

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 25

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON 6 FEBRUARY 2024



Present:

Cllr Mike Whitwam (MWm) of Swanage Town Council (Chair), Cllr Beryl Ezzard (BE) of Dorset Council (Vice Chair), Mick Stone (MS) of Swanage Railway (Secretary), Frank Roberts of Swanage Railway (FR), Steven Booth (SB) Community Rail Officer, Rory Pilcher (RP) of Network Rail, Alex Brocklesby (AB) of National Trust, Paula Aldridge and Andrew Ardley of SWR (first and second part of meeting respectively), Rachel Martin of RSPB Arne (RM).

The meeting was quorate.

Agenda Item 1 - Chair's Opening Remarks, Welcome and Introductions

MWm welcomed all to the meeting, and looked forward to welcoming FR in particular, although he was not yet present.

Agenda Item 2 - Apologies for Absence

Received from Lisa Gravett of SR (LG), Jaime Rockhill of Network Rail (JR), Ade Parvin of Perenco UK (AP), Daniel Wright of CRN (DW), and Kelly Flynn of Dorset Council (KF).

Agenda Item 3 - Draft Minutes of the Steering Group meeting of 7th November 2023

There were no comments or questions and the minutes were approved.

Agenda Item 4 - Matters Arising from Steering Group of 7th November 2023 and Not Appearing on the Agenda.

- Temporary highway signs - BE and SB updated the meeting about the options for having permanent signs indicating Wareham Station and car parking.
- **ACTION: SB and BE to liaise further with Mike Trew at Dorset Council.**
- Wareham Station issues - Re the CIS screens, neither JW and AA were present at that point, so the matter was held over.
- **ACTION: JW/AA.**
- NR-owned land on 'Up' side at Wareham - SB had drafted a proposal for Network Rail and sent it to JW. However, SB had not yet heard back and JW was not present.
- **ACTION: SB and MS to chase JW.**
- Possible Perenco funding for PCRCP - SB was pursuing with AP, however this was linked with the Wareham Landscape Proposal as mentioned above. **ACTION: SB.**
- Dorset Council Core Funding Proposal - SB had responded to KF accordingly and awaited a further response.
- **ACTION: SB.**
- A list of committed expenditure had now been provided.
- BE had now met the new VR&RO for Swanage Railway, Lisa Gravett.
- MS reported that Hampshire CRP had explored the VAT issue and had now advised that it would not be registering for VAT.
- The bid for funding for the murals at Dorchester South had been submitted (SWR Projects funding).
- An update re Wool Goods Shed was awaited from JW. **ACTION: SB/MS to chase.**
- A follow up meeting with SWR was awaited, noting that the current MD was due to leave shortly. Stuart Meek (SWR Chief Operating Officer) would be the Interim replacement for the MD.

- SR representatives had now met with Dorset Council. Notes from that meeting would be made available in due course.

ACTION: FR.

- RP confirmed that the Wareham Station Strategic Plan was now published and available on the NR website.

Agenda Item 5 - Financial Update (incl possible application to the UK Prosperity Fund)

Note: FR (Chairman of the Swanage Railway Trust) had now joined the meeting. The Chair welcomed him to his first meeting of Steering Group.

SB presented. The main issues discussed were:

- the SWR CCIF bid for Dorchester South had been submitted (Totem and digital poster boards);
- Potential Bids to some funds, mainly for local government schemes such as the Organisational Support Revenue Fund and Community and Culture Project Fund UK, required the submission of up to a 3 year Business Plan, which the Partnership currently doesn't have (the Activity Plan is for a shorter period). SB asked for authority to draft such a plan for future use **ACTION: SB/MS.**
- SB asked for his current authority for expenditure (£300) without reference to Steering Group to be increased to £500. He reminded the meeting that he always sought authority from the Chair and Secretary before committing such expenditure. This was agreed.
- At this point BE asked if there was a case for SB to work increased hours. MS's view was that the future financial position overall was still unclear and that it might be appropriate to delay a decision on this issue.
- It was reported that Hampshire CRP intended to charge PCRCP the gross amount of the costs of employing the Officer in future, rather than the net figure as currently. This was noted and would commence from April 2024.

Agenda Item 10 - Proposed 2RN Summer Service 2024

This item had been brought forward at the request of the Vice Chair. BE had prepared a report for the meeting. Rachel Martin (RSPB) presented the current position, via PowerPoint slides, of the potential options and costs of a service post mid-April 2024. It was noted that Rachel would be leaving her post at the end of March.

Various options for frequency of service were set out, together with anticipated costs. RM also said that there was approximately £2,200 available for 2024, held by Dorset Community Transport, and PCRCP itself was holding unspent 2RN funds from its 2023/24 SWR project funding (£2,700). In addition, RSPB had pledged £500.

Looking ahead to 2024 operations RSPB wanted to stay involved but, with RM leaving, would not be able to take the lead in the project. BE suggested that SB might take the lead going forward.

A lengthy discussion ensued, during which it became clear that a funding package was needed from various local bodies to see what was feasible. One point which arose was that the RSPB objective (Getting those people without access to a car to Arne) might be different from an objective of, say, increasing non car-borne visitors to the National Nature Reserve. The Chair suggested involving Corfe Castle PC in any decision making.

BE suggested the formation of a Sub-Group, led by her, to take the matter forward, noting the need to allow for a 6 week period for DCT to register the service. **ACTION: BE, SB, and RM to follow up and report back.**

Agenda Item 6 - CRPO Report and Updates

SB had prepared and sent round his report before the meeting. The main issues raised were:

- In the absence of further information regarding Wool Goods Shed it was proposed that a submission to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would take the form of a bid for a Feasibility Study into the prospects for a Wareham to Studland bus service, via Corfe Castle. AB would provide a draft Brief. She noted that this work would feed into the Studland Masterplan, needed because of the impact of ongoing coastal erosion. This way forward was agreed and SB, MS, and AA offered their help. **ACTION: AB and SB.**
- The water butts proposed for Dorchester South awaited sign-off from SWR.
- Totem at Wareham. AA had a meeting the next day with colleagues to discuss the input of PCRCP data etc and would report back. **ACTION: AA.**
- The new video featuring Dorchester - filming was due to take place in late February, using CRN funds (ISTF). This also included advice on how to increase the reach of PCRCP social media - ie the creation of a Social Media Action Plan.
- **Try The Train** - SB was working with Dorset Access Group as well as South Wessex CRP to make arrangements.
- **Dorchester South** - AA had sent out the latest drawings for the proposed Mid Tier Scheme at that station and was consulting on it. AA explained the proposals for the building modifications. The landscaping element is still to be determined.
- **Wareham Station landscaping proposals** - SB had submitted proposals to JW at Network Rail and awaited to hear a response. **ACTION: SB to chase JW.**

Agenda Item 11 - Reports from Steering Group Members

Swanage Railway - FR had sent a formal letter to Steering Group setting out SR's current position on Wareham services. There was some disappointment at the letter, which seemed to indicate that there was no intent or prospect of a Wareham to Swanage service within the next three years, due to the financial position of SR. It was made clear that, absent a substantial injection of cash, such a service could not be implemented.

One point made was that SR's Non-Mainline Safety Certificate (NMSC) and Operating Licence would be needed before any SR-operated service ran in the future. FER agreed to ascertain where the application for the NMSC had got to, and would report back in due course **ACTION: FR.** However, FR cautioned that he did not know how the further work needed could be funded.

It was noted that the letter assumed that the Restore Your Railway application made to DfT by SR was unlikely to progress at the late stage of the current parliament. MS cautioned that there was some evidence to say that this needn't necessarily be the case. SB wondered what the Dorset Council view was.

FR asked for a formal response to his letter so that he could go back to his fellow Directors and Trustees. This response should outline what type of service was envisaged by PCRCP. **ACTION: MW, SB, and MS to consider a draft response.**

FR referred to the Norden Extension Delivery Group which was to be set up by SR. AB offered her help to this Group.

Note: All other agenda items were held over to the next meeting because of lack of time.

Date on next Meetings:

Stakeholder Group: Wednesday, 17th, April at 11.00 – ONLINE ONLY

Steering Group: Tuesday, 7th, May at 11.00 - IN PERSON & HYBRID at the Wareham Youth Centre (to be confirmed).

ENDS.

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