

Anglia Platform Extensions Best Practice Case Study: Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Platforms at Shepreth and Foxton stations on the Anglia route have been extended to ensure that the new, longer trains, introduced as part of Network Rail's Thameslink Programme (TLP), do not obstruct level crossings. A rolling programme of community engagement has been implemented in the respective local area that has met several communications, sustainability and community objectives.

Praise for platform extensions at Shepreth and Foxton but rail bosses say Meldreth work not needed

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Susan van de Ven, left, with volunteers from the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership at Shepreth station. Picture: Courtesy of Susan van de Ven

Work to lengthen Cambridge-bound platforms has been completed at Shepreth and Foxton rail stations in time for the new eight-carriage trains arriving later this month, but concerns are being raised about the London-bound platforms which weren't given the same treatment.

Engagement with a Local Rail User Group

Planning for stakeholder engagement began well in advance of work commencing by gathering information from colleagues familiar with the area, from Network Rail's Anglia route, TLP and GTR, the train operator. This initial review identified a local rail user group that proved crucial in getting information to this sleepy part of South Cambridgeshire. The local group, led by vocal councillor, Susan van de Ven, has been strongly critical of Network Rail in the past. This reflected the adverse perception of Network Rail in the area before the project began.

As the local residents and rail users were not familiar with the TLP it was identified that we would need to do more stakeholder engagement activities to ensure that the good work being delivered in their area was attributed to the Programme. The positive outcome of the works to be delivered was used to counter and justify the noise created as a result of construction, which directly impacted the quiet village setting and its residents.

Engagement started with attendance at the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group (MSFRUG) meeting in December 2016, 3 months in advance of work starting. This gave TLP a chance to brief the most influential stakeholders well in advance of work starting, with a positive focus on what the benefits would be. Our attendance also resulted in a local newspaper article, spreading the information further in the area.



VolkerFitzpatrick colleague at drop-in session, Meldreth

Platform extensions at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton stations will take six months – Network Rail

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Shepreth railway station.

TLP and VolkerFitzpatrick (VF) representatives attended subsequent meetings a further 4 occasions over the project lifecycle. Ensuring stakeholders had exposure to Network Rail, and that the full project was covered from start to finish. The final meeting attended by TLP allowed the facilitation of a handover to the team from NR Anglia's level crossing project who would be taking over the compound at Shepreth once the TLP works were completed. The handover from TLP to the Anglia Route team meant that local stakeholders were assured that engagement and collaboration activities would continue. This approach to engagement further ensured that TLP left a positive legacy for NR at the end of the project lifecycle.

The relationships created from engagement meetings furthered the opportunity to rebuild NR's reputation locally. A key project was the restoration of a Remembrance Poppy Garden at Shepreth Station as it had previously been damaged by NR Contractors during works in 2014. TLP objectives related to community relationships and the rapport with Councillor Susan van de Ven, resulted in an agreement

whereby VolkerFitzpatrick relocated, tidied, and donated a number of brand new, weatherproof flower tubs and compost to the MSFRUG for the station and poppy garden, replacing rotten old tubs. A positive media was created as a result of this donation, the result of good relationships between the contractor and councillor.

Working in close collaboration with the contractor

Collaboration with all stakeholders on this project has been crucial to its success. The positive relationship between NR and VF has allowed for a progressive legacy of engagement at Shepreth and Foxton. The collaborative approach enabled the project to demonstrate the value of timely and comprehensive communications which in turn enhanced the ability of the project team to deliver a comprehensive communications strategy for local rail users and residents.

Minimal complaints

The project received only one construction-related and one environmental complaint throughout the whole duration of the project – over six months of work including piling work late at night. Both of these were dealt with by the project team proactively.

Maintaining ‘one version of the truth’

The team also worked closely with GTR and Anglia route to manage the de-scoping of the project from three stations to two. Despite this happening at the eleventh hour, it was managed effectively to quickly come to a joint decision which kept a positive spin on the message and kept control of the ‘one version of the truth’ – crucial when managing fallout from such a decision.

Other deliverables included:

- Notification letters six weeks in advance of work starting with a reminder two weeks before, two update letters, funded by the contractor using an agency which delivered to a wide radius to ensure as many residents and businesses were informed as possible;
- Early identification and notification of key stakeholders, including local MPs and councillors;
- Drop-in events at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton, with support and representation from both the project team and contractor;
- Several positive media articles in two local newspapers and online newspapers;
- Articles in all three parish newsletters;
- Posters at each station informing passengers and promoting the benefits of the work for station users;
- Effective engagement with local businesses to manage unofficial ‘car park’ closure at Shepreth;
- Bespoke leaflet for local residents, sent with notification letters and distributed in all three villages;
- Website page for the project with details of the project timeline and impacts on train services at the stations;
- Press release which generated local articles;
- Internal stories in TLP newsletter, route newsletter, on Connect and Hi-Viz magazine; and
- Positive feedback from the local councillor sent to the Route Managing Director for Anglia, which made its way to the TLP Programme Director Simon Blanchflower, RMD for the South East John Halsall, head of comms for Anglia Kate Snowden and head of comms for South East Gill Stevens, building a good impression of the Anglia 2 project at the upper echelons of the business.

New flower tubs at Shepreth Station



Meeting our objectives and targets:

- Supports Objective 7 of the Sustainability Delivery Objectives: *To pro-actively engage with communities around the Thameslink Programme to minimise negative impact and to work in partnership to maximise our social contribution;* and
- Meets Network Rail community relations targets for pre-notification.