

**Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton Rail User Group Special Meeting
 Foxton Level Crossing Safety
 21 May 2012, 19.30
 Foxton Village Hall**

Minutes

Attendees/Station:

Apologies:

Susan van de Ven	SVV	Not applicable (one off meeting)
Dave Ward, Managing Director, Anglia Route	DW	
Germaine Varney (Melbourn Village College), Theo Windred (MVC)		
Tina Hughes	TW	
Peter Wakefield (Railfuture)	PW	
Sue Hanson		
Jeremy Smith (CCC Transport Strategy)	JS	
Christine MacFadzean (Foxton Parish Council)	CF	
Florence Clark	FC	
Hattie MacFadzean	HMF	
Christine MacFadzean	CMF	
Erica Clark		
David Reed		
Jim Eggleton		
Mark Howard		
Brian Farmer		
Rachael Macintyre (Foxton Parish Council)		
Geoff Barnes (Foxton Parish Council)		
Robert Stripe	RS	
Mark Wyatt		
BBC 'Look East' unit		
Chris Mann (Drive time, Radio Cambs)		
Other abbreviations used:		
Cambridgeshire County Council	CCC	
Meldreth Village College media team	MVC	
Request for Quotation	RFQ	
Risk Assessment	RA	
Level Crossing	LC	
Network Rail	NR	
All responsible authorities (eg, CCC + HA + parish councils + Netwk Rail..)	All resp.	

1.	Welcome and apologies SV welcomed all for coming	Actions
2.	DW has been in post since November, has long service with the railway industry	

	<p>DW gave a summary of the situation, so far. DW gives a précis of the Radio Cambs interview and his promise to fix the situation & promises to cut through the red tape (if possible). Gates are installed, needs another £50k to complete locking mechanisms. 'Contingency path' on one side of the road has been widened; other side has no refuge area</p>	
3.	MVC media team are making video, which will go on MVC website and could also go up on Track Access Services (train driver training organization based in Shepreth) website (http://www.trackaccess.org/).	
4.	Meeting next month to discuss longer term approach	SVV CCC DW
5.	<p>Summary of level crossing usage 6500 .level crossings; mostly rural. Foxton, with 4 barriers and attendant operation is at the top end of LC complexity DW notes that the community lack of confidence in the crossing must be addressed, whatever the risk assessment says and notes that being trapped in the crossing 'must be absolutely terrifying'</p>	DW
6.	<p>Crossing Operation/Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level crossing keeper sets the 'coming train' indication (Uniquely to Foxton) there is a footpath crossing – the gates are locked, to prevent entry Operates the 'crossing clear' button → Cambridge; without this, signals for the train cannot be cleared 	DW
7.	<p>Foxton level crossing traffic: 15,000 vehicle movements/day 500 passenger movements/day 52 trains/day for the Anglia region: Vehicle movements: 180 million Pedestrian movements 26 Million</p>	DW
8.	<p>Gate failures Gates failed 37 times since 2011 (these figures come NR; there is a suggestion that the figures that the RUG's figures are higher, as the RUG may record some incidents which do not meet NR's criteria for recording).</p> <p>DW comments that NR has seen some part of the failures as simply a problem with users, but the new approach is to see things differently.</p>	DW
9.	<p>February undertaking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widen footpath on the station side of the A10 Refurbish locks with parts from a crossing in Suffolk; since then, there has been some evidence of improvement 3 suppliers were given RFQs to improve visibility, with 3 week deadline (with hindsight, more compliant bids might have been obtained with a less stringent time scale) Only a single compliant bid 	DW

- Awarded 'intent to contract' on the 3 week deadline
 - Supplier then wanted '28 points of principle' clarified. Actual cost went closer to £150k than £50k; signalling work is lucrative for supplier chain, with specialist railway/safety requirements
 - Contract finally awarded.
 - Some of the work is 'non-gates' (lighting, CCTV), which will be slightly later than the gates work (Sept vs July)
 - DW also concerned about the negative reaction that his staff are getting from the general public
- DW re-states the gate part of the works to be completed by 30 July

11 MVC Media Team:

Should teach about level crossings in schools
 This has already been discussed
 Would be good to roll out some kind of training before school holidays

DW

12 A10 compatibility

The A10 is a major road; how can it be possible that a crossing that pushes children into the main road be ranked 7th? There is no alternative to using it, inadequate information, so is risk assessment robust enough (rarely does traffic clear to allow the crossing to be used in a clear period).
 The fitting of cameras suggest that current visibility inadequate.

The risk assessment model (RA) separates the usage modes (train, road traffic and pedestrian), and this is unreasonable. CTV is a sea change & comes from seeing this as a community issue and an employee issue.

Risk control is not just a technical 'Railway Control' problem, but is also a community confidence problem.

Expense: £130m in current 5 year control period.
 In the next 5 year control period NR is aiming for £300m (figure provided by NR) nationally, to include obstacle detection.

DW points out that a footbridge is not in his gift; however much he would like a footbridge to be the solution, dealings with the Highways Agency, the County Council (planning/traffic) and others would mean that he couldn't just make one appear.

13 'Near miss' (in aviation safety terms) incidents

Signalman missed presence of Florence and Hattie, February
 Florence – happened twice within three weeks
 DW Crossing clear switch not operated in this case (some doubt about which of the two incidents this was)
 Can signalman re-open gates to allow a trapped passenger to escape? DW – yes.
 More incidents seem to be recorded on the MSF RUG log than NR record. Therefore, is the NR ranking reliable (SVV)?
 Phone number is now printed in a larger font; is this enough?
 One answer to this is 'Allow yourself to be trapped and in a panic, and then see how well you cope, irrespective of the size of the

font.' So, that would be a no, then.)

A comment from the floor expressed (trenchantly) some astonishment that we are discussing gates, in spite of the fact that there should be a bridge. Cannot accept that this is the safest in Europe.

DW points out that he is not responsible for roads and could not build a road bridge himself. Cooperation with other parties as part of a drive to find a fuller solution is fundamentally important.

There is potentially a wider economic case, integrating the avoidance of road delays, maintenance costs for the railways and general environmental utility (as well as the avoidance of 'incidents'), but this case has to be made.

This is a difficult junction (for traffic) - this makes congestion more likely and therefore accident risk increased. If this was a project starting today, it wouldn't be done this way (unclear whether this was just the risk assessment or whether a junction layout such as this would not be considered).

BTP: No crossings in some parts of Europe. A Bridge would be problematic, from a disabled access point of view. The worst problems include suicides and close approaches and the consequent pressure on staff.

Authorities put pressure on performance, and that means longer trains, and that increases stopping distances.

Tannoy-style comms system to crossing? Issues with deafness. Lighting improvements, better view, panic button all to be considered. (Panic button to interact with gate lock.)

Does this take resp from crossing keeper?

Not agreed – quite reliable, but not 100%, and this is a backstop. Is there ever a time when visibility is so poor that people in the gate can't be seen?

(The implication of users not being seen is that if they are not seen, then the safety measures that should occur are not taken.)

Traffic volume is problematic, and the signals operators can start to focus on the road traffic. Can lead to automaton-like behaviour. (For example, fog must be potentially problematic, without infra-red 'night sites', but not for many days per year)

It is necessary to take into account population growth in the area. Yearly risk assessment; risk assessments can therefore be up to a year out of date

14 **Introduction of level crossing managers**

Pilot scheme (Scotland first) this should lead to incremental improvements.

'ALCRO' (All level Crossings management tool). Collects data, but not human risk.

Red/Green pedestrian warning lights cost ~0.5 million and take ~2 years. These are not foolproof, but may make time for other solutions.

'Sonic wave' technology to give warnings to users could cost ~£30k and take 2 months: if suitable (and that is still an open question) 4 units to be ordered for a trial & then wider roll-out possible for troublesome crossings?

RA process has been too 'Office-based' which can ignore particularities of the situation on the ground.

3 fatalities in past two years; out of those, 2 wearing headphones, so sonic alarms (are becoming more) limited in utility.

15 Has everything been done?

- Extra-human; no
- Lollipop lady; no

DW

16 Parking and Visibility

DW points out that he does not have any control over parking
GB points out that the initial offer (a while ago) was half barriers and no signal box. Parish council persuaded the powers that were to upgrade. Footbridge was claimed to be too expensive. Foxton crossing is unique.

Underpass is impossible (uneconomic?), due to water table; there was some questioning of this, but the worst case has to be taken into account.

Highways Agency had bought some of the land, and when it was considered inappropriate that the HA holding the land, the CC have ended up with some key land.

There is a perception issue; The problem with the gates started in 2010, so it has taken 2 years to get to this stage. Do the numbers relate to 1 failure every 5 days (which wouldn't be good).

DW Agrees that the current situation is not good, Historically, haven't been prepared to listen (to local opinion) because the risk assessment methodology hasn't shown a problem.

DW: believes dialogue has been better since February. Has concerns for his staff, who are feeling the pressure and possibly that they are scapegoats.

GB: The signalmen's expertise has been helpful, so far, but may have contributed to the misalignment between the RUG's log of the problems, because, if the signalmen cope with a problem easily, it may not get to the formal log.

- 17**
- PW: Indiscipline from road users endangering the project
 - SVV People are nervous including one caught suspect
 - DW: Education of motorists!
 - BF has there been any study of the effect of the 50 limit?
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18 SVV comments that we are trying to improve the situation and not beat up on the signalmen

SVV

19 SVV thanks DW for attendance

SVV

20 Date of next meeting

No specific follow up meeting is scheduled. SVV, DW and others are to have a meeting to discuss the longer-term plan, and ordinary MSF RUG meeting dates are publicised on the mailing list and on the website:

<http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/next-meeting/>