

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 12

THURSDAY 3 JUNE 2021



Present:

Cllr Mike Whitwam (MWm) of Swanage Town Council, Paula Aldridge (PA) of South Western Railway, Randy Coldham (RC) and Mick Stone (MS) of Swanage Railway, Rob Hodgkinson (RH) of Network Rail, Dan Wright (DW) of Community Rail Network, Fiona King (FK) of Dorset Council, and Josephine Foley (JF) Purbeck CRPO.

Apologies

Kelly Flynn (KF) of Dorset Council, Mark Woolley (MWy) of Swanage Railway and Jonathan Cowe (JC) of Network Rail.

In the absence of Cllr Trite, Mike Whitwam (MWm) was elected Chairman for the meeting. The meeting was held virtually and was quorate.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks and Welcome

MWm welcomed everyone to the meeting. He referred to the email from Cllr Trite which all had received earlier that morning regarding his decision to withdraw from the Partnership. This was noted with regret, with members expressing their surprise at the news.

MWm thought it likely that the next meetings of the Partnership might be held on a face-to-face basis, dependent on progress with the easing of Lockdown.

2. Draft Minutes of Steering Group meeting 11 on 4th March 2021

The minutes were agreed in terms of accuracy, *nem. con.*

3. Matters Arising from the above meeting

None raised.

4. Consideration of Reports & Updates

a) Community Rail Network Update

DW explained the background to the pausing of the Re-Accreditation process. There was a need for regular contact between the CRPO and the Chairman of Steering Group, to discuss progress with the Activity Plan as well as offer advice. DW confirmed that there were no other reasons for delaying the process.

After some discussion it was agreed that MWm would fulfil the role of Chairman, pending the recruitment of a new Chairman, thus enabling the Re-Accreditation process to continue. PA expressed the view that the new Chairman need not necessarily be from Dorset Council, but MS, supported by RC, considered that it was important for the Partnership to have a senior Councillor from the Transportation Authority leading the Partnership at a time when Swanage Railway's Restoring Your Railway application process was ongoing.

MS asked DW if there was potentially reputational damage to the Partnership arising from the pausing of the process. DW advised that the pausing had so far only been brought to the attention of his two senior managers at CRN so there had been none. MWm confirmed his support for the stance that the new Chairman should be from Dorset Council. RH also thought this was an appropriate way forward. JF's view was that, whilst it was important to have representation from Dorset Council, it was not necessary that they be chairman.

MWm suggested that he should ask Cllr Trite for suggestions as to another suitable Councillor. MS thought that perhaps Cllr Lacey-Clarke, the deputy to Cllr Bryan, might be approached. Cllr Bryan is responsible for Environment, Travel, and Harbours.

It was agreed that DW would meet separately with JF and MWm to progress Re-Accreditation. Those who should be present at the reconvened Re-Accreditation meeting were: MWy, PA, MWm, JF, DW, and RH. MWm said he would speak to Cllr Trite. PA said she would speak to Andrew Ardley and Phil Dominey about any recommendations they might wish to make.

RC reminded the meeting that Cllr Trite wanted it formally minuted that he had an objection to CRN's interim report on the grounds that he had been misrepresented.

b) CRPO's Report

JF referred to the report which she had previously circulated. She explained further that some meetings were now taking place face-to-face again. Some key points which arose from the discussion were:

- reaching out to schools was now starting to happen, including the possibility of Try The Train events, potentially with SWR Ambassadors;
- Network Rail had sent some material for handing out with regard to rail safety;
- An initial meeting with the new Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Officer at Swanage Railway had taken place.

MWm mentioned that he had connections with three 'Primary' schools around the Swanage area and he would be keen to organise trips by train for some of those pupils.

c) Mick Stone's Report

MS gave a brief oral update since sending out his report. PA confirmed that SWR would be delighted if PCRCP took on Dorchester South station within its remit. RC pointed out that the new Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Officer would be able to help find the volunteers to take on this station, working in conjunction with JF. The issue seemed to be one of resources. **ACTION: MWm/MWy/JF to consider.** MS pointed out that a small alteration to the Constitution to reflect the addition of Dorchester South would be needed.

Discussion regarding the addition of Hamworthy station has been paused for the time being due to current BC&P plans for the station.

Cllr Bryan at Dorset Council had written to the Rail Minister requesting the early resumption of the pre-Covid SWR timetable in Dorset i.e. 2 trains per hour Waterloo to Weymouth on weekdays.

Regarding the MoreBus Breezer services it was now known that there would be a daily timetable on Routes 30 and the new 31. **ACTION: JF to create links on the website to these services.**

d) Network Rail Update

RH shared an update regarding the Williams-Shapps White Paper and the proposal for Great British Railways (RH's report is attached). Key proposals regarding Community Rail include plans to empower CRPs in order to strengthen rail's social and economic impact. A principle short term aim is to get passengers using trains for leisure and tourism purposes once again.

The Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study is being finalised this week, with expected distribution to stakeholders by 18th June 2021.

NR are working on a Social Value Framework, in line with the UK Government model, as an online tool for liaising with the DfT. PA asked how this might work alongside CRN's Impact tool. **ACTION: RH to check and advise.**

RH also confirmed that he continues to work with JF on the proposed wildlife garden at Wareham Station. The Community Licence is due to be submitted and JF/RH are discussing viable locations for a mural.

e) Perenco Update

No update available.

f) SWR Update

PA reported that First Group/MTR had now signed a National Rail Contract with the DfT. There were 90 commitments in the new contract but the details were not yet known. She has arranged to meet with JF on 28th June for a tour of PCRPs jurisdiction.

PA will ask colleagues at SWR for access to a tap at Wareham station so that the flowers could be watered more easily. **ACTION: PA**

PA asked for confirmation that the core funding for 2021/22 had now been received by SR. JF thought it had but will check **ACTION: JF.**

g) Swanage Town Council Update

MWm reported that the Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May had seen Swanage as a town the busiest it had been for some time. He confirmed that STC remained fully supportive of SR and its plans for operating to Wareham.

h) Swanage Railway Update

MWy had circulated an update before the meeting. RC reported that, during the half term holiday, every SR train had been sold out, but at 60% Covid capacity. FK said this was a very good news story that should be broadcast far and wide. RC said he would speak to the SR Press Officer accordingly **ACTION: RC.**

JF referred to the SR/Real Time Trains electronic notice boards which had been introduced on SR, and asked if one of those could be provided at Wareham. The cost was around £7,500 per board, but installation would be extra. MS thought any such board at Wareham might be adjacent to, or combined with, SWR train information and bus information. He referred to a new information point he had seen at Guildford. RH agreed to get details of that board and circulate.

i) Dorset Council Update

FK had nothing to add.

5. Any Other Business

- JF asked if she could have an expenses card. No objection was raised. **ACTION: JF to liaise with MWy.**
- Proposed Expenditure 2021/22 - JF had re-circulated the list presented to the previous meeting on 4 March. She agreed to update it once she had heard from DOTS about the accessibility audit at Wareham. In this regard PA offered to put JF in touch with Michael Adlington of SWR. **ACTION: JF and PA.**
- It was noted that the 12 new bike stands at Wareham station were being installed in the car park.
- It was suggested that a date be set for a further meeting of Steering Group ahead of the proposed Stakeholder/AGM meeting on 2 September. **ACTION: all to consider suitable date(s).**
- It was noted that future meetings could be face-to-face, in line with Government advice.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Currently set for 2nd September, but see above.

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