

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership



2022-23 Annual Report



Contents

Introduction by the Chair	3
Providing a Voice for the Community	4
Promoting Sustainable, Healthy and Accessible Travel	5
Bringing Communities Together, Supporting Diversity and Inclusion	6
Supporting Social and Economic Development	8
Strengthening the Partnership and Accreditation	10
Meldreth Underpass	11
Who We Are	12

Cover photo credit: Kathryn Betts, Meldreth Local History Group

Introduction by the Chair

As people take more steps back into active life, train travel has re-established a good routine, albeit in an evolving landscape.

Remote working has altered the traditional profile of the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton work commuter. Schools and colleges have reclaimed every day, in-person attendance, requiring public transport. Extreme climate events have sharpened the focus on choosing sustainable travel modes whenever possible, now and for the future. Pressures of inflation, cost of living and infrastructure maintenance influence day-to-day operations.



Train ridership has stabilized at around 70% pre-pandemic levels. The half-hourly all-day service is still not back within our grasp, but peak time trains are running every 30 minutes. The Cambridgeshire 50% student discount for 16-18 year-olds in education and training, pioneered by our CRP, also provides access to weekend and holiday jobs, friends and adventure. Good, affordable public transport is so important for young people establishing travel habits.

An expansion of Melbourn Science Park offers the prospect of more local train ridership. We're delighted to have an important employment centre championing active and public transport. The CRP is also about community life. Station gardeners keep our stations bright and cheerful throughout the year - a joy for all. Joining forces with other groups to encourage walking for health, fun and practicality continues to grow. Enthusiastic voices of Melbourn Village College students have shaped plans for refurbishing the A10 underpass. A #Freeto feed breastfeeding campaign on the train to Shepreth Wildlife Park was a high point of 2022.

Our CRP finds itself at the heart of a vibrant community rebuilding and building afresh for the future, seeking to do so in the best ways possible.

Susan van de Ven

Chair, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership

Providing a Voice for the Community

This year there have continued to be proposed changes that affect how we access our railway stations in our local area. We have continued to provide a voice and support to the community and its Parish Council representatives.

Melbourn Greenway

The aim of the Melbourn Greenway is to provide a safe active travel route between Cambridge and Royston along the A10 corridor. Our three railway stations form key waypoints for sustainable travel options. The Greenway passes through the location of the proposed Foxton Travel Hub, seeks to improve access off the A10 toward Shepreth Station, and includes much improved access from Melbourn to Meldreth Station via an upgrade to the current footpath. We have maintained good contact with the Greenway project team, and participated at a meeting of the GCP Joint Assembly, where the need to move at pace with a scheme that will make local journeys safer and easier, and make our railway stations more accessible, was agreed.

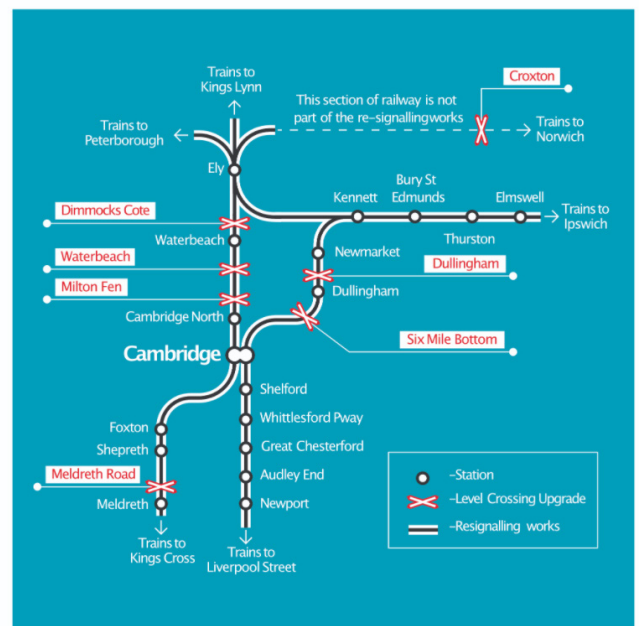


Cambridge re-signalling, re-lock and re-control project (C3R)

Modernising the existing signalling in the Cambridge area, to replace systems which are coming to the end of their operational life, is now underway. The new system will allow the railway to operate more efficiently and will allow more trains to run.

As part of the project a safety upgrade to the level crossing at Meldreth Road Shepreth has been proposed from Automatic Half Barriers to Full Barriers. Evidence that the information on which Network Rail has based its claim for improved safety is flawed has been presented to the CRP. We have assisted Shepreth and Meldreth Parish Councils to make representation to the Transport and Works Act Order Enquiry and to the Planning Application.

If the upgrade goes ahead, we want to make sure that thorough consideration is given to consequent traffic issues.



Promoting Sustainable, Healthy and Accessible Travel

Promoting Sustainable, Healthy and Accessible Travel

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership worked with South Cambridgeshire District Council to launch the #FreeToFeed campaign supporting venues across the district to become more welcoming to families who breastfeed and/or pump in public. A group of families with babies in tow took a train trip from Cambridge to Shepreth Wildlife Park to enjoy a day out.

We were asked by the team setting up the #FreeToFeedCP campaign whether there was a way we could promote the scheme using a train trip. Shepreth Wildlife Park have always been a great supporter of our CRP, and we knew they were close to the station and had great facilities for families with children of all ages.

We met at Cambridge Station, and after an introduction and tour a GTR staff member showed us the best way to get buggies on and off the train, and where to find baby changing facilities on board.

Tea, cake and a chat were enjoyed at the Shepreth Wildlife Park cafe, and mums breastfed their babies in comfortable surroundings. After a whiz round the park to see the animals, another on-time train again on the way home meant a stress-free journey back to Cambridge.



Photo credit: Peter Alvey

Bringing Communities Together, Supporting Diversity and Inclusion

Gardening has been going strong at each of our stations for many years. This year we are highlighting Meldreth as it has provided such a good variety of volunteering opportunities.

Meldreth Platform Tubs

Braving the drizzle, in May the volunteer gardeners at Meldreth got the platform tubs ready for the summer and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. All the old, overgrown conifers were dug out, and replaced with red geraniums and verbena, white geraniums and begonias, and blue lavender.

Long-time station gardening were joined by new volunteers from the Melbourn Timebank, and by one of this year's Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers.

In October the tubs were "turned around" and the contents replaced with pansies and perennials.



Meldreth Station Garden

Rising from the ashes of an overgrown patch cleared last year, the members of the Meldreth Veg Club have visited twice more this year to establish what has truly become a community garden.

In November we met to dig over, plant shrubs and then cover the whole area with a layer of protective woodchip.

In February we had another lovely morning. The Veg Club planted snowdrops and aconites behind the shelter and in the main garden in front of the cycle racks they put in a kerb to separate the garden from the grass to tidy up the area, and cut down on maintenance.

Duke of Edinburgh Volunteering

At all of our stations, we are so grateful for the support of our watering can bearers, many of whom are young people from the local area completing their Duke of Edinburgh Award.



Supporting Social and Economic Development

Explore the Great Outdoors along the Cambridge Line

This summer, as restrictions lifted, we wanted to encourage more leisure journeys to our stations. We did this by placing them in the wider context of the Cambridge Line, which runs between Hitchin and Cambridge. We recognised that many people still had concerns about COVID so we decided to concentrate on activities and destinations that could be enjoyed outside.

We ran a six-week Social media campaign supported by specially designed graphics for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, a printed leaflet, which could also be downloaded, a dedicated webpage and additional blog posts tying in with national events such as Afternoon Tea Week and Love Parks Week.

The campaign generated over 11k impressions, with Twitter engagement particularly strong, and also generated over 50 new followers on Instagram.



Explore the Great Outdoors along the Cambridge Line

- Cambridge*
- Foxton*
- Shepreth*
- Meldreth
- Royston*
- Ashwell and Morden
- Baldock
- Letchworth Garden City*
- Hitchin*

*Step-free access at these stations

Places to visit

Cambridge University Botanic Garden holds a collection of over 8,000 plant species from all over the world, arranged in a series of landscapes through which to discover the drama of plant diversity. The Garden Café provides refreshments.

Foxton Wood was planted in 1995 and is maturing beautifully. There are lovely views over open countryside and an option to walk to Fowlmere to visit the RSPB reserve.

Shepreth Wildlife Park is home to over 100 species to see and meet, with keeper talks and demonstrations throughout the day. Ringo's café and a large outdoor play area are onsite.

Melwood Local Nature Reserve. Meldreth has a tranquil riverside walk through woodland along the river Mel, one of Britain's rare chalk streams. The village of Meldreth has 19 thatched cottages – see if you can find them all!

Therfield Heath at Royston is a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its rare chalk grassland habitat. The Chalkhill Blue butterfly can be seen there in July. The Heath Café Bar provides refreshments.

Ashwell Springs is a Site of Special Scientific Interest consisting of a series of cool freshwater springs which form a source of the river Cam. The Icknield Way long-distance trail passes nearby.

Avenue Park. Baldock has gardens, a play area and toilets. A splash pad is open from May to September and provides hours of fun for visitors during summer months.

The Garden City Greenway. Letchworth is a 13.6 mile (21.8km) route suitable for walkers, runners, and cyclists to enjoy. The route covers a number of local wildlife and nature spots.

Hitchin Lavender at Cadwell Farm is a popular tourist attraction, where the flowers create stunning summer displays. Open all summer from June. The Old Barn sells gifts and toiletries made locally and includes a tea room.

Find out more meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail.org.uk/great-outdoors

Thameslink Art Trail

Building on the success of Countryside, Capital & Coast, a guide to the Thameslink route, we have again been working this year with all the other Thameslink Community Rail Partnerships to develop an Art Trail. Destinations with strong links to art and artists will be highlighted including London, Cambridge, Bedford, St Albans, Brighton, Ditchling, Horsham and Sevenoaks. The Trail will launch this summer with each CRP making recommendations for days out.

Strengthening the Partnership

Meldreth Underpass Project

The best example of partnership working this year has been the progress on the Meldreth Underpass Project, part of the Melbourn Greenway active link to Meldreth Station. Following on from a public survey carried out in June with 375 responses, we established the priorities of improving the lighting, cutting back the vegetation, cleaning the ceiling and walls, and refreshing the artwork with a project that will involve local schools, youth and community groups and other key village organisations. Grant funding has been forthcoming from a variety of sources, including Govia Thameslink Railway, the Parish Councils of Meldreth and Melbourn, the Community Rail Development Fund, South Cambs District Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire.

Reaccreditation

The Community Rail Network, on behalf of the Department for Transport reaccredited the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership in 2022.

“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.”

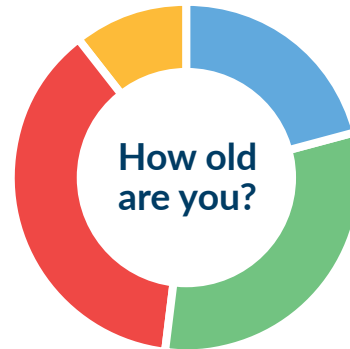


Meldreth to Melbourn A10 Underpass Consultation Response Summary

375
Responses

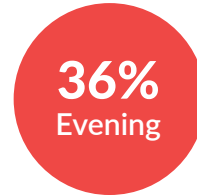
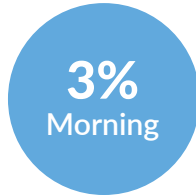


Melbourn
Meldreth
Other



Under 18
18-39
40-59
60+

Are there any times of the day you would avoid the underpass?



Is the underpass well enough lit?

YES NO

In the day



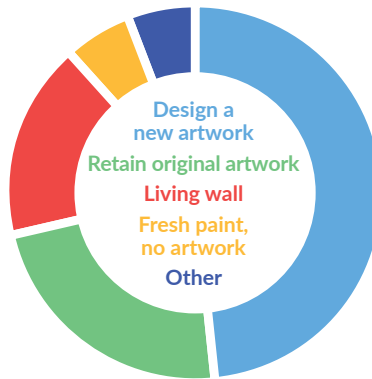
At dusk



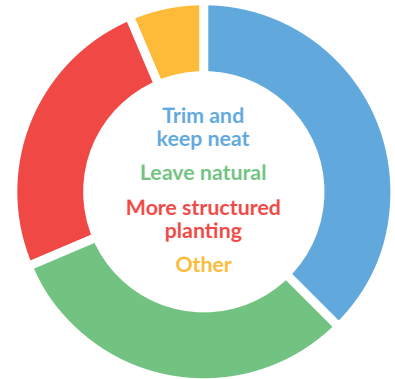
At night



How would you like to see the underpass decorated?

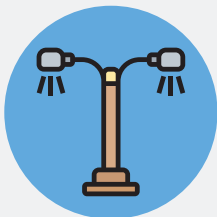


What to do about the plants and shrubs?



Meldreth Underpass Plan

Lighting



Install new lighting pillar to turn lights on earlier/stay on later

Vegetation



Cut back the nettles and brushes to improve sightlines

Cleaning



Jet wash the ceiling and walls

Artwork



Create a new artwork with community input

Celebrate



Hold a community event to celebrate our achievements



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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 meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail.org.uk

 @MSFCRRP

 MSFCRRP

 msf_crrp

Our Partners

