

# PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETING

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON 16 APRIL 2025



## Present:

Beryl Ezzard of Dorset Council, Wareham Town Council, and Friends of Wareham Railway Station (BE - Chairperson), Mike Whitwam (MWm - Vice Chairperson), Steven Booth (SB - Community Rail Officer), Mick Stone (MS - Secretary) of Swanage Railway, Jenni Jones of Community Rail Network (JJ), Alex Brocklesby of National Trust (AB), Paula Aldridge of South Western Railway (PA), David Budd (DB) of Wareham Town Council, Cllr Andy Hadley of BC&P Council (AH), Tony Smale of Purbeck Transport Action Group and Friends of Wool (TS), Richard Wade (RW) of Morebus/Go South Coast, Cllr Jon Andrews of Dorset Council (JA), Jack Wharton of Network Rail (JW), Kelly Flynn of Dorset Council (KF), Andrew Ardley of South Western Railway (AA), Jaime Rockhill (JR) of Network Rail, Andrew Bailey (AB) of Network Rail, Frank Roberts of Swanage Railway (FER), Matt Richter of Wareham St Martin PC (MR), Peter Robertson of RSPB (PR), Rob Smith of Perenco UK (RS)

**Apologies:** Claire Wood of First South Buses (CW), Nick Ward of Purbeck Transport Action Group (NW), Emma Scott of Dorchester Town Council (ES).

## Agenda Item 1 - Chairperson's Welcome, Introductions, & Opening Remarks

BE welcomed all to the meeting. It was a very full agenda.

## Agenda Item 2 - Notes of the Stakeholder Group Meeting/AGM held on 22nd October 2024

There were no questions raised nor points of accuracy, other than a reference to 'DCC' which should have been 'DC'.

## Agenda Item 3 - Funding Report

SB had circulated his report which included an item on Funding. At the end of March 2025 the Partnership had £35k in its Reserves, above the minimum/maximum of £25k stated in its policy. However, income and expenditure changed this amount on a day-to-day basis.

A key point to note was that the Core Funding from SWR (£23,062) for the year 2025/26 had just been confirmed. Once again there was no uplift for RPI, so the value of this funding was reducing year on year.

The three PCRP applications for CCIF funding to SWR had all been rejected. It was understood that there had been many other applications.

## Agenda Item 4 - CRO's Report

SB had prepared a report which was tabled at the meeting. Key points were:

- The formal opening at Dorchester South on 4th April, following completion of the Mid-Tier access scheme;
- Plans for decals on the new waiting shelters at both Dorchester South and Wool (examples were shown);
- The new information board at Wool and plans for further improvements to the station area;
- Wareham 178/Railway 200 celebrations on 14th June. Corten steel planters were due to be delivered shortly, to be placed adjoining the foot crossing;
- The Purbeck Shuttle 200 - despite the disappointment re CCIF funding, there would be a service in 2025. This was expected to be on 2 days per week (Weds/Sats) from end May to end of August. The route would include stops at Wareham Station, RSPB Arne, Purbeck Park, and Blue Pool. BE set out which parties were due to contribute, and there were discussions about publicity and promotion, including on some SWR stations, it was hoped. The following suggestions were made:

KF said she could publicise the service in the Monthly DC newsletter.

PA said that SWR could help with the proposed posters.

AA referred to the Jurassic Coaster promotion which he would deal with later in the agenda.

RW had arranged to mention the possibility of the Shuttle in MoreBus's timetable leaflet, which had recently gone to print.

AB said National Trust would promote the service via its Purbeck Heaths website.

BE said that the 'A' boards currently in place would need reviewing; PR said that he was pleased to see that the service would relieve some traffic on the heathlands. A meeting of the sub-group would happen soon to discuss next steps. Next year there might be a bid to the National Lottery, to fund this service.

### 5. Updates from Stakeholders

**Dorset Council** - KF reported that the Local Transport Plan and Local Plan consultations were due to commence in August. Also, that the recent meeting between DC and SR reps had been positive.

**Network Rail** - JR advised that the Dorset Metro SOBC work had demonstrated that it would be 'difficult' to fund additional services between Weymouth and Brockenhurst, due to the Transport Assessment parameters that NR had to work to. He thought it likely that a better way forward would be for Western Gateway STB to discuss different ways of providing local and sub-regional services, including buses and active travel as part of the mix. BE commented that we should keep an open mind on the various modes. Notwithstanding, JR commented that an NR Economist would be looking at the potential level of demand for Swanage to Wareham rail services.

JW had tried to join the meeting from a train but had failed due to the poor mobile signal. He said he would send through a brief report.

**Friends of Wool** - TS referred to the CRN document re 'Connectivity', the very popular First South shuttle bus to the Tank Museum on open days including the 'Tiger' days, and that Wool PC was looking at providing additional car parking adjoining the station.

**Community Rail Network** - JJ said that it was hoped that the 2025/25 allocation of CRDF funding would open before very long. Other funds would also be available, generally for smaller amounts. Community Rail Week ran from 19th to 26th May and would have Railway 200 themes.

**Morebus** - RW advised that the Summer timetable for the Breezers would commence in late May, although the service from Wool to Lulworth etc had started in March. There would be an earlier '50' departure from Bournemouth to Swanage and a corresponding later one in reverse. The £2 bus cap had been replaced with a £3 one and it would be interesting to see what that did to demand.

In response to a question from BE, RW said that there had been a trial locally with an electric bus (Checking clearances at the Ferry) but no funding from BSIP this year for services in Purbeck.

There would be 2 x electric buses on the Poole Town service and BE expected some journeys of the Purbeck Shuttle to be performed by an electric vehicle.

**National Trust** - AB referred to the Sustainable Tourism Plan for Purbeck as a whole. The area was leading the way in restoring heathland in the UK and there was huge potential to do more. The consultation report on the Studland Masterplan was due out shortly. BE commented that Purbeck Park needed refurbishment urgently. Hopefully, additional footways/cycleways would be provided before too long.

**Perenco UK** - RS apologised that Perenco had not been able to attend recent meetings. However, they had been in contact with DC about the Furzebrook sidings lease and sub-lease, and were currently checking measurements and drawings. SB asked if there were any opportunities to seek funding from Perenco for PCRCP and its schemes, and RS asked him to send a message to both RS and Ali Rodari on this subject and they could discuss. BE thought that such funding might go towards Purbeck Park and the Shuttle Bus. JA commented that he would be meeting the local councillor at Purbeck Park imminently to discuss repairs etc. He suggested that Cllr Ben Wilson might be invited to future Stakeholder meetings.

**SWR** - PA presented her report (attached). Although the Core Funding for 25/26 was being paid the Project funding would be delayed until after the transfer of SWR to the DfT in late May. The Social Development Fund should also be open after that transfer. CRN had small 'pots' of funds which might be available in addition. The CR Conference would be held on 16th October at Guildford. The Railway 200 train called 'Inspiration' would be at Waterloo on 18th/19th July and CRPs would be invited to participate on those dates.

AA advised that a decision on the application for a feasibility study for Access for All funding for a new footbridge and lifts at Dorchester South was expected in the coming months. He also said SWR's budget for Seamless Travel had been approved by the DfT. Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership would be leading the Jurassic Coaster re-boot. (Note: slides to be attached when forwarded after updating).

**Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Council** - AH asked that his Council be included in discussions re the Jurassic Coaster. He also wanted to mention the Poole Harbour Trails project. AB commented that the eastern end of the Jurassic Coast needed new signposting, and that Swanage itself was a Gateway but not part of the Jurassic Coast as such. AB confirmed that National Landscapes and the National Trust worked together on such matters.

**Swanage Town Council** - CS advised that his Council would also like to be involved in Jurassic Coaster discussions via 'Visit Swanage'. The works at the bus/rail interchange at Swanage had been completed. Further, his Council would like to be involved in Dorset Metro discussions going forward.

**Swanage Railway** - FER spoke to update the meeting on progress at SR. Abbie King, the new CEO, had started work with SR four weeks' previously. There had been a meeting at Purbeck Park in early April and it was hoped that progress could be made on various fronts accordingly. He asked that SR might be involved with future meetings regarding the Furzebrook lease and sub-lease. He thanked MS for his efforts in raising SR's profile by arranging visits by senior Railway managers and politicians. In this regard it was hoped that Lord Hendy (Rail Minister) would visit before long. FER was pleased to participate in Dorset Metro discussions and so would continue to play a part. It was 140 years since the Railway arrived in Swanage and there would be a celebration on 17th May. He was pleased to hear that SWR would make some poster sites available in its stations for a period, subject to conditions. There would be a Stakeholder Day on 18th July at Swanage. BE asked both DC and Perenco to keep in touch with SR on the various issues of common interest.

There followed a discussion regarding Beryl Bikes:

AB said that the Studland site was now out of use, although bikes still arrived over the ferry. She was concerned that it appeared that Purbeck in 2025 offered fewer sustainable transport options than in 2024. AH and JA were concerned re the Beryl Bikes situation. AB asked about data. There was discussion about other such operators. AA said he would be happy to meet separately to discuss further. CS said that his Council would also like to be involved in discussions re Beryl Bikes.

**6. Any Other Business**

BE said she would shortly be sending out the invites for the 178 event at Wareham on 14th June.

**Date of Next Stakeholder and AGM Meeting - Wednesday 1st October 2025**

This was planned to be a Hybrid meeting, possibly held at Wareham Town Hall or Youth Centre.

MS - 28 April 2024 V3

ENDS

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