

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 10 THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER 2020



Present:

Cllr Bill Trite (WST) of Dorset Council, Cllr Mike Whitwam (MWm) of Swanage Town Council, Andy Harrowell (AH) of South Western Railway, Kelly Flynn (KF) and Fiona King (FK) 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) new Purbeck CRPO.

Apologies

Phil Dominey and Andrew Ardley of SWR, and Jaime Rockhill of NR.

Agenda items 1 & 2. Chairman's Opening Remarks and Welcome

The minutes were approved and confirmed.

3. Draft Minutes of Steering Group of 24th September 2020

WST thanked MS for producing these, together with the meeting's agenda. The minutes were agreed in terms of accuracy, *nem. con.* He thanked the Sub-Group for its work on advertising for and recruiting the new officer, Josephine. He noted that the main items referred to in those minutes, namely the Wareham Bus Shelter, Furzebrook, and the Restore Your Railway bid would all be addressed later in the meeting.

4. Draft Minutes of AGM held on 10 September 2020

These were agreed in terms of accuracy, *nem. con.* WST pointed out that Stephen Drury's initials should be represented as 'SDD'.

Subject to that change, it was noted that the minutes of both meetings, having been approved by Steering Group, would be uploaded to the PCRCP website **ACTION: MS and JF.**

5. Matters Arising from the foregoing meetings and not on the Agenda

There was no update available for the water supply at Wareham station. It was suggested that JF should liaise with Kelly Marshall and take up this item with Dorset Council. **ACTION: JF.**

6. Consideration of Reports & Updates

a) MS had submitted an update a few days' previously to Steering Group members. This encompassed:

Wareham Bus Shelter - Replacement Bus Shelter

- Kelly Marshall had reported good progress with discussions with Dorset Council and its contractors, to the point where it seemed that agreement had been reached on how it should be paid for. However, there was an outstanding issue with the suitability of the power supply. It was agreed that the authority to proceed from Steering Group should be dealt with via an email 'round robin', as matters needed to be tied up well before the next planned meeting of Steering Group. **ACTION: MS and KM.**

Other Recent Work

- Kelly Marshall had been liaising with the RSPB about their experimental minibus service from Wareham station to the reserve at Arne, which had been due to commence in June 2020 but had been postponed due to the pandemic. MS proposed that the Partnership should engage with both the RSPB and the minibus provider, Dorset Council Community Transport (Amanda Evans), about the prospects for 2021, and consider locating some funding if it would help bring it to fruition and/or extend the period of operation. **ACTION: MS, KM and JF.**

Furzebrook Sidings - Lease & Sublease

- MS reported that Swanage Railway's response to the Heads of Terms provided by Perenco had yet to be finalised and sent to Dorset Council. Further, nothing more had yet been heard from Dorset Council, though it was believed that Dorset Council's legal officers were considering aspects of the plan. **ACTION: MS to chase both SR and DC.**

SWR CCIF Projects

- It was understood that MWy would be speaking to the SWR CCIF officer later in the day of the meeting. MWy expressed the hope that this post could be advertised and filled early in 2021.
- A second successful bid to this fund had regrettably not progressed i.e. the bid from Wool Parish Council to refurbish the former Goods Shed for community uses. **ACTION: MWy.**

Transport Decarbonisation

- MS had noted that SWR had successfully trialled clean-up technology for its diesel fleet. In view of national moves to reduce emissions, MS wondered whether the Partnership would like to consider making a bid or bids to fund feasibility work to clean up SR's diesel multiple units. As a first step, MS would make contact with SWR (Neil Drury) and Porterbrook, the owners of that fleet. MWy noted that local groups such as Planet Purbeck were keen to see action taken and was supportive of further investigation. MWy will also discuss potential options with the Swanage Railway's Locomotive Department. **ACTION: MS and MWy.**

- b) **JF Update** - JF provided some initial thoughts on what projects she thought she might undertake in the shorter term. These were mainly around educational and environmental themes. She will work these ideas up with MS and submit them for consideration to Steering Group, to determine their inclusion in the Activity Plan. **ACTION: JF and MS.**
- c) **SWR Update** - AH advised that the DfT had agreed to grant SWR a Direct Award, to replace the current ERMA agreement, which was due to expire on 31/03/21. He hoped this meant that funding would be available for all of its CRPs in 2021/22, but made clear that this was subject to DfT approval. MS expressed his pleasure that it seemed that SWR and its staff would remain in place after 1st April 2021. WST asked AH what his view would be if the Partnership wanted to extend its area to include Dorchester South and Hamworthy, and possibly beyond. AH said he would be very supportive but the Partnership needs to take a view on its ability to service a wider area within existing resources. **ACTION: AH to advise when DfT authorisation given to the funding, or not. ALL to consider the potential expansion of the area of PCRPs operation.**
- d) **Dorset Council Update** - KF suggested that Helen Jackson at DC (Lead on Local Transport Plan) might be able to help with funding regarding Transport Decarbonisation, in view of the Climate Emergency. A lot of current work in her area (Sustainable Transport) was in relation to the Transforming Cities fund schemes. There was no progress to report on the proposed footway/cycleway from the 'up' side at Wareham station, over the by-pass bridge to the 'down' side. She made clear that this scheme was not connected to the future of the pedestrian level crossing and possible changes there.

- e) **Community Rail Network Update** - DW reported that a key theme at CRN was to work with all CRPs to make a concerted effort to get passengers back on trains as soon as circumstances allowed. PCRPs should take a view on what part it can play e.g. via its website and beyond. He thought that a bid to the Small Grants Fund for funding towards the cost of an entertainer at Swanage Station during the Steam & Lights special service had been approved by CRN, but was subject to DfT approval.
- f) **SR Update** - MWy reported that the Steam & Lights services had proved very popular. SR was planning for a 'Staycation Summer' in 2021. Regarding the Restore Your Railway bid, a webinar with MPs and DfT on 14 December had been attended and a Business Plan is required by June 2021. Dependent on the details DfT would fund 75% of the costs of further feasibility work, up to a maximum of £50,000. This left SR to find the balance, which would not be straightforward in current circumstances. In respect of the commitment to provide the ninety-day trial service, MWy did not think this was viable without external revenue support in 2021, due to current restrictions on movement, SR not being funded by Government as were main line TOCs. However, SR would review its proposals for 2021 on a monthly basis, as matters progressed and it became clearer how events and leisure travel would unfold. KF said she would liaise with colleagues about the contractual position, but pointed out that the commitment for the ninety-day service was almost a decade late. MWy and KF agreed to discuss this further outside the meeting. She would need to be able to justify any further delay, although she acknowledged these were unprecedented times. Re Furzebrook, MWy hoped that it would be possible to have a meeting with DC officers about the lease and sublease before very long.
- g) **Perenco Update** - AP confirmed that the legal officer at DC was dealing with the Heads of Terms, and he awaited their response.
- h) **Network Rail Update** - JC reported that the Strategic Study (formerly known as the CMSP) was progressing well, but that the Timetable Planning element was behind schedule as the staff concerned had been re-allocated in the short term due to the changing needs of the rail industry during the pandemic. However, work had progressed, including a study of the links to stations, the so-called 'first mile/last mile' element. This included bus services and walking/cycling routes. He hoped the timetable analysis would be complete by March/April 2021. The next Working Group meeting would be held in January 2021. JC would be having a planning meeting with MWy that afternoon, to discuss the Restore Your Railways proposal.
- RH advised that he was responsible for all things Community Rail (excluding safety), within Wessex Route. He has been engaging with the Environment & Sustainability Strategy Manager at NR, about the Social Performance Strategy which includes Community Rail aims. He anticipated that this would help to optimise Wessex Route's working relationships with CRPs. This should enhance engagement and possible funding in future financial years, and he would update the Partnership next year. He is also examining the potential for Community Licence's to be for a term of 2 years, rather than the current norm of one year.
- i) MWm (STC's Transport Lead Councillor) reported STC's concerns that a 'Staycation Summer' in 2021 would result in the town being inundated by cars. It was hoped that rail transport could help in this regard. He suggested that it would be helpful to STC if SR were to share its forward bookings data so that the Council could have some forewarning. **ACTION: MWy/MWm.**

7. Activity Plan

This had been referred to earlier in the meeting, concerning proposed changes arising from JF's arrival and increased hours of working. **ACTION: JF/MS to reassess and then forward to Steering Group for consideration.**

8. Any Other Business

- KF suggested that the Partnership consider purchasing its own Licence for Microsoft Teams. The aim would be for JF to arrange meetings in future. ACTION: JF to investigate and report back the likely cost. If it was in the low hundreds £s this was considered reasonable but above that would need authority from Steering Group.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 4th March 2021 at 10.30 (via Teams).

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