FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
PRESS RELEASE

October 18, 2018

Solar power lights up Whittlesea railway station

A Fenland railway station has improved its carbon footprint and boosted passenger safety after having new solar-powered lights installed.

As the dark nights draw in, passengers at Whittlesea Station are benefitting from new LED ‘cat eyes’ powered entirely by the sun.

A footpath between the station entrance on Station Road and Platform 2 used to be dark and unlit at night, but now 70 solar-powered road studs have created an illuminated walkway, providing a clear and defined guide of the path ahead.

The £15,500 project is part of the Whittlesea Station improvement works being driven by Fenland District Council on behalf of the Hereford Community Rail Partnership.

The lighting upgrade is also the first in a range of short, medium and long term regeneration projects designed to improve Manea, March and Whittlesea stations, funded by £9 million of investment from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Councillor David Oliver, Fenland District Council’s Portfolio Holder for Transport, said: “This lighting scheme was one of the top requests from passengers using the station, so it’s great news that it has now been implemented, and good timing with the shorter days now upon us.

“The LED lights are far more cost effective and environmentally friendly than the option of street lighting whilst increasing the feeling of safety amongst passengers using the footpath.”

Mayor of the Combined Authority, James Palmer, said: “This much-needed improvement to Whittlesea station is just one of a pipeline of upgrades for stations in Fenland, including March and Manea, as part of a £9 million package of funding from the Combined Authority. This funding will help redress years of underinvestment in our Fenland stations.

“The overall aim is to regenerate these three stations to increase passenger use and make them more accessible to local residents, businesses and tourists. We need to make public transport a more attractive option for people and reduce pressure on our roads, but that won’t happen without investment. Further developments like extending the platforms at Whittlesea and Manea, installing ticket machines, improved car and cycle parking, and waiting shelters will all follow as part of the package of improvements.

“These upgrades are coupled with a strong campaign to increase the capacity and frequency of service in Fenland. That includes pressing to accelerate the delivery hourly instead of two-hourly stops at Whittlesea, March and Manea on Greater Anglia’s Ipswich to Peterborough service. Together with local councillors and North East Cambridgeshire MP Steve Barclay, I’m also pressing for later running trains back to Fenland stations from Cambridge, so people can enjoy evening entertainment while still returning home by rail.”
“Improvements like this cost-efficient and effective lighting upgrade at Whittlesea are a tangible example of our investment taking effect, and in direct response to what local passengers are telling us they want.”

Paul Haynes, Greater Anglia's Community Partnerships Manager, said: "We would like to thank the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the Hereward CRP and Fenland District Council for funding this project, which will make a difference to rail passengers using the station.

“At Greater Anglia we are working on a number of environmentally friendly projects including fitting LED lighting, using solar power and creating bee-friendly gardens. This project at Whittlesea will help us further to reduce our carbon footprint, create a more pleasant atmosphere for our customers and improve safety and security."

North East Cambridgeshire MP Steve Barclay added: “I am delighted that these much needed improvements are being implemented at Whittlesea Train Station which will make the footpath safer for passengers using the service. Improving transport links for constituents in North East Cambridgeshire is an area I have lobbied for since I was first elected and it is good to see Fenland District Council and the Combined Authority invest in our rail stations, with a package of developments scheduled across Whittlesea, March and Manea.”

A new ticket machine and information point has also been installed at Whittlesea Station by Greater Anglia which will become operational in the coming weeks.

The machine will offer passengers 24-hour live help – if people have a query while using the new machines, or are not sure what to do, they can press a button which will put them straight through to a real person who can help them buy tickets and find the best fares.

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