

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 22

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON 9 MAY 2023



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), Gavin Johns (GJ) of Swanage Railway, Steven Booth (SB) Community Rail Officer, Rory Pilcher (RP) and Jack Wharton (JW) of Network Rail, Ade Parvin of Perenco UK (AP), Dan Wright (DW) of Community Rail Network.

The meeting was quorate.

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

MWm welcomed all to the meeting. He was pleased to advise that Swanage Railway was operating regular train services to/from Swanage and Wareham on four days per week, as a trial service. There was also the RSPB's minibus service to Arne from Wareham on three days per week.

Agenda Item 2 - Apologies for Absence

Had been received from: Andrew Ardley (AA) and Paula Aldridge of South Western Railway (PA), and Kelly Flynn of Dorset Council (KF).

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

The minutes were approved.

Agenda Item 4 - Matters Arising from those Minutes Not Appearing on the Agenda.

- Item 6 - page 2 - the funding towards core costs by Dorset Council for the year 2022/23 had been received. Also, the funds held by the Friends of Wool and the Friends of Wareham had now been successfully passed to Hampshire CRP for safe keeping.
- Item 11 - page 4 - SB had made the necessary changes to the Constitution.

Agenda Item 5 - Financial Update and Report on Grant Applications Made

SB reported on the state of funds held. He went on to explain that some funding due in 2023/24 was still awaited, from SWR, DC, and SR.

He would shortly be submitting a revised bid to CRDF in respect of the Dorchester South information screen totem. The Wareham totem was now paid for, including installation, and would be provided once SWR had received Listed Building Consent.

He would send round the end of April financial statement to all after the meeting. **ACTION: SB.**

BE thanked SB for his work in getting the new planters at Wareham.

Agenda Item 6 - Proposal to Extend the Period for the Accountable Body Function with Hampshire CRP for a further year, to October 2024

MS reminded the meeting that the decision to transfer the Accountable Body status from Swanage Railway to HCRP had been made on a time limited basis (one year) so that the Partnership could make a longer term decision on its future during that period. He felt that discussions had not progressed very far yet on that future direction and with less than five months to go before the first year was over, suggested that the Partnership should agree to extend for a further year, in order to give a reasonable period of time for discussions to proceed. A decision at this point on the extension of time would also give HCRP more certainty about its own future role. MS had spoken to HCRP and had received its agreement to provide the same services for the same fee (£1,800 per annum/£150 per month) should Steering Group ask it to do so.

On being put to the meeting all Voting Members agreed with the proposition.

GJ suggested that, at the next meeting, it would be helpful to ensure that SWR was represented, so that a full discussion could be had as to future options. MS said he would locate the options paper considered in 2022 and would send it round with the next agenda. **ACTION: MS**

Agenda Item 7 - CRPO's Report and Updates (Incl Training Undertaken and Activity Plan)

SB's report had been sent to members and was tabled. It dealt with a wide range of issues, including:

Discussions with RSPB, Arne - the '2RN' service was operating from 2nd May. The service was being promoted via social media and on the PCRP website. In addition, RSPB have produced flyers and posters. The Arne and Studland video was being produced by Pageant at a cost just within the £3,000 set aside from PCRP Reserves. SB was trying to find a way whereby the VAT thereon would not be paid by PCRP but via a third party. This was ongoing. MS commented that HCRP was re-investigating whether it might become registered for VAT, and this might be a way forward. SB suggested that the Mining Museum at Norden might be included in the filming.

Dorchester South - SB had attended a meeting at this station. The Friends group was supporting the SWR Access for All mid-tier scheme, which it was hoped would start in Autumn 2023. The meeting had included the MP for West Dorset and among the issues discussed was the mini-masterplan for the station, which it was hoped might include the installation of lifts. A decision from DfT on this funding is awaited. Other matters to be discussed include the potential for Beryl Bikes and some public art.

Wareham - temporary highways signage - there was a proposal for PCRP to fund the purchase and installation of temporary signs advising of the route to the station car park, via the two local roundabouts. BE felt there were too many signs, which might cause 'sign blindness' and suggested reducing the order by 2 signs. SB commented that the overall concept is to persuade people to use the train to visit WRM to join/leave the Swanage services, wherever possible. GJ wondered who would remove the signs for safe-keeping at the end of the trial service - Dorset Council? BE thought that permanent signs were the way forward. SB recommended that the order for a reduced number of temporary signs should be placed very soon.

It was agreed that £1,000 from Reserves be allocated for this work, subject to SB and BE liaising first with the Sign Shop to agree the final number of signs and their location.

ACTION: BE and SB (Post Meeting Note - the signs have been ordered and erected).

Other Wareham Issues - the toilets and waiting room at WRM were not available when SWR staff were absent, typically after about 13.00hrs each day. MS said that he had recently been in contact with AA, who had advised that he planned to discuss this point with SR's Passenger Services Manager. GJ said that he was not aware of any discussions thus far with SR on this point, and went on to state his frustration at the lack of information being provided via the Customer Information Screens, which most commonly referred to a 'Charter' service without stating a destination. After discussion, MS was asked to contact AA on both these points. **ACTION: MS.**

Questionnaire - it was considered important that SR and PCRP collected data from passengers using the services. SB and MS had drafted a Questionnaire, which GJ said he was happy with, as long as SR staff on the services knew where to send the completed versions. He also suggested that there might be a Prize Draw, to induce people to complete them. Finally, GJ said that SR wanted to collect data from passengers using the non WRM services operated by SR.

Impact Tool - SB was keen to trial the use of this tool. He felt that it would help in collecting data on behalf of the PCR. The tool was free to use (courtesy of CRN) but there would be a cost in terms of SB's time. MW, BE, and GJ were supportive and therefore SB will press ahead with the user agreement. **ACTION: SB.**

SB's report included a list of upcoming events in which he proposed to get involved.

Agenda Item 8 - Re-accreditation Update

MS reported that the formal meeting had taken place on 12th April and it was understood that the recommendation from CRN to DfT would be approval. DW was not able to advise further except to say he was confident that the recommendation would be approved and the Partnership should proceed on that basis.

Agenda Item 9 - Reports from Steering Group Members

South Western Railway - no report.

Network Rail - RP spoke about the first meeting of the WRM Station Strategic Study working group (Integration with Buses). He asked whether he should continue to use the 'Whiteboard' app in future, and the view was 'yes'. The next session would be on 'Sustainability'. RP confirmed that GJ and BE would be invited to that session.

JW talked about the success of the Coronation from a railway logistics point of view and thanked CRPs for their support. Re the land around the foot crossing at WRM he suggested that he should have a separate discussion with BE after the meeting **ACTION: JW and BE.** The recent works on the former 'Up' bay had been led by the NR ecologist.

Swanage Railway - GJ advised that the trial service had commenced as planned on 4th April. Although passenger numbers were encouraging they were not yet at a level which was needed financially. There was a specific issue with Network Rail re the rail profile on the short section between Worgret Junction and the boundary with SR at Bridge 2, whereby excessive tyre wear was occurring. NR proposed to deal with the issue in the short term by installing flange greasing equipment at the location, pending a longer term suggestion of re-laying the track. GJ said that prospects were quite good generally for the coming Summer season. GJ asked AP if it were possible to have closer liaison between Perenco and SR about the use of the access road to Wytch Farm where it crossed the railway at Norden. **ACTION: GJ and AP to discuss.** It was proposed to hold a series of Press Days, probably one per publication, to try to raise the profile of the WRM services. **ACTION: GJ and MS.**

MW asked about the impact of the current £2 maximum bus fare in place nationally. GJ felt this was undoubtedly a factor - it was not a 'level playing field'. GJ commented that the trial was as much as anything about teasing out operational issues ie not just financial ones.

Perenco - AP had met online with SB and MS to discuss possible funding opportunities. **ACTION: SB to follow up.**

Agenda Item 10 Special Events incl Coronation and Waterloo 175

These had been discussed and reviewed earlier, in the Officer's Report.

Agenda Item 11 - Any Other Business -

a) GJ reported that one candidate had been interviewed for the vacant VR&RO post but the applicant, having been offered, had declined to take the role. It was being re- advertised.

- b) MS advised that he would be away on holiday at the time of next proposed date for a Stakeholder meeting (7th June). However, following discussion about the recommended reduction to two meetings with stakeholders per annum, arising from the Reaccreditation process, it was agreed that the meeting be cancelled. SB agreed to advise Stakeholders of this and to re-affirm that he is open to any questions or proposals at any time. The next meeting with Stakeholders would be the AGM, on 11th October. On checking the Constitution it was confirmed that Stakeholder meetings were expected to be held twice per year. **ACTION: SB.**
- c) SB suggested that two of the current members of Stakeholder Group (National Trust and RSPB) be invited to attend future meetings of Steering Group in a non-voting member capacity. **ACTION: SB to invite Alex Brocklesby (NT) and Rachel Martin (RSPB) to attend at the next meeting on 8th August.**
- d) It was agreed to place an item on the future direction of PCRП on the agenda of the next Steering Group meeting on 8th August, to be held in person, probably in Wareham. **ACTION: MS/SB.**

V1 ENDS

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