
Swale Joint Transportation Board

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Monday, 29 June 2026 from 5.30 pm - 8.12 pm.

SWALE BOROUGH COUNCILLORS: Simon Clark (Vice-Chair), Alastair Gould, Peter MacDonald, Karen Watson and Mike Whiting.

KENT COUNTY COUNCILLORS: Maxwell Harrison, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer and Paul Webb.

KENT ASSOCIATION of LOCAL COUNCILS: James Morrison (Parish Councillor), Julian Saunders (Parish Councillor) and Paul Townson (Parish Councillor).

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Monique Bonney and Paul Stephen.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Philippa Richardson.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Daniel Cannon-Skeet and Mike Knowles.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Shelley Cheesman.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Tony Winckless and Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGY: Kent County Councillor Antony Hook.

139 **Confirmation of Chair and Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2026/27**

Kent County Councillor Chris Palmer was confirmed as Chair and Councillor Simon Clark as Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2026/27.

140 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

141 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 December 2025 (Minute Nos. 545 – 555) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

142 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

143 **Public Session**

Mr Stuart Lyons, representing Ospringe Action Group, spoke on reducing the speed limit in Ospringe Street, Faversham from 30mph to 20mph. He highlighted concerns about speeding vehicles and referenced a recent collision near the pedestrian crossing. Mr Lyons explained that in 2022, the A2 in Newington was granted a 20mph speed limit and he requested parity. The Chair was handed a petition signed by over 1,500 people.

144 Presentation from Network Rail

The Vice-Chair reminded the Board that Councillor Mike Whiting had previously requested an item on Network Rail Freight. He welcomed Guy Bates, Head of Freight Development, Network Rail to deliver his presentation, as set out in the agenda papers and shared on screen.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments and these included:

- Sought more information on rail freight in Wales, Ireland and Scotland, a lot of freight went through the Channel Tunnel to those destinations;
- clarification sought on the comparative pollution levels of using rail freight rather than roads;
- suggested collaborative working with Peel Ports could be beneficial;
- sought more information on what was being offered to potential customers to get more lorries off the road;
- was there anything the Council could do to help increase rail freight and take this forward?;
- increased rail freight would significantly help the roads and towns in the borough; and
- it was important that the bridge at Crown Quay Lane, Sittingbourne was replaced as it was really narrow.

Mr Bates responded as below:

- There was a well-established land bridge operation from Ireland through the UK across to the Continent;
- there were loading gauge issues in some locations;
- sea routes were used, skipping the UK altogether;
- the Channel Tunnel was massively underused;
- different unit sizes had an impact;
- more funding was needed to open up more opportunities;
- in terms of carbon saving, if it was assumed that every train took between 40 and 100 lorries off the road, there would be 76% less carbon on average;
- there had been discussions with Peel Ports and some supermarket chains to progress rail freight;
- Sheerness was the most obvious centre for freight traffic;
- there was a revenue support scheme for intermodal traffic, an access charge to the network was determined by the regulator, and freight facility grants were available in some parts of the country; and
- a grant assisted world might encourage more businesses to engage with rail freight traffic.

Councillor Whiting proposed: That it be recommended to the relevant parties at Swale Borough Council (SBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) that a joint working group be set up with Network Rail to move this forward at pace. This was seconded by Kent County Councillor Maxwell Harrison and on being put to the vote was agreed.

The Vice-Chair thanked Mr Bates for attending the meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That it be recommended to the relevant parties at Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council that a joint working group be set up with Network Rail to move this forward at pace.

145 Urgent Item - A249 Sheppey Crossing

The Chair welcomed Francis Cluett, Head of M25, Operations South East and Rob Knight, General Manager for Sheppey Route Limited to deliver their presentation, as shared on the screen.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments and these included:

- Very disappointed with the lack of communication;
- there had been a lot of different messages given out to the public;
- considered more should have been put on the company's Facebook page;
- the messaging had not been consistent;
- many drivers had been stuck in their vehicles for four or five hours;
- lessons should have been learnt already from previous incidents;
- what was going to be done to reassure the public that this would not happen again?;
- Members needed to know the maintenance processes and schedules that were in place going forward and suggested these be reported to the next JTB meeting in October 2026;
- other countries with hotter climates seemed to cope without these issues;
- it was not good enough that people suffered so many delays;
- better ways were needed to divert traffic;
- considered the company was ill-prepared for this type of incident;
- increased development could make incidents like this more common;
- needed to be reassured that this would not happen again;
- it seemed that the company was ill-prepared for routine maintenance and incidents; and
- sought assurance that the Kingsferry Bridge was maintained sufficiently well to take additional traffic.

Members received the following responses:

- Lessons had been learnt to not schedule the works during a Bank Holiday weekend;
- a de-brief with multi-agencies was due to take place;
- communications would be looked at and improved going forward, including co-ordinating with other partners;
- we were as confident as reasonably possible that such an incident would not occur again; and
- there would be more spare parts going forward.

Following commentary from a Member attending remotely, Kent County Councillor Richard Palmer proposed the following: That the Chair of the Swale JTB writes to the Department for Transport to set out the Board's anger and concerns that the Department for Transport had really underestimated the road infrastructure on and off the Isle of

Sheppey considering it had three prisons and a port, a resident and tourism population and businesses. It had become wholly unreliable, on the A249 and the bridge and what had been shown over the last couple of years was a complete pattern of failure and this impacted on businesses on the mainland as well as on the Isle of Sheppey and that the Department of Transport be asked that these issues be responded to and acted upon, and the letter to be signed by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Swale JTB and that the Leaders of Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council be copied into the letter as well.

Further comments included:

- Clarification sought on the maintenance schedule and why the expansion joint was repaired with a sub-optimal part when the company was aware that the joints were coming to the end of their working life;
- not happy with the maintenance inspections – the bumps in the road should have been picked up;
- parts had a shelf life so it would have been known that they would have needed to be replaced at some point;
- this incident affected the community;
- traffic management had gone astray;
- communications needed to be improved;
- SGN were closing the Iwade route during the whole of August 2026 which would have an impact if there was another incident;
- the National Highways website needed to be updated, not just have communications via Facebook;
- modern vehicles were heavier than older ones, that might have an impact on the bridge; and
- clarification on the Iwade works were needed sooner rather than later.

Members received the following responses:

- The temporary repairs had historically worked and had been expected to last, these had now been replaced;
- every two years there was a general inspection and a principal inspection every six years on the bridge (including bridge joints), there was also an annual maintenance;
- comparison work with similar bridges was being undertaken to see when their bridge joints were checked;
- there was a maintenance regime and would report back with that in October 2026; and
- would investigate the SGN works and provide further information in due course.

The Chair thanked Mr Cluett and Mr Knight for attending the meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) That the update be noted.**
- (2) That the guests return to the next meeting on 5 October 2026 to update the Board on their maintenance schedules and updates following their de-brief with multi-agencies.**
- (3) That the Chair of the Swale JTB writes to the Department for Transport to set**

out the Board's anger and concerns that the Department for Transport had really underestimated the road infrastructure on and off the Isle of Sheppey considering it had three prisons and a port, a resident and tourism population and businesses. It had become wholly unreliable, on the A249 and the bridge and what had been shown over the last couple of years was a complete pattern of failure and this impacted on businesses on the mainland as well as on the Isle of Sheppey and that the Department of Transport be asked that these issues be responded to and acted upon, and the letter to be signed by the Chair and Vice-Chair and that the Leaders of Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council be copied into the letter as well.

146 Petition for Residents' Parking Scheme - College Road, Sittingbourne

The Seafront & Engineering Manager introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers.

A visiting Ward Member spoke in favour of there being an informal consultation.

Kent County Councillor Paul Webb proposed that an informal consultation with residents of College Road be undertaken on the possible extension to the current Residents' Parking Scheme. This was seconded by Kent County Councillor Richard Palmer and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Recommended:

(1) That an informal consultation with residents of College Road, Sittingbourne be undertaken on the possible extension to the current Residents' Parking Scheme.

147 Update on the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Project and other Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure

The Swale Highway Manager explained that the report had been sent to all JTBs in the district. In response to a question, he confirmed that he would look into where the EV charging points would be located within the borough.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

148 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Swale Joint Transportation Board would be on Monday 5 October 2026.

149 Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned from 7.48 pm until 7.58 pm.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel