

# PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 23

HELD IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON 8 AUGUST 2023



## Present:

**In Person:** Cllr Mike Whitwam (MWm) of Swanage Town Council (Chair), Cllr Beryl Ezzard (BE) of Dorset Council (Vice Chair), Mick Stone (MS) of Swanage Railway (Secretary), Gavin Johns (GJ) of Swanage Railway, Steven Booth (SB) Community Rail Officer, Rory Pilcher (RP) and Jack Wharton (JW) of Network Rail.

**Online:** Andrew Ardley (AA) and Paula Aldridge (PA) of SWR, Ade Parvin of Perenco UK (AP), and Dan Wright (DW) of Community Rail Network.

The meeting was quorate.

### Agenda Item 1 - Chair's Opening Remarks, Welcome and Introductions

MWm welcomed all to the hybrid meeting and hoped that those joining in online would be able to participate satisfactorily.

### Agenda Item 2 - Apologies for Absence

Received from Alex Brocklesby of National Trust (AB).

### Agenda Item 3 - Draft Minutes of the Steering Group meeting of 9th May 2023

The minutes were approved.

### Agenda Item 4 - Matters Arising Therefrom and Not Appearing on the Agenda

- Item 5 - action completed.
- Item 6 - action completed.
- Item 7 - temporary highway signs - the signs were in place but some were wind-blown and/or obscured by vegetation etc. SB commented that the invoice was still awaited. He would follow up on permanent signage with DC Sign Shop.  
**ACTION: SB.**
- Item 7 - Wareham issues - MS had asked AA for an update. AA advised the meeting that the totem for Wareham had been delivered to secure storage and had been fully paid-for. However, it was not now due for installation until January 2024. This was due to the Listed Building Consent required and the fact that SWR intended to install radio microphone equipment at the station - both consents would be sought from the Planning Authority at the same time. In response to a specific question, AA confirmed that PCRCP would not be asked for any additional contribution to funding arising from the delayed installation. Re the CIS screens, JW was escalating the lack of information currently being displayed.  
**ACTION: JW.**
- Item 7 - Impact Tool - SB confirmed that he was now using this.
- Item 9 - NR-owned land on 'Up' side at Wareham - JW, SB and BE had met, together with the NR ecologist. JW asked that the PCRCP and Station Friends group now formally submit a proposal to NR for the land around the foot crossing. SB said that funding was an issue. **ACTION: BE and SB to investigate further before submitting a formal application to NR.**
- Item 9 - SR issues at Norden level crossing - GJ and AP had been in touch. AP advised that he was awaiting further information from SR. **ACTION: GJ.**

- Item 9 - 'Raising the Profile' - MS, SB and GJ had invited various people to visit the Swanage-Wareham services and this was continuing (see later in agenda).
- Item 9 - possible Perenco funding for PCRCP - there had since been an exchange of emails between SB, AP, and MS.  
**ACTION: SB and MS to follow up with AP.**
- Item 11(b) - action completed.
- Item 11(c) - action completed.
- Item 11(d) - action completed.

### Agenda Item 5 - Financial Update

SB reported that funding had been received from SWR both in respect of the core funding and the project funding for promotion of the 2RN bus service. Thanks were extended to PA for her help with this. SB further reported that agreed contributions from DC and SR were still awaited for 2023/24. There was discussion around whether DC would require a legal agreement for its funding or possibly a Service Level Agreement (SLA). It was pointed out that PCRCP was not a legal entity and therefore signing a formal legal agreement would be problematic. KF was dealing. **ACTION: KF/SB.**

SB said that he would send round the end of July financial statement to all after the meeting. GJ asked for 'commitments' to be assessed so that all could see how much funding was available for other projects. **ACTION: SB and MS.**

Re the proposed totem for Dorchester South, SB advised that he had not yet heard a response to his revised application for CRDF funding. DW asked SB to speak to him after the meeting on this point (POST MEETING NOTE - CRN has declined the application).

### Agenda Item 6 - 'Raising The Profile' of the Swanage to Wareham Services

MS reported on the visits of various rail-industry colleagues to see the services for themselves. There were more to come before the cessation of trial services on 9th September, including some politicians. **ACTION: MS to send the latest list of visitors to Steering Group members.**

GJ advised that both local MPs had been invited by SR to visit the Wareham services but neither had taken the offer up. GJ thanked PCRCP members for their work on sending out invitations and hosting the various visitors. GJ added that his intention was to meet DC Councillors in the Autumn to ask what help that Authority might be able to give to enable some services to operate in 2024. MS asked if PCRCP might be represented at the Autumn meeting and GJ confirmed his view that it should be.

Under this item, it was reported that a site meeting with the Accessibility Manager of SWR was due to take place on 11th August at Wareham Station. SB and BE would be present.

### Agenda Item 7 - CRPO's Report and Updates (Incl Training Undertaken and Activity Plan)

SB's report had been sent to members and was tabled. It dealt with a wide range of issues, including:

**Update re RSPB, Arne** - the '2RN' service was operating and it was thought that the season was due to be extended to the end of September (was due to be end of August). News was awaited to confirm this. The Arne and Studland video was now complete and available in two separate versions, the shorter one for social media use. A new print run of 5,000 brochures had been ordered and was being distributed. New temporary signage was in place at Wareham station.

**Dorchester South** - SB reported that 6 x raised wooden planters had been donated by SWR's contractor, Coombes, for the station. This was much appreciated. A CRN small grant funding application would be made, maybe to include the installation of a water butt on the 'Down' platform.

**Wool** - 2 x large banners had been erected, organised by the Friends group and assisted by SB, to promote bus services to Lulworth and Durdle Door, in association with First group.

**Education** - SB advised that he was continuing to attend CRN Education networking meetings, with a view to engaging with children and young people locally in due course.

SB's report included a list of training events which he had attended since the last meeting.

### Updates from Steering Group Members

**Network Rail** - JW reported on the success of the Waterloo 175 celebration and also the upcoming engineering works affecting the Purbeck area over the weekend of 23/24 September when buses would replace trains locally. RP advised that the Wareham Station Strategic Plan report was due to complete its drafting in the next week or two, after which it would be circulated for any further comments. MS asked about the frequency of reviews once the report was complete. RP said that the frequency was yet to be agreed. **ACTION: RP.**

**SWR** - PA confirmed that SWR and its contractor had donated the raised planters for Dorchester South. These were of recycled wood. The Waterloo 175 celebrations had taken a lot of work but had been well-received. Finally, she reported that an SWR CR conference was planned for October (date to be advised) and a separate Stakeholder Conference was due in November.

**AA** advised that the mid-tier scheme for accessibility at Dorchester South was now programmed for early 2024. NR had been rewiring and erecting new lighting columns at the station in recent weeks. The application for an Access for All footbridge and lifts was still with the DfT for decision. It was possible that a decision would be announced after the Budget due in the Autumn.

**Swanage Railway** - GJ gave an update on the Wareham services. Key points were that 1.5 days had been lost to train failures thus far, patronage/ridership levels had not been as high as hoped for, and there had been issues with tyre wear on the DMU arising from worn rails in the Worgret area on the NR-owned section of the branch. A view would be taken in the Autumn about the prospects for operating the service in 2024, a matter which would be discussed with Dorset Council in the Autumn. The questionnaires being completed by passengers would help to inform that discussion. The decision had been taken to proceed, after a period of delay, with SR obtaining its own TOC Licence - this would avoid the need to use another TOC to operate the trains, thus reducing costs in the future.

Questions and comments raised were:

- AA asked about the Restoring Your Railway application. GJ said there was no news and that it was planned to raise this with the DfT over the next few weeks and months.
- The Volunteer Recruitment post had now been filled on a two year contract from early August, working three days per week. **ACTION: GJ to put SB in touch with the VR&RO.**
- In answer to a question from MW, GJ said that he anticipated a period of around 6 months before a TOC licence would be obtained. An issue was that the licence had to be used within 6 months of the grant or the licence would be rescinded.
- BE considered that DC should recognise the importance of the Wareham services continuing in future years.

## Agenda Item 8 - Future Direction of the PCRCP

MS and SB had circulated a report ahead of the meeting. Key issues raised were the real terms cut in funding to PCRCP from SWR in 2023/24 and the uncertainty of the level of funding in future years. To counter this potential shortfall, SB had been talking to other partners to ask for contributions toward core funding. Additional potential sources of core funding were being identified.

The relationship with Hampshire CRP was reported to have worked well in practice, and was due to be extended for a further year from 1st October 2023. One issue which remained to be resolved, however, was that HCRP was not registered for VAT, the impact of which was that, on some orders and projects, PCRCP was not able to get the VAT reclaimed. Whether it was possible to change this was under discussion with HCRP. **ACTION: MS/SB.**

The report also advised that, after an absence of several years, Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Council (BC&P) wished to become a Stakeholder once more.

Steering Group was asked to continue thinking about what future direction PCRCP should take, taking into account potential financial pressures to come, and the changing world around.

No decisions were made at the meeting but the following questions arose:

- PA asked how much VAT was at risk. **ACTION: SB to check and advise.** PA continued by saying that SWR was anticipating being under pressure in future years, in common with all national TOCs. She also said that she thought that SWR might be content if PCRCP took on responsibility for Station Friends groups at one or two stations to the East of the PCRCP area.
- Following on from this SB asked if SWR was aware of any proposal to merge existing CRPs in its area. PA replied 'no'. **ACTION: MS/SB to meet with HCRP to discuss further.**

## Agenda Item 9 - Any Other Business

- MS reported that a formal response from the Partnership on the consultation re proposed ticket office closures had been sent to Transport Focus and this response had been copied to Steering Group members.
- BE added that Purbeck Transport Action Group had sent its own response to the consultation.
- GJ noted the July interim report from RSPB on the usage etc of the 2RN bus service and thanked PA for her help with funding the promotion of the service. PA asked that the new video be shared as widely as possible, including via SWR itself.
- AA asked about future visitors to the Wareham Service and for further information. **ACTION: MS and SB.**

**Date on next Meeting:** Tuesday 7th November 2023 in-person at Purbeck Sports Centre Worgret Rd, Wareham BH20 4PH

ENDS

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