

# Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership



2021-22 Annual Report



# Contents

Introduction by the Chair	3
Providing a Voice for the Community	4
Promoting Sustainable, Healthy and Accessible Travel	6
Bringing Communities Together, Supporting Diversity and Inclusion	7
Supporting Social and Economic Development	9
Strengthening the Partnership	10
Financial Report and Funding	11
Who We Are	12

Cover photo credit: Simon Smith, Railscene Cambridge

# Introduction by the Chair

## ‘Try the Train!’

This year, our job as Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership (MSFCRP) has been to keep a strong focus on the future and sustainability of local rail services. We’ve rekindled community involvement in looking after our station environments and encouraged take-up of rail travel as society reshapes itself in the wake of the pandemic.

The foundation of a Community Rail Partnership (CRP) and the access to a wide range of networks has provided a good footing for rebuilding ridership and cultivating wider interest in sustainable, active travel. Some of these networks are new and have fostered new ideas. A strong relationship with our train operating company provides constant close attention to detail.

The effects of the pandemic on mental and physical health, and the importance of physical exercise and social contact, has underpinned new emphasis on active travel.

Big infrastructure projects continue to demand careful thought and attention and we have sought to make local voices heard and consider the long-term public interest.

We’ve been delighted to work in new ways with our closest secondary school, Melbourn Village College, as well as other schools further afield who’ve taken an interest in Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteering opportunities.

And we’ve taken an active role in the national network of CRPs promoting rail for tourism – all part of the picture in choosing to Try the Train! We were delighted to win an award for communications in the Countryside, Capital, Coast campaign, hosted by the Community Rail Network.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the passion and dedication of our Project Officer, Sarah Grove, whose role is supported by a multitude of partners, reflecting widespread commitment to the future of active sustainable rail travel for our local communities.

**Susan van de Ven**

**Chair, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership**



# Providing a Voice for the Community

This year we have continued to make local voices heard during important infrastructure consultations that will affect our local area and rail users. We have energetically engaged with our train operating company through several changes to the timetable.

## Timetable Issues

Throughout the ups and downs of the pandemic we have liaised closely with Govia Thameslink Railway, ensuring that the timetable supports our key workers, commuters and school travellers. At times, special stop orders were put in place for our villages, and we have continued our campaign for a half-hourly service. This was returned in December, only to be dropped again due to the emergence of the Omicron Coronavirus variant, however we have great hopes to see it return in May 2022.

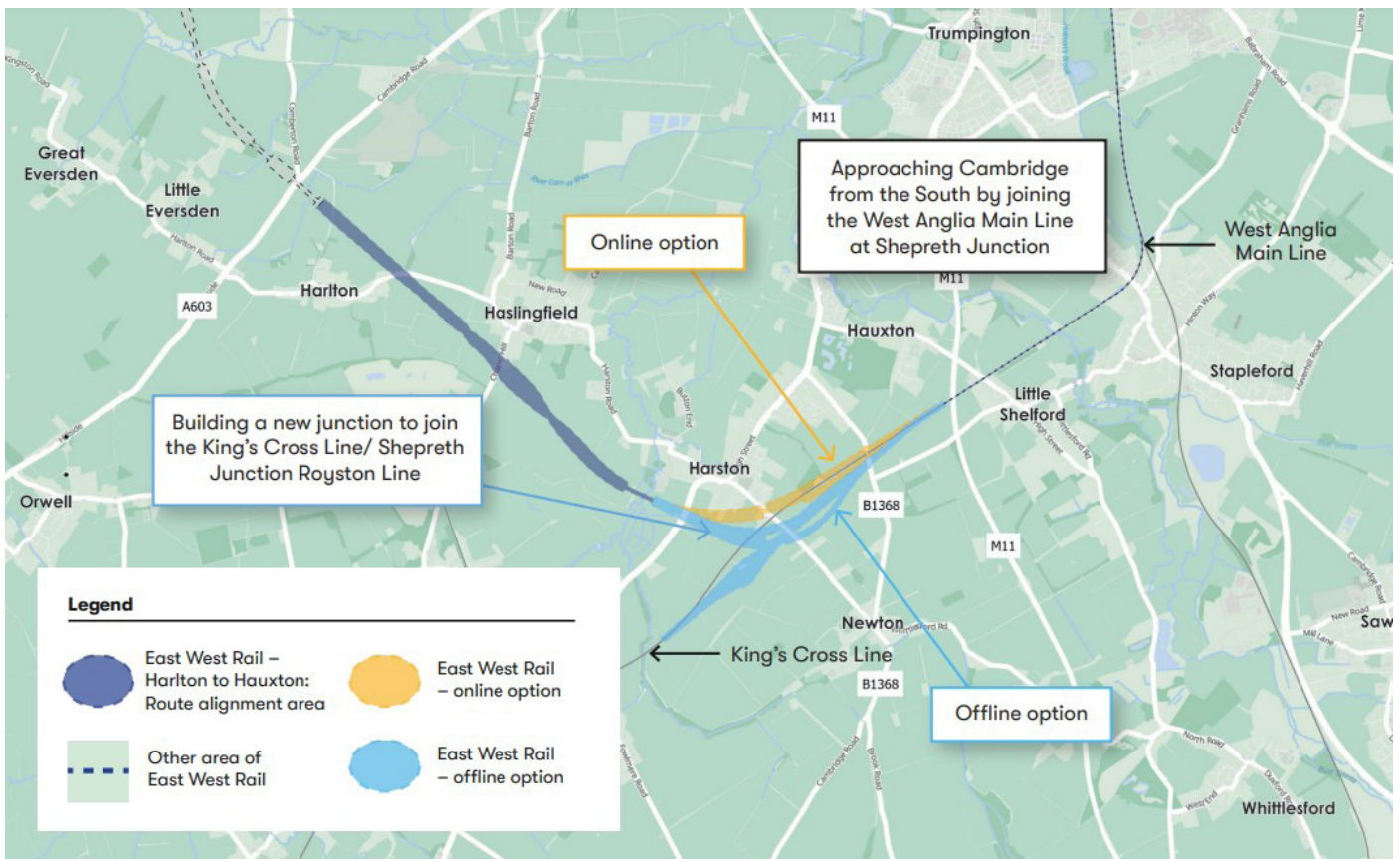
## Foxton Travel Hub

In our response to the Travel Hub consultation in September 2021, we tried to strike a balance of considerations on what has been a contentious proposal for the local community. As one of the smallest stations between London and Cambridge, and one situated on a complex level crossing/road junction, the proportion, scale and physical siting of new car parking facilities at Foxton have been extremely challenging. At the same time, we recognize that investment in this small station is vital for the future of rail services here. We participated extensively in the Non-Motorised User Group, championing all aspects of passenger accessibility, and raised concerns on platform capacity and safety for projected passenger growth ahead of the reduction to 200 car park spaces in the proposals of December 2021. Concerns remain about the safety of passengers who will be required to cross the A10 from the new car park. We expect a planning application to be made in Summer 2022.



## East West Rail

In May 2021 we submitted our response to the consultation on the high-level route alignment proposed for the Bedford to Cambridge section of East West Rail. Whilst supportive of an Oxford-Cambridge rail link, our response highlighted the failures of the proposed route in serving the concentration of new population growth around north Cambridge; the severance of community connections in our Community Rail Partnership area villages; the problem of blight, noise and pollution; and limitations to accessibility to new line services from our existing stations.



# Promoting Sustainable, Healthy and Accessible Travel

Our focus this year has been on improving the active travel links to our stations to encourage sustainable travel.

## Encouraging Modal Shift

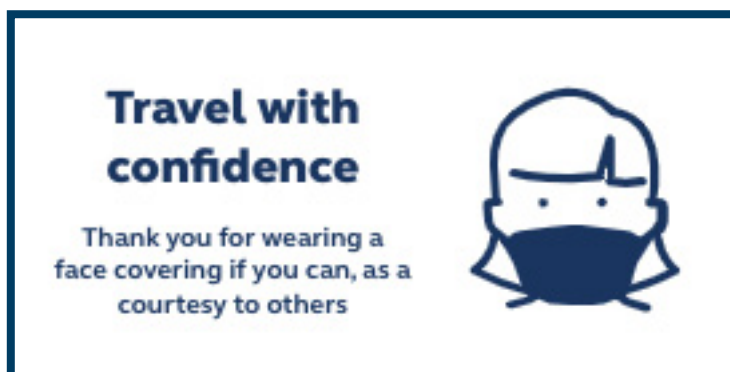
The MSFCRP are continuing to work on improvements on the path between Meldreth Station and Melbourn, which will be widened, rebuilt and lit as part of the Melbourn Greenways Project.

We are working with the South Cambs Community Safety Partnership, the District and County Council Communities Teams, Melbourn Science Park and Melbourn Village College on a project to improve the lighting, artwork and plant life at the A10 underpass between Meldreth Station and Melbourn – part of the off-road option for active travel in that direction.



## Communication and Messages

As timetables and regulations have been constantly changing, we have kept in close contact with our rail users and local communities this year to promote safe travel messages through our website, Facebook group, email newsletter and Twitter. We have continued to hold our steering group and Rail User Group meetings online, resulting in good attendance from our rail industry colleagues.



# Bringing Communities Together, Supporting Diversity and Inclusion

Our station gardens continue to provide a fantastic opportunity for the local community to get involved in gardening projects, some because they simply can't wait to get their hands dirty, and others who live near the stations but have no garden space themselves. We were also very happy that even with restrictions in place, community events such as the Meldreth Christmas Tree festival were able to go ahead this year.

## May 2021 – Shepreth Memorial Garden

The memorial garden at Shepreth had become choked over the years with weeds and brambles. A day-long working party in May 2021 cleared the way for new pollinator friendly wildflower and shrub planting.



**Before and after at Shepreth Memorial Garden**

## March 2022 – Meldreth

In March 2022 14 members of the Meldreth Veg Club came to Meldreth Station for a morning of clearing and planting of areas around the station car park. We filled a 12 yard skip, very kindly donated by County Council's waste contractor Amey, removing old, dead shrubs and cutting back encroaching ivy, and putting in lovely new perennials donated by volunteers.



## Duke of Edinburgh Award Volunteering

We've been delighted to welcome back Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers to our station gardening. These young people come from a variety of secondary schools and make a critical difference to station platform gardens, through reliable help with watering tubs through hot summer months.

## Meldreth Christmas Tree Festival

We were delighted to be able to participate in the return of the Meldreth Christmas Tree Festival this year. Over 30 local organisations are invited to decorate a tree, and this year ours was strung with timetables, tickets and train ornaments.





# Supporting Social and Economic Development

We have worked hard this year to improve our online presence to promote our villages as destinations for tourists and locals, highlighting visitor attractions and walks.

## Countryside, Capital, Coast wins award

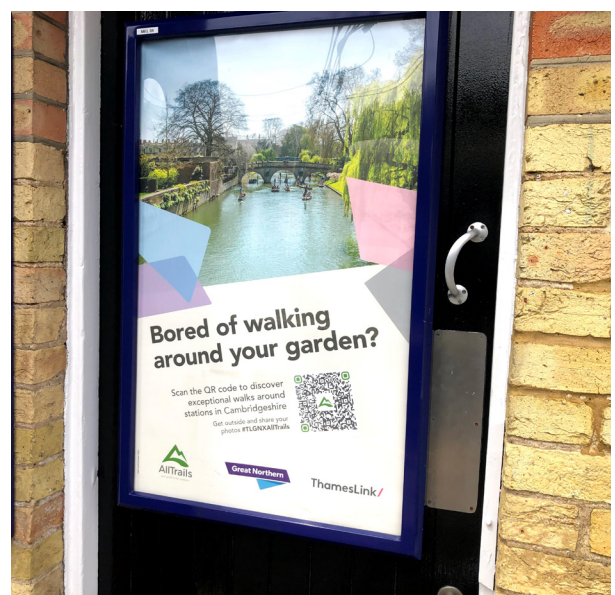
We were delighted that our Countryside, Capital, Coast campaign – promoting destinations along the Thameslink Line - was awarded 2nd place in the Best Communications Category at the Community Rail Network awards in December. We learned so much by working with the other CRPs involved.

## New “Discover” sections of the website

We updated our website with new “Discover” sections for each of our stations, including places to eat, points of interest and famous residents – did you know that Jonnie Peacock, the Paralympian Sprinter and Strictly Come Dancing Contestant, grew up in Shepreth?

## Alltrails Collaboration

We contributed local station walks to the collaboration between GTR and the outdoor walking and hiking app AllTrails. Posters with QR codes were installed at Thameslink stations, so that visitors could scan the code to reveal nearby walks. Our walks also feature on the AllTrails app so that potential visitors can see what walks are available in areas they are considering visiting.



# Strengthening the Partnership

The Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership feels ever more embedded in the community as a force for good as we have worked with new partners this year. Our efforts have been rewarded by reaccreditation with the Department for Transport.

## New Partners

The MSFCRP has worked with a number of new partners this year. These include:

- CRPs along the Thameslink Line, working together to create the Countryside, Capital and Coast guide.
- The Community Safety Partnership, Melbourn Practical Solutions Group, and Think Communities Team at Cambridgeshire County Council on the Melbourn Greenways and Meldreth Underpass Projects.
- Melbourn Timebank, where our CRP Officer has been supporting weekly Well-Being Walks from the Melbourn Community Hub to encourage active lifestyles, tackle loneliness and improve mental health in the community.

## Reaccreditation

The Community Rail Network, on behalf of the Department for Transport, reaccredited the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership in 2021.

*“Accreditation is formal recognition by the DfT that a community rail partnership (CRP) operates to a high standard and that its objectives and activities are supported by Government.”*



# Financial Report and Funding

MSFCRP is extremely grateful for the continued funding support from Govia Thameslink Railway and South Cambridgeshire District Council. It is also thankful for continued funding from Melbourn, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Parish Councils.

## Accounts for 2021-22

### Income

Core Funding	£16,400
Grants	£2,121
Brought forward from 2020-21	£13,787
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£32,308</b>

### Expenditure

Partnership Officer	£14,660
Operational Expenses	£55
Administration Expenses	£847
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£15,562</b>
<b>Balance at 31 March 2022</b>	<b>£16,746</b>





## Who we are

Our Community Rail Partnership aims to develop links with schools and local businesses associated with our local rail services, and to enhance sustainable transport links in the wider area.

## Contact us

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 @MSFCRRP

## Our Partners

