

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group Meeting
17th June 2014, 7:30pm
Shepreth Village Hall

Minutes

1. Attending

Susan van de Ven (chair), Mark Wyatt, Jane Eggleton, Jim Eggleton, Sue Hanson, Linda Pearmain, Denise Pearmain, Marianne Bruggemann, Cyril Kenzie, Beatrice Fisher, Malcolm Howe, Geoff Barnes, Peter Wakefield (Railfuture), Andy Hart (FCC), Karen Gregson (FCC), Mark Howard, Rebecca Willers (Shepreth Wildlife Park), Philippa Hart (District Councillor), Janet Cottenden

Apologies

Sean Cronin (Network Rail), Jonathan Holdcroft (Network Rail), Paul Hollinghurst

Susan opened the meeting at 7:30pm.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

There were no corrections to the minutes from the last meeting (AGM), but these will not be formally approved until the next AGM. Susan explained that next year we will run the AGM in a separate section, to be followed by the main meeting. Separate minutes will be written.

3. Franchise transition

From 15th September Govia will be operating the franchise. As a rail user group, we had contact with all shortlisted companies and Susan met with Govia.

Susan expressed our thanks to FCC for their support, especially in getting us set up as a rail user group. It was also agreed that we would like to see Govia keep the same local team in place and to continue the excellent relationship we have with FCC.

4. News from Govia

- There is to be a meeting with Govia on 15th July at the Cambridge University Centre. Janet Cottenden and Peter Wakefield plan to attend.
- Govia have confirmed that they will continue the 16-19 discount on trains.
- Peter Wakefield reported that Govia have said there is to be a new pattern of trains from 2018. Fast services will be half hourly to Kings Lynn. Semi-fast services will be twice-hourly and will continue through to Brighton. Stopping services will be twice-hourly throughout the day.
- Karen Gregson reported that a lot of the current engineering works are to do with the Thameslink upgrades, and advised travellers to look out for engineering works.
- Peter advised us to keep reminding Govia of what they have said about the importance of small stations, and to lobby them to make the trains for Cambridge Science Park station (opening 2016) stop at our stations.
- There was also a point that with more trains on this line by 2018, the pressures on level crossings will be even greater.

5. Updates

a) Foxton Level Crossing Project Board

The project board has met and will meet again in July when it will go through the feasibility study in detail. Unfortunately Network Rail were unable to come to tonight's meeting, but Susan has an update from Sean Cronin:

Alistair Frost [Cambs County Council Project Board Lead] has now selected 3 consultants who are preparing a brief document outlining the approach they would take to the GRIP3 at Foxton, with submissions due back to Alistair on 20th of June. The submissions will be evaluated as to who will be on the tender list for GRIP 3.

Other Projects in the Area: I have been in contact with our Route neighbours to see if there are any other projects on your patch but other than a gauging scheme which is very much a railway infrastructure project there doesn't seem to be anything in the offing. If you think that is incorrect then let me know what you have heard and seen and I will do some more digging.

Marcus Jones (new Network Rail Area Manager) has also reminded us that the Foxton level crossing issue is still very much a work in progress and there are many steps in the process still to go through.

A number of members at the meeting reported issues/incidents with the level crossing, both relating to the pedestrian and road gates. Karen Gregson asked that people report any incidents to FCC (via Karen & Andy) as well as to Network Rail.

b) Community Rail Partnership

The CRP is going very well. We are now starting to improve communication with various parties, especially local businesses such as Shepreth Wildlife Park. The management at the "new" pub in Shepreth are also interested in getting involved. Susan encouraged people to think about their own villages and what businesses there are that might be able to be approached. Susan will ask CCC to draft a flyer to send to other potential business partners.

c) Station updates

Shepreth

The end of the London-bound platform has been blocked off for safety reasons to stop people from darting across the tracks. We had been informed by Network Rail that a path would be put round the front of the station, with a ramp to provide disabled access onto the London-bound platform, and access to the ticket machine. No ramp has been put in as yet, and trees have also been removed and a larger area tarmaced than we were expecting. Susan, Philippa and Janet met with Marcus Jones (Network Rail) at the station today and were told that the ramp would still be put in, as soon as possible, and hopefully "this summer".

Karen said that FCC are hoping to make use of the extra tarmaced area to create more parking spaces. Susan requested that the free parking at Shepreth be maintained even if the car park layout is changed.

It was asked whether the ticket machine could be moved into the car park to avoid passengers needing to go onto the London-bound platform at all if their train was from the Cambridge-bound platform. FCC will look into this. It was stated that the machine does not take enough money to warrant putting in a second machine on the other platform.

Foxton

The issue was raised that the loud speakers cannot be heard adequately on the platforms. Karen/Andy agreed to take this up with the relevant team.

Meldreth

Philippa pointed out that the CCTC in the car park only points at the cars, not the bikes, and that one bike is known to have been stolen recently. Karen/Andy will take this up with the relevant team, and thefts should be reported to British Transport Police on 0800 405040.

A few weeks ago there was a fault with the Meldreth ticket machine printing out extra "VOID" tickets. Andy believes that the problem has now been solved.

The issue was raised again of there being no ticket machine on the London-bound platform at Meldreth. FCC's line is still that it is not realistic to install a second ticket machine, but Karen will re-check whether a permit to travel machine can be put on the London-bound platform. (Permit to travel machines have in general been removed.)

Susan and Janet have been in communication with Brian Barnsley (Operations Manager at ACoRP) about the accessibility campaign and issues at Meldreth.

He had some further suggestions about how we could develop our campaign:

- Engage with the new train operator – we are doing this already, and will continue to do so as the franchise changes over.
- Contact our local MP – Janet will do this.
- Engage with the local authority as there may be possible pots of money there which could be used alongside DfT/Network Rail/TOC funding – we are already doing this via the CRP and feel as if we have the local authority on side.

Station gardens

Thanks were given to all who have contributed to the station gardens, especially Philippa for co-ordinating Meldreth and Shepreth.

d) Bus passes

FCC have been asked if bus passes could be honoured on trains, as if they were a railcard. This has been successfully trialled elsewhere. We are waiting for an answer from FCC about whether it could be done as a special deal for Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton due to the limited bus services in the area.

e) Railfuture conference

This Saturday, 21st June. Peter Wakefield invited anyone to go. This focus is on how the railway can be adapted to the changing needs of this area.

6. Station Wardens

Susan suggested the idea of having representatives from the RUG for each station. There were no immediate volunteers (!) so this was left for members to consider.

7. Distributing timetables

Batches of timetables were taken by various people who were willing to deliver them in Meldreth and Melbourn. It was agreed to put batches in key locations in the villages rather than deliver them door-to-door as this was very time consuming.

8. Next meeting

Wednesday 24th September 2014, Foxton Village Hall.

Andy and Karen assured us that they would still be there, even though it is after the start of the new franchise as it will be within the transition period.