

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

26 January 2023

Fenland railway station celebrates official opening of free car park, amid record passenger numbers

A free passenger car park has been officially opened at Manea Railway Station, as rail journeys from the station increase to over 21,000 a year for the first time.

The car park, designed to serve the station's current demand and accommodate future growth, marks a key achievement in Fenland District Council's Railway Station Masterplans scheme.

Cllr Chris Seaton, the Council's Cabinet member for transport and Chairman of the Hereward Community Rail Partnership, said: "The Manea Station car park is a testament to our commitment to providing top-notch facilities for our community and a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to enhance the region's rail infrastructure.

"With record passenger numbers using the station, it is essential that we invest in infrastructure that not only meets current demands but also lays the foundation for a sustainable and efficient transportation network for years to come."

The car park is part of a raft of improvements for Fenland stations being delivered through the Council's Railway Station Masterplans scheme, funded by £9.5 million from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority.

The free car park has been open and available for passengers to use since August last year, but partners involved in the project gathered for its official opening on Friday, 26 January.

Dr Nik Johnson, Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, did the honours and cut a ribbon at the car park, which includes 100 parking spaces, disabled bays, a cycle shelter, CCTV and low energy lighting.

He said: "This is a great example of what cooperative action between the Combined Authority and Fenland District Council can achieve – our investment in support of the Council's masterplan makes it easier for Fenland's residents to travel by train, which, as well as being far better for the environment, brings regional and national opportunities within reach."

Jonathan Denby, Head of Corporate Affairs for Greater Anglia, said: "We're really pleased that the car park at Manea is now open, providing additional capacity to encourage more sustainable journeys on the rail network to/from Manea, using our comfortable and reliable new trains.

"Instead of having to drive to March, Ely or maybe even Peterborough, before catching the train, passengers can now make a more local trip to Manea and board the train there, thereby helping to reduce pollution and congestion.

"We would like to thank Fenland District Council and all the other partners involved in delivering this very positive project."

Cllr Ben Bonos, Chairman of Manea Parish Council, added: “The new car park isn’t just a fantastic facility for the station but for the whole village and the surrounding area. It will be a huge benefit to everyone here in Manea, particularly younger people. Investments such as this which compliment public transport in rural areas help to give them better access to employment, training and other opportunities. Hopefully the completion of the car park will also accelerate the introduction of increased rail services from Manea.”

During the opening ceremony, a time capsule put together by Manea residents was also buried to mark the completion of the scheme and an historic milestone for the village.

The official opening of the car park comes on the heels of Manea Railway Station achieving record-breaking passenger numbers, underscoring the importance of investing in transportation infrastructure to meet the rising demand for rail services.

According to Office of Rail and Road (ORR) figures published in December, Manea Station use for April 2022 – March 2023 is above pre-Covid levels (18,834 passengers in 2019/20) at a record 21,038 passenger numbers.

Cllr Seaton added: “Manea Station car park is part of a long-term strategy to create demand for increased and improved rail services for Fenland and supports our ambitions for economic growth in the district through improved access to jobs, education and training, housing, and leisure.

“Now that the station boasts this crucial addition, the station is very much open to the wider area. People can park at Manea Station free-of-charge and travel easily to destinations near and far – not only Cambridge, Ely and Peterborough, but on to the wider country as many journeys from Manea are direct or only one change of train.”

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