

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 11 THURSDAY 4 MARCH 2021



Present:

Cllr Bill Trite (WST) of Dorset Council, Cllr Mike Whitwam (MWm) of Swanage Town Council, Andrew Ardley (AA) of South Western Railway, Kelly Flynn (KF) of Dorset Council, Mark Woolley (MWy) and Mick Stone (MS) of Swanage Railway, Rob Hodgkinson (RH) and Jonathan Cowe (JC) of Network Rail, Dan Wright (DW) of Community Rail Network, Ade Parvin (AP) of Perenco UK, Josephine Foley (JF) Purbeck CRPO.

Apologies

Phil Dominey and Andy Harrowell of SWR, Jaime Rockhill of NR, and Fiona King (FK) of Dorset Council.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks and Welcome

WST welcomed all to the virtual meeting and expressed the wish that 2021 might prove a better year than 2020.

2. Draft Minutes of Steering Group meeting 10 of 17th December 2020

WST thanked MS for producing these, together with the meeting's agenda. The minutes were agreed in terms of accuracy, *nem. con.*

3. Matters Arising from the above meeting and not on the Agenda

- MS reported that contact had been made with Eminox regarding possible clean-up technology for the Swanage Railway-owned DMU fleet. MWy and colleagues at SR would now take matters forward.
- AA advised that negotiations between SWR and the Department for Transport were continuing regarding the proposed Direct Award. The new management arrangements are due to take effect from 1st April 2021.
- MS and AA reported that BC&P Council had proposals to adopt all stations within the conurbation, including Hamworthy.
- 'Staycation Summer' - MWy anticipated Swanage Railway would operate as many trains as feasible during Summer 2021 between Swanage and Norden, dependent on the pandemic and potential staffing issues caused thereby.
- It was noted that the annual Service Level Agreement meeting with SWR had taken place satisfactorily.

4. Consideration of Reports & Updates

a) Community Rail Network Update

DW advised that the Integrated Sustainable Transport Fund would be opening again for 2021/22 and bids would be welcomed.

b) Dorset Council Update

KF said that there was no update available regarding the replacement of the foot crossing at Wareham. The bus shelter project update was later in the agenda. KF had attended a meeting of the Western Gateway (a Sub-National Transport Body) at which the issue of Mobility Hubs had arisen. Wareham may be suitable for such a Hub, in which case a Station Audit would be helpful, in assessing whether funding might be available from Western Gateway. DW suggested that CRN could help with advice on the Station Audit. Finally, KF advised that Purbeck Park (Norden) was being considered as a site for one or more Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP).

c) CRPO Report

JF had submitted a written report ahead of the meeting. This set out in some detail how she was spending her time and included new ideas around education and oral histories etc. The updated Activity Plan had also been sent out with the Agenda and would be considered later in the meeting. JF's report was accepted as submitted.

The following issues were discussed further:

- RH offered to put NR's Community Safety Manager in touch with JF with regard to advising schoolchildren of the dangers of trespassing on Railways.
- There was some discussion of the former 'up' side bay at Wareham and its suggested re-designation as a wildlife garden. Both MWm and MWy pointed out that, historically, this area was designated as a possible site for re-instatement of the track. However, the view was taken that this was a long-term possibility only and that the wildlife garden should not prevent that re-instatement, if it was ever put forward as a viable project. RH stated that a Community Licence length is 2 years although subject to renewable.
- JF had made some enquiries regarding the possibility of tea/coffee sales at Wareham during the Summer months. These were continuing.
- Contact had been made with Wareham Cycleworks regarding cycle hire. They have no plans to expand into cycle hire but would be happy to discuss the matter further.
- Wool Goods Shed - contact had been made with the Parish Council Clerk at Wool. It seemed that the CCIF bid had been made without any formal survey of the structure having been made. JF suggested that the Partnership might bear the cost of a structural survey in order to assess the possibilities for future refurbishment.
- Living Walls - JF was making enquiries about these, which might suit narrow platforms where normal planters would cause a constriction.
- Contact had also been made with the DC member of staff who might be able to help with a water supply at Wareham station.
- AA commented that NR's Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study was looking at the possibility of operating extra trains to Wareham and, if that occurred, the crossover and sidings at the London end of the station would have to be commissioned and come into use.
- The 50th Anniversary of the closure of the Swanage Branch by British Railways on 1st January 1972 was raised. It was suggested by MWm that this should be commemorated in some way, a view shared by MWy. **ACTION: All to consider.**
- Activity Plan - consideration of this item took place at the end of JF's report, rather than later in the agenda. The Plan was approved, subject to the addition of reference to Swanage Town Council amongst the Steering Group members.
- Regarding Microsoft Teams, Steering Group agreed that funds towards a new laptop would be granted (in order to enable purchase of the Microsoft software). Amount of £700 agreed.
- A funding update was tabled. The tabulated items were split into funding already committed and those where some discussion had previously taken place and awaiting a formal decision from Steering Group. See *Proposed expen 040321*.

d) MS Report

MS had submitted a brief paper suggesting both Wareham and Wool stations might become 'Mobility Hubs'. MS asked for support for the principle, which was agreed. The next steps were to draw up 'Blueprints' for each i.e. master plans, which could be developed incrementally as time and funding might allow. Wool already has a project for Beryl Bike hire. Wareham may be a suitable site for Beryl Bikes, but would need a Business Plan. DW suggested that CRN's Community Stations Toolkit would assist to build that Business Case. AA said SWR would be very supportive in principle if a genuine need could be demonstrated.

It was agreed that a master plan should take account of the future use of the NR-owned land on the 'up' side, at the London end.

ACTIONS:

- JF and MS to start work on master plans for both Wareham and Wool;
- MS/JF to advise RH of the land at the London end which might be included in the master planning exercise;
- MS to advise DW if a CRN-organised Study Tour to exemplars of Mobility Hubs, whether in the UK or Europe, might be helpful
- AA to arrange a virtual discussion with CoMoUK about Mobility Hubs and electric cars for shared use.

e) Network Rail Update

- RH had earlier commented on the wildlife garden proposal and the 2 year Licence which was under discussion. Artwork & murals, can also be considered within SWR station leased areas, it just adds a layer of additional permissions that are required from SWR – these can also be considered where viable.
- JC advised that work on the Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study was ongoing having been delayed due to the Pandemic. The next meeting of the Group is to be held on 23rd March, when timetabling will be discussed following work by his colleagues at Milton Keynes.

f) Perenco UK Update

AP advised that he had heard nothing further from Dorset Council regarding the Heads of Terms for the Furzebrook Sidings lease. MWy said that the issue was due to be discussed by SR, via video link, with senior officers at DC later in March.

g) South Western Rail Update

- AA reported that Andy Harrowell was currently on 6 month leave of absence. His temporary replacement is Paula Aldridge.
- AA re-confirmed that the new Direct Award was due to start from 01/04/21, for a minimum of 2 years, with a possible extension to a maximum of 4 years.
- Following the decision not to proceed with CCIF funding for the old Goods Shed at Wool, a scheme was being drawn up for making the existing toilet in the main station building available outside of staff working hours. This would be achieved via remote access arrangements which were due to be introduced shortly, following the resolution of HR issues. Such an arrangement might also be applied to the toilets at Wareham.
- The Beryl Bikes available at Wool would not be electric-powered.

- The 12 new stands at Wareham would now have to be relocated due to NR objections to the proposed site on the grass area adjoining the 'up' platform.
- There were proposals for a 'rover ticket', which might be available from June or July 2021 onwards, subject to finalisation of the Direct Award. This idea was welcomed by Steering Group. The website could be updated with the details, as and when.
- AA referred to the Dorset Local Plan consultation. SWR would be responding, as would SR. KF commented on the lack of rail proposals in the draft plan, but balanced this with the comment that the Local Transport Plan 4 Review would be starting shortly, and this would be the place to ensure that proposals were included.
- AA concluded by commenting that leisure travel was a focus moving forward from 'Stay at Home' guidance - it would be very important to get product and pricing right.

h) Swanage Railway Update

- MWy updated the meeting with respect to the appointment of a Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Officer, who would work for SR but assist PCRp with volunteers for the main line stations, too. Interviews will be held on 11th March. **ACTION: MWy to share the details of the job specification with Steering Group.**
- MWy had circulated a report prior to the meeting. The main focus now was preparing for the 2021 season and seeking to maximise income post lockdown. The Restore Your Railway fund application was progressing. SR's choice of consultant had been agreed by the Department for Transport and meetings would shortly commence towards writing the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). It was agreed that the £3,000 allocated from 2021/22 SWR Projects fund should be allocated to meeting the balance of the costs of completing the SOBC. It was noted that the offer by SWR of the £3,000 was still subject to confirmation by DfT in respect of the Direct Award.

i) MS Update re new Bus Shelter at Wareham station

MS reported that there was a continuing delay with the placement of the official order by DC to the contractor. When that order had been placed and the costs agreed a further report would be made.

5. Any Other Business

- It was noted that the Re-Accreditation process would be due later in the Spring.
- KF noted with regret that the Summer Saturday train service between North Dorset and Weymouth/Wareham was not proposed in Summer 2021. This was disappointing news.
- JF asked for authority to get DC to remove PCRp from the main 'Dorsetforyou' website. This was because it was confusing users of search engines to have two different options. **ACTION: JF to contact Fiona King.**

6. Date of Next Meeting

- Thursday 3rd June at 10.30. This would again be a virtual meeting.
- Next Stakeholder Meeting/AGM - Thursday 2nd September. A decision would be taken nearer the time on whether this would be a virtual meeting again, or whether it might take place in person.

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