

# PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP RE-CONVENED MEETING 15 HELD IN PERSON & VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON 2 DECEMBER 2021



## Present:

Cllr Mike Whitwam (MWm) of Swanage Town Council, Cllr Beryl Ezzard (BE) of Dorset Council, Gavin Johns (GJ), Jonathan Evans (JE), and Mick Stone (MS) of Swanage Railway, Rob Hodgkinson (RH) of Network Rail, Dan Wright (DW) of Community Rail Network (via Teams), Alex Brocklesby (AB) of National Trust, and Josephine Foley (JF) Purbeck CRPO.

**Apologies:** Kelly Flynn (KF) of Dorset Council, Jaime Rockhill and Jonathan Cowe (JC) of Network Rail, and Paula Aldridge (PA) of SWR.

The meeting was quorate.

## Agenda item 1 - Chairman's Opening Remarks and Welcome -

MWm welcomed everyone to the meeting, the first to be held 'in person' since Covid restrictions commenced in March 2020. Introductions were made, in particular of AB, attending as an observer on behalf of the National Trust.

## Agenda Item 2 - Draft Minutes of the Steering Group Meetings on 28 July and 4 November 2021 (Meetings number 12 and 14)

These were agreed.

## Agenda Item 3 - Matters Arising Therefrom

There were none.

## Agenda Item 4 - Considerations of Reports & Updates

### A) Community Rail Network

- DW reported that the annual CRN Awards ceremony would be taking place in Southampton the following week. It was not too late to book a place on the livestream event, which was free. A face-to-face CR conference is scheduled to take place in March 2022, details and location to be advised.
- In response to a question from GJ, DW advised that SWR was definitely obliged to provide core funding for all of its CRPs for the next two years, and possibly for another two years after that. However, SWR has to present annual Business Plans to the DfT in order to get consent for providing the funding for the ensuing year. It did not seem that there would be a problem with this, but funding could not be guaranteed as things stood.

### B) Dorset Council

- BE noted that she was the only representative of DC present, and asked for confirmation that DC officers had been invited to the meeting. JF confirmed that two officers had been invited but one was on long-term sick leave and the other had not responded to the invitation. BE advised that she had not received a briefing from DC officers and was thus not able to give a full update. She suggested that Wayne Sayers might be invited to future meetings **ACTION: JF to invite WS to future meetings.**
- BE was able to advise that work was due to start in January on the new footway/cycleway between the north side of the station at Wareham and the roundabout on the A351, by the by-pass bridge. This was Phase One, but Phase Two still awaited the putting in place of a funding package. This was the section over the by-pass bridge to the roundabout to the south of Wareham Station. BE hoped that this work would be undertaken in 2022/23. Network Rail had to be involved in the second phase because the road needed to be re-aligned.

**C) CRPO Report /Activity Plan (JF)**

- JF had sent out her report and spoke to several of the items. Re Beryl Bikes at Wool, JF reported that Wool Parish Council had declined to sign the contract, for reasons unknown, and the Clerk had asked if PCRCP would take it on. Because the Partnership was unincorporated, this in turn would mean that Swanage Railway would need to be the signatory. A copy of the contract had been sent to GJ, on behalf of SR. GJ advised that he was taking legal advice but warned that SR would be 'risk averse'. AB asked where the 3 x sites for the Bikes in Wool would be, and about the funding. BE asked if Dorset Council was providing s106 funding for this purpose, which JF confirmed. BE advised that DC had set aside £1m of s106 funds projects in 2022/23.
- The question of Beryl Bikes in Wareham was discussed. MS pointed out that Wareham Cycleworks do not hire bicycles and that means that Wareham Station has no such facility. As far as it is known, nor does Dorchester South. AB suggested that a holistic approach to bike hire was needed throughout south Dorset. This was agreed as a principle, but the question was posed regarding the organization to take the lead. BE felt that Dorset Council should. AB wondered if Purbeck Transport Action Group might take the lead, perhaps supported by DC. GJ added his voice by saying that, as Chairman of SR, he received regular emails from a plethora of local groups who seemed to be concerned about local environmental etc issues, with a considerable degree of overlap. All agreed that leadership and co-ordination was needed, but how best to go about it? A single plan was required.
- JF continued by referring to Wool Goods Shed and land adjoining. The latter was the subject of an application to Network Rail for a Community Licence. A quote for refurbishment of the Goods Shed building is awaited MWm said that he was excited by the possibilities.
- The 175th anniversary of the Southampton & Dorchester Railway would take place in June 2022 and JF is working with other CRPOs to run events marking it.
- Recently a takeaway café has opened on the north side of Wareham Station - MS asked whether this was a temporary or semi-permanent facility. BE advised her view that it might only be temporary, in view of the planning position. This might impact on the viability of proposals for a 'coffee cart' in the car park at the station.
- MS expressed the view that the Activity Plan had a lot of actions for the CRPO, particularly in view of the part time nature of the role. JF responded by saying that the reality is that a lot of projects have a long 'lead-in' time, and there needs to be enough short term projects to fill in between the larger, more complex, tasks. MWm asked JF to make sure she alerted him if it was becoming too onerous.
- BE referred to developments at Wareham Station, in terms of re-decoration and the installation of the new FoWRS sign on 6th December. An unveiling for this will be held in the New Year.

**D) Mick Stone's Report**

- MS apologised that there was no written report. He referred to the Partnership's letter of support for Dorset Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), and hoped for a positive outcome.
- Secondly, and lastly, he advised that it seemed that both SWR and NR were proposing re-assessments at Wareham, both to take place in early 2022, in terms of accessibility and first/last mile onward travel etc, and hoped that the two studies would be complementary. He has asked that PCRCP be involved in consultation in both cases. BE commented on the Accessibility issues at Wareham. RH apologised that neither of his colleagues dealing with the Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study (JR and JC) were present. His understanding was that the final draft report to DfT was due to be submitted 'imminently'. GJ was disappointed that Swanage Railway's proposals were not mentioned more in the final draft, on which he had commented. BE said she thought that a response from DfT regarding the BSIP was due in December.

#### E) Network Rail Report (RH)

- RH started by talking about the 'up' bay at Wareham. The Community licence had been held up following the NR Ecology team's concerns regarding the protected species on site and the need for a 'corridor' either side of the site. The relocation can only occur at certain times of year, and this will lead to a delay to the Licence. RH thought this might now be September 2022. The proposal was that there might be a 'walk through' nature reserve, accessed probably via steps at the 'buffer stop' end, with heritage style fencing along the edge of the old platform. There would also be an enhanced management regime. BE asked where the relocation sites would be, and RH advised that it would be along stretches of local embankments.
- The meeting was pleased to note that the mural/target sign at Wareham was now in place and drawing positive comment.
- Regarding Wool Goods Shed, RH said that the land adjoining the Goods Shed was NR's, and he had started work on a Community Licence for this.
- RH had advised that he was leaving his job imminently, but that he had no news of who or when a successor might be appointed. He will let JF have a note of who to contact after he has left his job. The meeting thanked RH for his efforts during his time in post.
- MWm asked about the previous commitment by NR to safeguard the area of the former bay platform for use by trains to/from Swanage in the event that the preferred access to the 'down' sidings was not available. RH confirmed that this safeguarding was still in place.

(NOTE: AB left the meeting at this point)

#### F) Perenco Update

- There was no report and no representation at the meeting.

#### G) SWR Report

- There was no representation from SWR at the meeting, but Paula Aldridge had submitted a written report ahead of the meeting.
- BE asked if printed timetables would be made available again, perhaps from the May 2022 timetable change.
- GJ asked if it was known what the Bournemouth to Weymouth service was expected to be in May '22. This was important in terms of the proposed Swanage to Wareham Service (see below). **ACTION: MS and JF.**

#### H) Swanage Town Council Report

- There was no written report but MWm re-iterated his Council's support for the proposed Swanage to Wareham trial service and the Restoring Your Railway application.

#### I) Swanage Railway Update

- GJ reported a very good trading year in 2021, especially so in view of the 2020 figures. SR had cut its cost base by 30%. The outlook for Christmas services was also good. However, there was now a backlog of maintenance to be dealt with, which would cost a lot of money.
- The Restoring Your Railway Strategic Outline Business Case had been submitted and there would now be a period for the Department to consider whether to ask for the next stage to proceed i.e. the Outline Business Case.

- The trial service to Wareham was now due to start in May 2022, but GJ cautioned that there was still much to do for this SR-operated service. BE asked about through ticketing for the trial service. GJ advised that discussions were ongoing with SWR on this. The service was planned to operate on 92 days between May and September 2022, 5 x days per week. Mondays and Fridays were days when servicing would be undertaken, of both trains and infrastructure. The trains were to be serviced from a temporary depot at Corfe Castle, pending Furzebrook or another site becoming available.
- Furzebrook - GJ reported very slow progress, and wondered whether BE could help to move things forward at Dorset Council, for example finding out who is the lead officer for the Furzebrook negotiations. He also referred to SR's leases at Purbeck Business Centre, which had expired, where there had been no contact from DC. This was urgent because of the need for Health & Safety improvements to be made.
- Referring to earlier discussions, GJ also wanted to see co-ordination with various proposals locally in respect of minibus services e.g. RSPB and Arne.
- Finally, he reconfirmed SR's support for the development of Norden (Purbeck Park) as a Hub.

### J) Volunteer Recruitment & Retention Update

- JE advised that he was currently working with JF on plans for a Friends of Dorchester South group, and had liaised with the Friends of Wool. Friends of Wareham would be the next group he liaised with.

### Agenda Item 5. Suggested Additions to the Steering and Stakeholder Groups of PCRCP

There were suggestions that National Trust and Go South Coast might be invited to join meetings, possibly to the Steering Group. Whilst Dorset CAN and Dorchester Transport Action Group might be added to the Stakeholder Group. Referring to the former, MS expressed the view that Steering Group needed to be lean and agile enough to make relatively quick decisions when needed, and thus wondered whether NT and GSC should be invited to attend Stakeholder Group instead. Following discussion, during which BE and MWm added that Stakeholder Group might in future meet three times per year, a proposal was put forward to add these two organisations to Stakeholder Group. Of the voting members present, two voted for this proposal (BE and MWm) and there was one abstention (GJ). There was a meeting due of Purbeck Transport Action Group, and GJ wanted to see what happened at that meeting before committing himself. (Note: PTAG is already invited to Stakeholder Group meetings). **ACTION: JF**

### Agenda Item 6. Proposed Allocation of PCRCP Funds

- JF had circulated a report before the meeting. She cautioned that final confirmation of SWR core funding for 2022/23 and 2023/4 was still awaited, and Steering Group might want to be flexible of allocation of funds until that issue was resolved. DW had earlier explained why there was a delay (see above).
- MWm was keen to formally allocate some funds for work with schools. Some of the bigger items came with longer lead-in times because of waiting for partners etc. to go through procurement procedures e.g. the proposed new electronic real time information screen for Wareham.
- The report was agreed on condition that there were regular updates.

### Agenda Item 7. Constitution

- A few minor amendments had been made to the Constitution, mainly around the adding of Dorchester South to the area of activity for PCRCP, and the amendment of ACoRP to CRN. There being no comments the amendments were agreed. **ACTION: JF.**

### **Agenda Item 8. Wareham Level Crossing**

- It was understood that the proposed meeting at Basingstoke had not taken place. BE thought that that meeting was not now scheduled to take place, and that another way forward was to be pursued by the MP.
- JF reiterated the CRN re-accreditation in 2020 advised that the level crossing (as a topic for discussion) should only be included on the agenda when there is new information. MWm and BE asked that it be included on the agenda for each Steering Group meeting.

### **Agenda Item 9. Any Other Business**

- MWm had agreed that lunch would be paid for from PCRP funds.
- Thanks to RH were again expressed for his services to the Group over the last two years or so, and wished him well for the future.

### **Agenda Item 10. Dates of Next Meetings**

Steering Group - Thursday 10th February at 10.30 (via Teams).

Stakeholder Group - Thursday 3rd March at 11.00 at All Stars Bar with Teams hybrid option available.

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