-related uncertainty).

Transformation and readiness for Robertsbridge (Easter 2028):

- Consultant Matthew Green appointed to lead business transformation, safety/compliance improvements, and draft service planning;
- 2026 focus on engineering reliability and catering growth.

Motive power resilience plan:

- Reduce hired locos;
- Several engines planned/secured for 2026–27;
- Debt reducing (down to ~£145k end-2025) with aim to be debt-free by 2028.

Annex 4: Commercial presentation - Project 28 / Robertsbridge

Strategic Direction: Project 28

- **2027 planning focus — Project 28** as the commercial transformation needed to be “railway ready” for **Robertsbridge** and beyond.
- **Planning principles in motion** — the work is positioned as active, iterative strategy-setting rather than a one-off plan.

Market-Led Decision Making

- **Board-level market insight** — market research is now a standing input to monthly Board conversations to steer “**now and next**” priorities.
- **Value-led offers** — pricing and promotions are treated as key levers for families under pressure (e.g., adapting offers like **Kids Go Free**) to stay competitive on days-out decisions.

Experience & Product Development

- **Audience-first product design** — emphasise building experiences for specific segments rather than generic programming.
- **Proven + expanded events** — examples include **Murder Mystery, Fish & Chips, Bird Watching**, and scaling **Fright Night** after sell-outs, reflecting a “double down on what works” approach.

Listening, Learning, and Partnership

- **Peer benchmarking** — ongoing conversations across other railways and tourism businesses highlight knowledge-sharing and borrowing proven concepts (with reciprocal examples like **Birdwatching** and **Lego** ideas).

Evidence and Performance Measurement

- **Decision support from data** — using measures from **website traffic and conversions** through to **sales** and booking patterns.
- **Behaviour shifts tracked** — trends like booking **closer to the day** and outings shifting earlier (“**6pm is the new 8pm**”) are treated as actionable inputs.

Resources and Skills (Volunteer-Led Model)

- **Volunteer-first resourcing** — a renewed push to be more **volunteer led** is positioned as both cultural (“return to our roots”) and financial (tight budget management).
- **Skills diversification** — volunteer capability needs span **retail, catering, software systems, and market research**, signalling a broad operational uplift.

Delivery and Recognition

- **Full-year delivery** — despite constraints, the narrative emphasises delivering the full-service year (including seasonal highlights like **Santa** and **New Year Steam Up**).
- **Six awards** — recognition includes distinctions across marketing, events, hospitality, visitor experience, and tourism quality, including **Tripadvisor Travellers’ Choice** and **Visit England Quality Assured**.

Bottom Line

- **Transformation is underway** toward **2027 readiness**, anchored by **market insight**, **evidence-based decisions**, and **experience innovation**.
- **Volunteer capability** is treated as a strategic enabler, not just support.
- **2024–25 execution and awards** reinforce momentum heading into a “period of change” aimed at long-term **survival and growth**.

Annex 5: Robertsbridge - Rother Valley Railway Project Update

- **Robertsbridge open day (17 April):** around **1,600** visitors attended, thank you to everyone who helped deliver a smooth, professional day.
- **Thank you:** grateful to all volunteers and to everyone who has donated to the appeal for the Robertsbridge loco shed and facilities. More progress will be visible in **September**.
- **Robertsbridge station (completed):** the new station building (c. **£500k**) is finished.
- **The “Missing Link” (to be built):** a **3,500 m** section. Part of the formation survived but was overgrown; the Salehurst to Robertsbridge section needs embankment reinstatement where it was removed in the late 1970s.
- **2026 main build (Junction Road/Udiam Farm to Bridge 18):** about **2,500 m**. Two major bridges are complete (repairs/new beams). At Bridge 18, abutment repairs are needed and the new span is already fabricated and ready to be installed.
- **Trackbed and track:** contractors are surfacing the formation (including granite) and installing culverts where required. Track laying is planned to start with a short session in **June**, then ramp up in **July**. Target by winter: rails laid from **Junction Road to Salehurst/Bridge 18** (or just beyond).
- **Robertsbridge to A21 (c. 300 m):** also planned this year—includes moving the floodwall, replacing a major bridge, and adding culverts. If additional external volunteer groups can support, we may also get track laid on this section.
- **Winter plan:** valley flooding can limit work for ~3 months, so winter focus will be the **engine/loco shed** and associated tasks.
- **2027–2028:** complete the A21 to Salehurst connection, then finish commissioning items (e.g., signage and token equipment). **Target opening: Easter 2028.**
- **Get involved:** if you’d like to help with trackbed, track laying, or support tasks, volunteers are very welcome.