




**The Melton
Constable Trust**

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May 2017 Update

**£63,600 PROJECT FOR FAKENHAM
YOUR SUPPORT HAS ACHIEVED THIS**

**HELP NOW TO BUILD UP FUNDS TO BUY
MORE OF THE ROUTE**

The Fakenham Project

This is real recognition. After a great deal of background work, the Melton Constable Trust has been successful in a major application to the Heritage Lottery Fund which will pay for repairs to our two bridges at Pudding Norton, Fakenham and a range of initiatives that will help to draw the community into our project by working with a number of local partners.

Because this is Heritage Lottery money, there is an emphasis on history and education but it is clearly understood that the overall aim is to return rail services to Fakenham. Our intention is that the site will have Permissive Path status, so that it will be possible for us to close or modify it when the track bed is needed for the rebuilding of the railway.

The HLF grant is £59,800. With contributions from Fakenham Town Council, the Ernest Cook Trust and the Veronica Awdry Charitable Trust, the total is £63,600.

One of the most important points to make is that this success was only possible because our individual supporters reached into their pockets to provide the £24,000 that was needed to buy the track bed and bridges at Pudding Norton when they came up for auction at very short notice. It was that proof of community support which really strengthened the application to HLF.

There is a great deal of work to do in order to get the HLF project underway. Our selected contractors, Greenford Ltd., have started work on the bridges. The other aspects of the work will follow.

The engineering work will be supervised by our highly experienced consultant civil engineer, Bob Wright, who is also a director and civil engineer of the North Norfolk Railway. Bob oversaw the installation of the connection with Network Rail at

Sheringham and produced the initial report on the condition of our bridges. His help, in a voluntary capacity, is another important contribution for which we are very grateful.

Now we have to build on this advance. The key to future progress is to raise money for our ongoing Track Bed Fund. That will enable us to step in when opportunities to buy other sections of the rail route arise. With money in the bank we can enter into negotiations with landowners with confidence. It will be a sensitive job but we can now demonstrate serious progress.

With this Update is a donation form. You will see that it is possible either to make regular standing order contributions or single donations. If you are a tax payer, completion of the Gift Aid part of the form will enable the Melton Constable Trust, as a charity, to claim a further 25% from the government.

The great benefit of a standing order is that it does help to provide regular income to the Trust in a fairly painless way by spreading contributions over a period. Even the price of pint of beer or a few coffees and cakes a week provides a useful flow of funds.

All donations, however, will help immensely.

This is your success. Thank you!

Here is the press release announcing the Fakenham project:

THE MELTON CONSTABLE TRUST

NATIONAL LOTTERY SUPPORTS FAKENHAM RAILWAY PROJECT WITH £59,800 GRANT

The Melton Constable Trust, the registered charity that is seeking to bring the railway back to Fakenham, has been awarded a National Lottery grant of £59,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The grant will enable the Trust to use the section of line and the bridges it already owns for the benefit of the community, by providing safe access and interpreting the history of the railway for school students and visitors. A key aim of the project is the repair of the two bridges to prevent their continued deterioration.

Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, the project is also being supported by Fakenham Town Council, the Ernest Cook Trust and the Veronica Awdry Charitable Trust. The total funding attracted is £63,600. The Trust also works in partnership with the Mid Norfolk Railway, which has been operating trains between Wymondham and Dereham for many years and is actively extending its line northwards.

Two years ago, with the aid of donations from the local community and supporters across the country, the Trust was able to buy an important section of the old rail route at Pudding Norton, Fakenham including two iconic bridges. The three arch bridge over the River Wensum is a much loved local landmark which appears on town maps. The ultimate aim is to acquire more of the old track bed and to link up with the Mid Norfolk Railway so that the railway can be rebuilt to Fakenham.

Trevor Bailey, a Trustee of the Melton Constable Trust, said:

“This success is really the result of the tremendous interest that local people have shown in the old railway, its history and the prospect of trains eventually returning to the town. We bought the track bed and the two bridges at auction for £24,000, with very little time for fund raising, simply because our supporters were willing to put their hands in their pockets and donate significant sums. That effort has now paid off in a big way. The Heritage Lottery Fund has decided that the community's support and our plans for the site are worthy of major funding. We are more than grateful to HLF and to the members of the public who buy Lottery tickets and make these grants possible. We are a small group of volunteers working very hard and it provides enormous encouragement to have this kind of backing.”

“Our aim is ultimately to acquire all of the track bed necessary to link to the Mid Norfolk Railway in order to bring trains back to the Fakenham. The Mid Norfolk Railway is actively rebuilding its line northwards to County School, the next station north of Dereham, which is already in its ownership.”

“The extension of services to Fakenham is, however, well into the future. It will take a considerable time to acquire the rest of the land required and to achieve the rebuilding of the railway, with the very substantial expenditure involved. We have to work carefully and considerately with existing landowners.”

“For the coming years, we want to make sure that the Pudding Norton site is open to the community, for walking, heritage education purposes, environmental experiences and related events.”

“We shall be working with Fakenham Town Council, schools and a number of community and voluntary groups. The Town Council has committed its support and Fakenham Academy has agreed to work with us on the production of an education pack for students and on training for teachers in local railway history. Volunteers from the Fakenham Area Conservation Team will undertake basic maintenance work on the site on an ongoing basis. The Fakenham and District Archive, along with the Mid Norfolk Railway, has offered to contribute historical information and photographs.”

The main priority is to get the site into an accessible and safe state, so that it is maintained for future railway use, interim community access is realistic and the historical story can be told. One of the main concerns is the restoration of the bridges and related safety issues. Both bridges are fundamentally sound but there has been deterioration in the years since the railway was closed and they do not offer enough safety for people on foot, including children. The iron bridge where two railways, the Great Eastern Railway and the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway, crossed, in particular, needs maintenance.

A full inspection of the bridges has been carried out by a very experienced professional railway civil engineer. Repairs to the bridges are vital to the eventual restoration of rail services.

The other principal aim is to interpret the site, its surrounding environment and their histories for the benefit of the public and to provide educational outcomes in partnership with local schools.

The National Lottery grant from HLF will, therefore, cover these things:

Preparing the site for easy access and use by the community.

Bridge repairs and safety measures.

Information signs and interpretation boards dealing with the history and environment of the railway and surrounding areas.

A training course for teachers and classroom assistants from local schools on the history of the site, the railways and the surrounding flood plain environment to enable them to bring their students to the site and use it as a learning resource.

Production of associated educational materials, including an education pack

The making of oral history recordings of people who used and worked on the railway, which will be included in the educational material and be available for broadcast and on the Trust's website.

Paul Young, the Trust's Project Officer, will be the local point of contact whilst the work is being carried out. He advised:

“In the coming months the most obvious activity will be the repair work on the bridges, which will be carried out by professional engineers. It will be necessary to close off access whilst that work is under way for safety reasons but the end result will be a great improvement. Meanwhile, other work will be going on. We shall be researching information, documents and photographs about the history of the railway and recording the memories of people who used to work or travel on the line. If you have personal memories of the railways through Fakenham or any pictures and memorabilia, we shall be very glad to hear from you.”

STOP PRESS!

Things have moved on at a great pace since the above was written. Our engineering contractors, Greenford Ltd., were able to start work earlier than was expected and have completed work on the two bridges with great efficiency. Our consultant engineer, Bob Wright, has overseen the work and approved the finished result. We owe a great deal to Bob who has helped very significantly in a voluntary capacity.

The photographs below will give an idea of some of the work that has been carried out.

BRIDGE 1714 – THE THREE ARCH RIVER BRIDGE



Bridge 1714 before work started.

This has been cleared of vegetation that was rooted in the brickwork and of small self-seeded trees that were threatening the masonry.



Removal of vegetation and damaging trees from bridge 1714 over the river Wensum.

Repairs have been carried out to the masonry, with significant repointing and reseating of loose coping stones.



Masonry damage to bridge 1714 before repairs.



Masonry repairs.

A hump of spoil that had been piled against one parapet has been removed, restoring the parapet to a safer height.



Bridge 1714 after removal of excess spoil and vegetation.

Additional timber fencing has been installed at the ends of the parapets for greater safety.

BRIDGE 1715 – THE GIRDER BRIDGE OVER THE M & G N FORMATION



Bridge 1715 over the M & G N track bed before work started.

Ballast has been removed to allow a close inspection of the timber decking. This has proved to be surprisingly sound and usable for present purposes.

A great deal of vegetation has been cleared.

The masonry of the abutments has received considerable attention, including renewal of some brickwork.

New handrails have been fitted and extended for greater safety.

A number of small self-seeded trees that were threatening the masonry have been felled.

A tarmac path has been laid along the centre line of the bridge to encourage walkers to stick to the centre.

The exposed ironwork of the bridge has been fully repainted.



Trustees Trevor Bailey and David Bill with Greenford Ltd. foreman Paul Clifton on the repaired bridge 1715.



Paul Clifton on the M & G N track bed in front of repaired bridge 1715.

We are very grateful to Tim Horn and Paul Young who have made a comprehensive photographic record as the work has progressed.

The Holt Project

As those of you with access to the internet will already know, thanks to your generosity we met the challenge of having to pay the next instalment towards the purchase of the second section of land at High Kelling. This still leaves us with having to find over £50,000 to complete the purchase so any suggestions or assistance really would be

appreciated.

Together with the initial stretch of land we purchased from the County Council some time ago this means that we have reached far beyond the half-way mark in purchasing the part of the railway route between the Cromer Road (by the North Norfolk Railway station) and the by-pass and much enhanced the prospect of getting into Holt. Our ambitions lie beyond Holt of course but we have to face and try to overcome each obstacle along the way. Fakenham remains the goal.

In other developments, we are implementing the planning consent we received last year to establish a small embankment and install a demonstration length of track which will very kindly be supplied by the North Norfolk Railway. We are now waiting for the Army Disposal Unit who have agreed to undertake tree clearance and for the settlement of the land.

We were consulted by the District Council about the building of a new roundabout on the A 148. This has been positioned to avoid the wide verge which is needed for the railway. As you will recall, this section is protected by the District Council's Local Development Framework which specifies that the route must not be compromised. We have had an initial visit from the ORR, the Office of Rail and Road, to discuss technical requirements for the building of the line into Holt, including clearances between railway and road alongside the by-pass. The guidance of the ORR will inform our negotiations with the County Council as the other main interested party. We are to have a follow up visit in due course.

Our Facebook page - Norfolk Orbital Railway - continues to contain some fascinating information and is gaining additional followers every week. It currently stands at over 2000 !

Our website – <http://norfolk-orbital-railway.co.uk> has been given a makeover to include the latest news including, of course, the all important land purchase appeal which we must keep going. Our Project Officer, Paul Young has taken on the task of maintaining these sites so can we thank him and of course Chris Booty who has maintained the site over many years and will continue to provide support. Please visit these sites and see for yourself.

Since our last Update Paul Young and Joe Penfold were invited to attend the annual Holt Town Council's public meeting to talk about the prospects of re-opening the line to Holt. They tell me they were enthusiastically received !

David Rees

David has had to step down from active involvement in the project for family reasons. David can be described as the father of railway preservation in East Anglia as he took the first steps to objecting to the closure on the M&GN back in 1959 and went on to take practical steps to do something about it. It is arguable that without his intervention there would be no private railway activity in the area today. We all wish him and his wife good health and hope that he will continue to keep involved.

THE MELTON CONSTABLE TRUST

Track Bed Fighting Fund

Title (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss).....

First Name(s).....

Surname.....

Address.....

.....

..... Post code.....

Telephone.....

Email address.....

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Regular monthly donation of £.....

FOR SINGLE DONATIONS, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING

Donation amount £.....

Please make cheques payable to The Melton Constable Trust

GIFT AID

Please tick I wish all my donations to The Melton Constable Trust to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I confirm that I pay at least as much UK Income and/or Capital Gains Tax for the year of donation as the MCT and any other charities or community amateur sports clubs that I may donate to will reclaim on my donation during the tax year.

Signed..... Date.....

PLEASE SEND THE ABOVE TO THE MELTON CONSTABLE TRUST, THE RAILWAY INSTITUTE, 6, BRISTON ROAD, MELTON CONSTABLE, NORFOLK, NR24 2DH.

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To the manager of (*name of your bank / building society*).....

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Please pay to the account of the Melton Constable Trust at TSB Bank PLC (Sort Code 30-94-34, Account Number 00493540)

the sum of £....., commencing on/...../..... and every calendar month until I give further notice.

Signed..... Date.....