

Foxton Level Crossing Feasibility Study – Important juncture

Network Rail's feasibility study for the prospective closure of Foxton Level Crossing is expected imminently and it is vital now that local people have the chance to be kept properly informed. The County Council has a role in this project because any closure of the crossing would necessarily be a combined 'rail and road' project – as there will inevitably be some implication for the highway, whether big or small. I have not yet seen the draft report but I have been liaising with the Council about the importance of good communication, and with Network Rail on account of the seemingly continual failure of the new pedestrian gates.

All information about the feasibility study will now be fed through Foxton Parish Council. In addition, the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group 'Foxton Level Crossing' website page will be kept up-to-date with news and information: <http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/foxton-level-crossing>

The Leader of the County Council recently appeared in the local press talking about the idea of a bridge at the crossing. It is vital that the process is taken one step at a time and that we first see what the report recommends. The underpinning principle of the feasibility study, as set out by Managing Director Dave Ward last June, is to look at 'all options' and so there should be no assumptions made at this point. Furthermore there is no provision in the current County Council budget for any type of project work at Foxton Level Crossing, so it is premature for any announcements of what the council will or will not support.

If Network Rail makes a strong case for closing the level crossing then it would seem appropriate that they should be expected to access as much as possible the Department for Transport funding specifically set aside for level crossing closures – but first we'll have to see what the proposals consist of. As mentioned at the March Foxton Parish Council meeting, I have requested a meeting with County Council and Network Rail officers, Foxton Parish Council's Chairman and myself, to get acquainted with the detail of the report before it is made public. I have also suggested to County officers that Barrington Parish Council's Chairman and County Councillor be invited to attend this meeting since the crossing is situated relatively near to Barrington parish.

I am well aware that talk about big changes to Foxton Level Crossing has been taking place for decades. There will no doubt be many questions and many concerns about any proposals to change the way things are, so we are in for a busy time.

Finally I should remember to say that this particular chapter in the discussion about Foxton Level Crossing was triggered by a Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group campaign to solve pedestrian safety issues. When Network Rail took a closer look, they decided that a detailed and overarching study was warranted.

Many thanks for your patience.

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