

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group: 8 March 2011 AGM report

A. Campaigning issues

1. Nuisance and dangerous parking around stations

- Liaised with parish councils, police and Highways; Foxton will and Meldreth will likely pay for added double yellow lines at cost of several hundred pounds. However, desired level of police enforcement is not possible.
- Illegal parking on existing double yellow lines at Station Road, Foxton, resulting in traffic queuing on the level crossing itself, has been reported and conveyed to Network Rail and British Transport Police. Meeting on site with NWR has taken place and we will be looking for County Highways support in possible further measures.

2. Parking charges

- The RUG has monitored and recorded parking levels at Meldreth and Shepreth Stations where usage remains disappointingly low (often zero at Shepreth).
- Further disappointment in First Capital Connect's parking charge rise to £3 per day at both station car parks.
- Overall this remains a waste of two important village amenities, and has exacerbated the problem of parking around stations, especially Foxton where 2009 footfall figures indicate a rise of 21.7%, compared with 1.8% at Meldreth and 1.5% at Shepreth. This suggests migration to Foxton for free street parking.

3. Ticket machine screen visibility

- A campaign to encourage rail users to report back to FCC visibility problems resulted in Foxton and Meldreth ticket machines to be included in a pilot for new screens, which are now awaited. If the pilot is successful, all screens including Shepreth's will be replaced.

4. Cycle parking

- Foxton now has some limited cycle parking. Thanks are due to Cambridgeshire County Council for providing the five cycle racks, the land to put them on, and the installation. Much more cycle parking is needed, and Foxton is well situated for this as the station is linked to Harston and beyond by the A10 cycle path, albeit in poor condition.
- Passenger Focus has recommended that Meldreth should have cycle parking to accommodate the south-bound platform. Cycles regularly stacked against rails.

5. Post-16 student fares

- We are extremely pleased about FCC's 'Cambridge Schools' scheme which offers a 50% discount off the adult fare for all 16-19 year olds travelling to Cambridge for education.
- This has saved students between £130-£200 annually and has saved Cambridgeshire County Council over £100 per student not seeking a County-subsidized bus pass.
- These young people will have developed a familiarity with rail travel which hopefully will reinforce the likelihood of adopting the habit of seeking sustainable forms of transport.

6. Extra services

- Extra morning service (9:41, 9:43 and 9:45)
- Extra evening service (18:14 from King's Cross)

7. Information Screens

Some improvement, awareness of FCC when problems are occurring.

8. Disabled ramp, Meldreth southbound platform

- A cost estimate produced by FCC in 2009 was in the range of £30K. The best prospect of funding is via DfT's Access for All, though match-funding is required.
- A possible link via Sustrans was explored, for which thanks to Sustrans and Cambridgeshire County Council, but was not successful.
- Continuing priority; other opportunities to be explored.

9. ASB incidents at stations

- British Transport Police data now reported at Melbourn/Bassingbourn Neighbourhood Panels as part of the quarterly policing profile on ASB in villages. Levels of ASB previously not understood.
- Commitment of Cambs Police to continue this reporting practice.

10. Support of parish councils and local groups

- We would like to thank Meldreth, Shepreth, Foxton and Melbourn Parish Councils for covering the cost of room hire for one meeting per year in each village. We feel it is important to bring the meeting to each of the villages who enjoy direct access to rail travel.
- We would also like to thank Meldreth Manor School who have offered free premises for meetings in the coming year; parish councils are facing unprecedented financial demands and this offer will be presented to them.
- Finally we'd like to thank the Melbourn Village Website for hosting the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, at no charge.

11. Communication with rail industry

- We have developed excellent communication with First Capital Connect, National Express and Railfuture, all of whom have regularly attended our meetings; also with Network Rail and Passenger Focus who have both met us on site to take up local concerns.
- National Rail have erected station information posters; good start but incomplete information.
- National Express has provided a poster board for MSF RUG at Cambridge Station, and First Capital Connect has provided poster boards for us at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton stations.

B. New issues

1. Mechanical failure of pedestrian gates, Foxton Station

- Network Rail has now responded very positively.

- New gates are to be installed imminently and a new safety action plan is now in place in the event of future gate failure.
- Further safety measures are being considered by NWR and County Highways cooperation will be needed.

2. Station Adoptions and Community Rail Partnership

Station adoption and a Community Rail Partnership have been proposed to the MSF RUG by First Capital Connect. Background:

- Incidents of ASB have been reported at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton stations. At the suggestion of National Express Ely Station Manager Alan Neville, who has been involved in station adoption projects,
- SvdV visited March and Ely Stations where station adoption and garden enhancement have helped to reduce anti-social. She also visited Fenland District Council Community Transport to learn about their involvement in the March Station project.
- RUG members suggested that the three stations birthdays be observed this summer – 160 for M and S, 163 for Foxton.
- Liaison with local history groups, gardening clubs and local primary schools has indicated strong interest in all three villages and a date of July 9th has been set, arranged to coincide with the revival of Shepreth's Village Fete.
- A meeting with FCC has taken place to discuss garden enhancement at each station as a way of marking the birthdays.
- Station Adoption and Community Rail Partnership have been proposed by First Capital Connect. Continuing campaigning in all areas would be facilitated through greater public awareness and involvement, and by strengthening our ties with the Train Operating Company.
- About fifty CRPs exist nationwide and often a significant increase in rail usage is associated with them. They involved a range of community activities linked to rail stations or train operating companies, like garden enhancement and sponsorship of local groups, sport clubs, etc. FCC is looking to initiate its first CRPs.
- A CRP could explore new areas of activity, such as developing some small community transport links to the three stations.
- Support would be needed from Network Rail and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Susan van de Ven (Chairman)