

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership Six Month Report Feb-Aug 2018



1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to summarise the work carried out by the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership in the first six months after the appointment of the Community Rail Partnership Officer.

The audience for this document are the stakeholders in the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership.

The sections in this document reflect the sections of the Line Action Plan:

- Partnership Management
- Station Adoption and Work with Volunteers
- Marketing and Communication
- External Users
- Funding Sources
- Major Projects

In addition, there is a section devoted to the launch of the May 2018 timetable, which had a significant impact on the line, the community and the work of the Community Rail Partnership.

2. Partnership Management

Line Action Plan

The Line Action Plan was developed in conjunction with GTR and ACoRP and was presented at the May meeting of the CRP. It is a living document, which reflects progress which has been made against objectives.

Public Meetings

The following public meetings were held:

- March 19th: Community Rail Partnership Meeting, Shepreth
- April 4th: Rail User Group Meeting, Foxton
- May 17th: Community Rail Partnership Meeting Shepreth
- June 27th: Rail User Group Meeting, Melbourn

CRP and RUG meetings are being scheduled for the Autumn.

Project Officer Personal Development

The Project Officer has attended the following events for personal development:

- March 8th: Council Induction Day, SCDC
- March 27th: Community Rail Education Conference, ACoRP, London
- June 14th: Holding Challenging Conversations, SCDC

- July 11th: Volunteering and Social Inclusion Workshop, ACoRP London
- July 23rd/24th: New Community Rail Partnership Officer Training, ACoRP, Birmingham
- July 25th: PREVENT online training, SCDC

ACoRP events

The following ACoRP events were attended:

- March 12/13th: ACoRP Annual Conference, Milton Keynes
- July 2nd: ACoRP Summer Seminar, London

The Autumn seminar and AGM will be attended later this year.

Meeting with DfT

In June we met with an officer from the Department for Transport about their plans to move from Designation to Accreditation for Community Rail Partnerships. We have agreed to be part of the consultation group for this project.

Meeting with Network Rail

In August we met with the new Operating Officer for our region from Network Rail. Several infrastructure items were discussed, and a good working relationship has been established for the future.

3. Station Adoption and Work with Volunteers

Method Statement

A Method Statement and medical certification forms for all volunteers were completed and a Site Access Permit was obtained from GTR, formalising the access to the station platforms for gardening.

Station Gardening and Watering Volunteers

In April we met with Station Gardening Groups for each station and organised for Spring Planting to occur in May and June. Foxton Station planting was supported by the Foxton Gardens Association. At Shepreth each tub is adopted by a local family or business. At Meldreth, volunteers carried out the planting; some new volunteers were attracted after social media posting. Volunteers were also organised for watering the tubs throughout the summer (mainly Duke of Edinburgh award candidates). See <http://meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail.org.uk/station-gardens/>

Garden Tidy and Picnic

In June we held a garden tidy and picnic at Meldreth Station to say thank you to station gardeners and waterers, and to Bern, the station master for his help during the disruption caused by the new timetable.

4. Marketing and Communication

Website

Broken links on the website were fixed, then the website was redesigned with a new look and feel and new logo. Regular updates have been made to the website sharing news features, for example about station gardening, and information relevant to the May 2018 timetable. We have established a page relating to our responses to the timetable, and this has been kept up to date with correspondence sent and received.

Facebook

A new Facebook page was established on 1st May. There are now 211 members. The page has been used to disseminate information about:

- the new timetable, including extracts from the May and July interim timetables
- operational incidents, including posts from Bern, the station master at Meldreth
- experiences with travelling and claiming compensation, where commuters have been sharing their hints for claiming compensation
- updates from GTR, these are sent to us as stakeholders, and we have published extracts and useful information.

See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail/>

Twitter @MeldrethRUG

The Twitter feed now has 164 followers. We regularly update Twitter with information as outlined above and retweet any items we think may be of interest to followers.

Mailing List & GDPR

The existing mailing list was migrated from Gmail to Mail Chimp and a GDPR exercise was carried out to confirm that subscribers were still happy to receive information. There are now 90 subscribers to the mailing list. An email template has been set up, and regular updates have been sent out.

5. External Users

In June we met to establish contact with the Junior Travel Ambassadors from Meldreth School. We will have further meetings with them this academic year, leading to Rail Safety events.

6. Funding Sources

An Agreement was reached with GTR for them to contribute £5,000 annually towards the salary of the Project Officer and the running of the CRP until the end of their franchise. The first tranche of money was received in June.

The Parish Councils will be visited in the Autumn to re-establish their contributions.

7. Major Projects

In March a station visit took place, in conjunction with GTR to look at water butt siting. A new water butt was installed at Shepreth Station, and subsequently moved when boxed in by Level Crossing works.

In March we attended the Foxton Parish Council meeting at which the Foxton Crossing Bypass was discussed. We continue to monitor the Greater Cambridge Partnership's website for details and expect another announcement in December 2018.

In April we attended a meeting about the Shepreth Level Crossing works before the works commenced. We advertised the diversion on our Social Media Channels. After the work was carried out we have been in communication with GTR and Network Rail about the effects on traffic in Shepreth of the longer barrier downtimes and a meeting at the station has been arranged for 7.45 on 13th September which will include representatives from the Parish and County Council to see what mitigation can be put in place.

In July we attended a presentation by CamBedRailRoad in Litlington. This group is proposing an alternative route for the Bedford to Cambridge Section of the East West Rail Link. The current preferred route would bring the line in near the Shepreth junction. There will be a public meeting on 25th September in Shepreth. We continue to monitor the proposals for the East West link and the impact it could have on our line. See <http://meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail.org.uk/2018/08/17/public-meeting-new-train-line-via-bassingbourn-whaddon-meldreth-shepreth-foxton/>

8. Launch of May 2018 Timetable

The launch of the May 2018 timetable and subsequent disruption had a significant effect on the working of the Community Rail Partnership. During the period of disruption, it has not been possible to organise “try the train” trips. The main concern of the community has been to re-establish a reliable operating service.

In March, April and May we attended Stakeholder meetings with GTR in London, concerned with the promotion of the new timetable to our rail community, and indeed we used our social media channels to make rail users aware of the changes which were proposed and the benefits to rail users.

However, after 20th May, it became apparent that the train operating company could not provide the level of service it had promised. We have used our Facebook page to monitor the situation, and have been in frequent contact with GTR, feeding back on the effect that the timetable disruption has had, and attending an additional stakeholder meeting in July.

Letters have been sent to GTR on the subject of rail disruption and compensation. Feedback has been given to the inquiries set up by the Office of Road and Rail and the Transport Select Committee. All this has been communicated to our members through Facebook, Twitter and Newsletters. See <http://meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail.org.uk/portfolio/response-to-may-2018-timetable-change/>

In July we attended a joint meeting of the Royston/Letchworth and Hitchin Rail User Groups, and subsequently contributed to a joint letter to GTR about rail fares.

In July, an interim timetable was brought in which stabilised the service somewhat, but has left gaps in the service at peak times to our stations. A meeting is scheduled for 28th September to meet with GTR to discuss the remaining gaps in the timetable and the possibility of reintroducing some semi-fast services.

In the meantime, we have continued to give help to our members with advice on applying for compensation.