

## **Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group Meeting**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2014, 7:30pm**

**Foxton Village Hall**

### **1. Attending**

Susan van de Ven (chair), Marcus Jones (Network Rail), Karen Gregson (Great Northern), Andy Hart (Great Northern), Mark Wyatt, John Evans, Mike Prior-Jones, Paul Hollinghurst, Beatrice Fisher, Jim Eggleton, Laraine Pocknell, Marianne Bruggemann, Geoff Barnes, Sue Hanson, John Clark, Peter Wakefield, Robert Stripe, Mark Howard, Malcolm Howe, Stuart Moris, Janet Cottenden.

### **Apologies**

Claire Gibbons (SCDC), Philippa Hart (District Councillor), Rebecca Willers (Shepreth Wildlife Park)

### **2. Minutes from previous meeting**

The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

### **3. Introduction and welcome: Great Northern**

Susan welcomed Marcus Jones (Area Manager for Network Rail), and Karen Gregson and Andy Hart (Great Northern, formerly First Capital Connect).

#### New franchise

Karen Gregson introduced the new franchise. The transition has begun. The franchise is called "Govia Thameslink Railway" (GTR); we are part of the "Great Northern" section.

Karen summarised the commitments of the new franchise and a booklet was circulated to those at the meeting.

A few key points of particular interest to our rail user group:

- Increased frequency and capacity on trains over the next few years.
- A commitment to maintaining community relationships.
- Five area development managers to be put in place – they will have responsibility for community relations.
- There will be a £1 million annual fund (from 2016) for local communities to spend on improvements to small stations (< 1m footfall). This funding will be available via a local "wishlist" system. Karen and Andy have already put our aspirations for improved access at Meldreth station onto this list.

As a rail user group, we are delighted to note that within the first ten days of the franchise we have had very good communication with the local staff from GTR and are encouraged about the prospects for the future.

### **4. Train service issues**

- A question was raised about overcrowding on some of the morning trains going towards London, but the overcrowding is in certain carriages because people do not realise there is space elsewhere on the train. Request for an announcement to be made at Royston to explain to passengers which carriages there is still space on. Karen will speak to colleagues at Greater Anglia to ask for more information to be passed from Cambridge to stations further down the line.
- In the evening the 18:14 from London is frequently used by passengers to these three villages – the train splits at Royston. This is an excellent service except that the information given to passengers is inadequate both at Kings Cross and at Royston. Karen explains there are complications in the service data technology because of the train turning into two trains. Network Rail are looking into this. Karen will take the point forward again. It was also pointed out that manual information given at Kings Cross is sometimes actually wrong, as well as the routine/automated information being inadequate.
- There was also some confusion over listings at Kings Cross saying that trains stop at either Foxton (not Cambridge) or Finsbury Park (not Kings Cross). Marcus and Karen said they would look into this.
- A question was raised regarding cycles on trains and what GTR's approach is going to be on this? Some trains have been recorded with excessive numbers of bikes. The issue is a problem for both passengers and staff and is a safety issue. Existing restrictions still apply under new franchise. There is a policy to increase cycle storage at stations. Karen is liaising with Susan about increased cycle storage at our stations. Karen also explains that passenger capacity has to come first on trains and therefore space for cycles will remain limited.
- Action for the RUG: to readvertise cycle restrictions to our local residents especially as it is the start of a new school year. Also, to encourage residents to use folded bikes if possible.

## **5. Updates from Network Rail**

Marcus Jones – new Area Manager for this area (and quite a large area!)

### Apologies from Network Rail:

- Shepreth Centenary Poppy Garden – some weeds had grown through into a Network Rail control box. Instruction was given to clear this, which inadvertently meant that an external contractor cleared the whole area, and herbicide was sprayed. Huge apology given from Network Rail that the mistake was made. The feeling of the meeting was that common sense was not used to an adequate extent and that the contractor had ignored signs up stating what the garden was. Marcus has offered that Network Rail will fund the replacement of the garden. Susan and Beatrice will liaise with Marcus about funding and remedial work to restore the garden.
- Shepreth Ramp – the end of the London-bound platform was closed off for safety reasons because of people being able to walk straight onto the level crossing. But this left the London-bound platform only accessible with steps. A ramp design has been commissioned but Marcus is still waiting for approval of the design. He is hoping to get design approval in about a week, and Karen is chasing the approval from the GTR side. The car park will be handed over to GTR once the ramp has been built. GTR will then be able to decide on remarking the car park. So there is a slight delay on what we were hoping for, but this work should still be happening soon.

- Request from Susan that when the former coal shed is dealt with, that Network Rail should contact Shepreth Parish Council to ensure that the local community is aware of what is to be done and is happy with the outcome.

#### Other updates/information from Network Rail

- Cambridgeshire resignalling to be done in 2017/18 – will include both Shepreth level crossings being converted to a full barrier systems
- Speed restriction coming out of Cambridge will be lifted in next few months.
- Cambridge Science Park station progress continuing. Decision still to be made on whether trains that stop at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton will continue through to Cambridge Science Park.
- Network Rail aspiration to run freight trains into Foxton/Barrington sidings at some point.
- Foxton level crossing closure feasibility study - possibility of a new road route still on the agenda. This process still has a long way to go, so it is likely that the crossing system will be upgraded in the shorter term, before the overall complete change of the crossing or crossing removal in the longer term.
- Assurance given that any timetable changes / additions have to be risk assessed for the down time for the gates, so the situation cannot become much worse than it currently is anyway because it is almost at capacity already.
- Susan also explained that Foxton Parish Council are taking the lead in the local reporting and negotiations on the issue of Foxton level crossing feasibility study, and that the RUG should leave the majority of the discussions to Foxton Parish Council.

#### **6. Meldreth Accessibility: feedback from public and industry support**

- Andy has already spoken to Andrew Sedgwick at GTR and the ramp on the London-bound side of Meldreth station has already been put on wish list for community funding for GTR. Thanks to Karen and Andy for keeping the profile raised for us.
- Janet also wrote an article in the Autumn Melbourn Magazine explaining the ongoing situation to residents to assure them that the campaign is still very current. (The proposed ramp would be of most benefit to Melbourn residents.)
- Action for the RUG: Continue to keep the profile raised via discussions with GTR and Network Rail, and via local magazines and press, in order to ensure that our aspirations remain 'on the radar'. Susan/Janet to make contact with Anne Bates (Transport Access Consultant) who Peter Wakefield spoke to at the GTR launch last week.

#### **7. Other station issues**

- We reminded Karen and Andy of our earlier request for a shelter on the Cambridge-bound platform at Meldreth. They will pursue this again.
- The state of the waiting room at Foxton was discussed. GTR are 'on the case'. It is thought that there is a group of young people who are responsible for graffiti – BTP are involved.
- Shepreth Water butt lid – Thanks to a Shepreth Station garden volunteer who has replaced the water butt on the platform, and to Phillimore Garden Centre for a greatly reduced price.
- It was asked whether there was a possibility of a bin being put in at Shepreth. This may be a security issue due to the station being unmanned but Karen will look into it.
- Meldreth Christmas Tree festival – thanks to Sue Hanson for doing this for the past few years and again this year. If anyone has any ideas please give them to Sue.
- Garden tubs – Philippa is liaising with Karen/Andy for Shepreth and Meldreth, and Susan will arrange a date for Foxton.

## **8. Community Rail Partnership**

Susan briefly explained the purpose of the CRP. It is working very well for bringing together the various parties involved in the railways.

## **9. Any other urgent business**

Timetables for distributing – apparently the wrong ones were sent for us to distribute. One box of timetables rather than two would be the right number to meet our capacity to distribute them.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

10<sup>th</sup> December in Meldreth, venue to be confirmed.