

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 24

HELD IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON 7 NOVEMBER 2023



Present:

In Person: 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, Jack Wharton (JW) of Network Rail.

Online: Andrew Ardley (AA) of SWR, Ade Parvin of Perenco UK (AP), Kelly Flynn of Dorset Council (KF), Dan Wright (DW) of Community Rail Network, Rory Pilcher (RP) of Network Rail, and Alex Brocklesby (AB) of National Trust.

The meeting was quorate.

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

MWm welcomed all to the hybrid meeting. He referred to the successful conclusion of the Swanage Railway's 90 day trial service to/from Wareham, of which we would hear more later.

Agenda Item 2 - Apologies for Absence

Received from Paula Aldridge (PA) of SWR, Jaime Rockhill of Network Rail (JR), and Rachel Martin of RSPB Arne (RM).

Agenda Item 3 - Draft Minutes of the Steering Group meeting of 8th August 2023

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

Agenda Item 4 - Draft Minutes of Stakeholder Group and AGM on 11th October 2023

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

Agenda Item 5 - Matters Arising from Steering Group of 8th August and Not Appearing on the Agenda

- **Temporary highway signs** - BE asked what had happened to the temporary signs. It was thought they might have been removed to Herston depot, as had been requested. KF thought that new signage might best be as add-ons to existing highway signs close to the station. SB said he would follow up on permanent signage with DC Sign Shop and try to locate the temporary signs. **ACTION: SB.**
- **Wareham Station issues** - Re the CIS screens, JW and AA would check that the problem had been permanently resolved from their respective points of view. **ACTION: JW/AA.**
- **NR-owned land on 'Up' side at Wareham** - JW had asked that the PCRCP and Station Friends group now formally submit a proposal to NR for the land around the foot crossing. Upon discussion, JW said that it did not need to be a formal proposal but he needed something to respond to. BE said that Wareham Community Growers had shown interest in being involved. **ACTION: SB to draft a proposal for discussion with BE and NR.**
- **Possible Perenco funding for PCRCP** - there had been an exchange of emails between SB, AP, and MS. AP confirmed that he had met with AB. **ACTION: SB to follow up with AP.**
- **Item 5 of 08/08/23 minutes** - KF understood that PCRCP was not incorporated and was therefore unable to enter into a legal agreement with Dorset Council for core funding. **ACTION: SB/MS to amend the draft document to reflect the foregoing and send back to KF for further comments.**

- **Item 5 ditto** - a list of committed expenditure had been provided by email on the 9th August by SB. This will be subsequently updated. **ACTION: SB.**
- **Item 8 ditto** - MW and SB had met the new VR&RO for Swanage Railway, Lisa Gravett. It was suggested that Ms Gravett be invited to attend the next meeting of Steering Group. **ACTION: SB and MS.** BE wished to meet her. **ACTION: SB.**
- **Item 9 ditto** - No response from Hampshire CRP yet regarding VAT. **ACTION: MS/SB to chase for a response.**

Agenda Item 6 - Financial Update

SB reported that a bid had been submitted to the Dorset Council Organisational Support Fund, which was for Revenue Support over 3 years. No response yet. Also, a bid had been submitted to the CRN Integrated Sustainable Transport Fund (ISTF). This was intended to cover the making of another Video (covering Dorchester) but also for the services of a specialist who could ensure that all PCRPs videos were available to a wider audience. This proposal included working with South Wessex CRP, and required £1,500 of match funding between the two CRPs. It was noted therefore that the PCRPs element of this sum was £750 and this was agreed.

SB then mentioned the making of a bid to SWR's 2024/25 Projects fund. A bid would have to be submitted to SWR by mid-November. His report recommended applying for funding for additional murals at Dorchester South, to match the existing tiled murals, although the previous supplier was no longer in business. This approach was agreed in principle, subject to SB investigating the options. AA mentioned vinyls at Salisbury station and could help with contact details for a supplier. **ACTION: SB/AA.**

AA advised, under this heading, that it looked likely that SWR would be able to hold another round of its CCIF funding in 2024/25. He thought that bids of up to a maximum of £70-£80k might be entertained. Steering Group considered various possible bids that might be made, including bus link promotion, footbridge murals, etc. AB asked if SWR would be looking for a comprehensive approach ie a single bid covering various smaller proposals? AA thought that two separate bids might be made from the same applicant/group of applicants. GJ wondered if preparations for the Rail 200 celebrations in 2025 might be supported in this round of funding? BE asked about funding for the replacement footbridge over the Railway for the Cordite Way footpath. This was viewed as too ambitious, but funding for a feasibility and a design study might be appropriate. **ACTION: all to consider further.**

Finally under his heading, SB mentioned the CRN Small Grants Fund application, where the views of SWR on the proposed water butts at Dorchester South were still awaited.

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

The discussion above under item 6 continued under this heading. In discussing forthcoming priorities GJ asked if individual members were expected to be Strategic, or more parochial, in their responses. AB thought that the 'bigger picture' was the more appropriate, and suggested that physical improvements as well as striving for modal shift would be appropriate. It was confirmed that the Activity Plan was a 'live' document and subject to continual updating, as required.

AA's advice was to 'add value' when working with other partners. SB commented that a Comms Plan would be needed to feed into the Activity Plan going forward. The Partnership needs schemes that are ready to go as funding opportunities come up. AB added that she thought that each project might need a 'Lead' officer, as well as resources in the design stage. MW mentioned the Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust's proposals for local bus services around Swanage.

A Wash-up meeting for the 2RN Arne bus shuttle service at RSPB Arne had been held on 18 October with our partners and discussed the positive feedback and visitor numbers that had used the service. Part of that discussion was a RSPB funding bid to the Wytch Farm Enhancement Fund for a winter service. *(Post Meeting Note: The bid has subsequently been successful, and the service will now happen from the Christmas holiday period through to March 2024).*

Item 8 - Wool Goods Shed

Access from old Goods Yard - JW reminded the meeting that his original Land Clearance request to NR colleagues had prompted 2 x internal NR objections. JW agreed to speak to his colleagues and hopefully re-submit his request. GJ thought that a modest amount of additional land would assist the refurbishment proposal. **ACTION: JW.**

Item 9 - Wareham Station Landscape Design and Development

This item had been briefly discussed earlier in the agenda.

Item 10 - Activity Plan Update

This had been considered earlier.

Item 11 - Raise The Profile Visits Follow Up

MS and SB were undertaking these. AA agreed to get a date in the diary for the follow-up Raise The Profile meeting for SWR with SR and PCR. **ACTION: AA.**

Item 12 - Updates from Steering Group Members

The previous heading led to further discussion about the need for data; for example, if any revenue support for future Wareham services was to be forthcoming. SB referred to data being sought from the PCR questionnaire, and Dorset Council and Swanage Town Council car park usage data. RP was working to try to obtain the use of Mobile Network Data during the period of the trial service. KF referred to the data needs of Dorset Council for its forthcoming Local Transport Plan 4. SWR data was also awaited.

GJ made clear that it was becoming increasingly urgent for SR to hear from Dorset Council about discussions on the potential for financial support. After discussion it was agreed that BE, as the local DC Councillor, would write to Cllr Lacey-Clarke, who was Cllr Bryan's Deputy, asking for an update. **ACTION: BE.** As data became available it would be shared with SR and Southampton Uni colleagues. **ACTION: SB/MS.**

National Trust Report - AB reported on the Active & Sustainable Travel Week in September. This would be repeated in 2024. A Comms Plan was being discussed with SWR and PCR (SB). She also referred to the Landscape Recovery bid to DEFRA for a Visitor Management and Sustainable Travel Plan. If this were successful the impact could be significant.

SWR - MS asked about the Business Planning Process which SWR was currently undertaking with DfT. AA replied that there would not be a separate consultation with PCR as discussions were already being undertaken via himself and PA. There was a report from PA, who had been unable to attend following a last minute issue. *(Post Meeting Note: The report has since been sent).*

Swanage Railway - GJ reported that 2023 passenger figures were not as high as the 2019 level. Cash flow over the winter period was an issue. He did not think there would be a 2024 Wareham Service unless financial support was forthcoming. Engagement by Dorset Council was seen as 'critical'. GJ mentioned Rail 200 and suggested that there was a proposal to take some SR historical assets around the country, to regional centres in collaboration with NR and SWR, via local CRPs, incl PCRPs. Finally, GJ advised that he was no longer the Chair of the SR Trust so it was likely that there would be a change in the SR representative on PCRPs. MS proposed a vote of thanks for GJ in view of his service over the years. MW asked about the SR's Operating Licence application. GJ said that this was not proceeding at present in view of a lack of resources.

Network Rail - JW/RP advised that the Wareham Station Strategic Plan report was not yet ready for circulation as the DfT wanted time to review it. A date for the first review, possibly in February 2024, would be proposed. **ACTION: RP.**

Agenda Item 14 - Any Other Business

- AP advised that there had been no further correspondence about Furzebrook sidings lease since the last meeting of Steering Group.

Agenda Item 15 - Date of Next Meeting - Tuesday 6th February 2024 at 11.00 (online only)

ENDS

Steven Booth
Purbeck Community Rail Officer
steve.booth@purbeckcrp.org.uk
Tel: 07485 372137

