

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING 32

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS
ON 18 NOVEMBER 2025



In person:

Cllr Beryl Ezzard (BE) of Dorset Council, Steven Booth (SB) PCRP Community Rail Officer, Mick Stone (MS) Secretary, Mike Whitwam (MWm) representing Swanage Town Council, Kelly Flynn of Dorset Council (KF), Andrew Ardley (AA) and Paula Aldridge (PA) of SWR; Jack Wharton (JW) of Network Rail, Ali Rodari (AR) of Perenco UK, Jenni Jones (JJ) of CRN and Alex Brocklesby (AB) of National Trust.

The meeting was quorate.

Agenda Item 1 - Election of Chair and Vice Chair

In accordance with the Constitution and PCRP's normal practice MS led this part of the meeting. He advised that he had received two nominations for the position of Chair, from BE and from FR. However, the latter was not present to confirm that he wished to stand and to advise what he hoped to bring to the Partnership if elected. In the circumstances, MS suggested that BE should be elected as Chair. However, both PA and AR thought it appropriate to give FR the opportunity to make his presentation to the next meeting of Steering Group, on 3rd March 2026. Following discussion, it was agreed that BE should act as Chair for this meeting, pending further consideration at the next meeting. BE was content with this arrangement. At this point, MS handed matters to her for the rest of the meeting.

It was noted that there was no Swanage Town Council Councillor in attendance. MWm thought that he was authorised to act in that role but MS was not clear. ACTION: MS to ask the Town Clerk for guidance and advice (Post Meeting Note: STC has formally advised that MWm is their nominated representative until May 2026).

Agenda Item 2 - Chair's Opening Remarks, Welcome and Introductions

BE welcomed all to the meeting.

Agenda Item 3 - Apologies for Absence

Received from Frank Roberts of Swanage Railway (FR).

Agenda Item 4 - Draft Minutes of the Steering Group meeting of 5th August 2025 and Stakeholder/AGM meeting of 1st October 2025

The listed actions from the August meeting were reviewed. Matters discussed included:

- Joint Ticketing with Coastal Cruises, MoreBus, and SR. it was noted that Martin Trott had now left SR. **ACTION: SB to engage with new member of SR staff.**
- Purbeck Plus Bus - it was thought that MoreBus had withdrawn from the discussions. AA said that he hoped there would be separate discussions with them. **ACTION: AA to report back.**
- BE advised that the Corten Steel Planters had still to be moved.
- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) at Wareham Station - JJ would send CRN material to BE. PA asked BE to let SWR know whenever there was ASB on railway property.
- Purbeck Shuttle - was to be considered later in the meeting.
- Proposed Blue Pool Halt - MWm advised that a planning application was being pre-pared for submission.

Agenda Item 5 - Matters Arising Therefrom and Not Appearing on the Agenda

Nothing to add to the above.

Agenda Item 6 - Financial Update

SB's report was tabled and included a Finance update. There was not expected to be an announcement about SWR CCIF for 2026/27 in the near term. However, other financial information from SWR, including an update on Core Funding, was expected, as soon as the DfT had finalised the figures.

In answer to a question, SB confirmed that funding for the Down platform planting etc at Dorchester South was via the SWR Sustainability Fund.

MS confirmed that a further one year extension had been agreed with Hampshire CRP to act as Accountable Body to PCRP. The financial terms were the same as existing.

SB re-affirmed that Station Friends' groups' expenditure was reclaimed where possible via either CRN or SWR.

Agenda Item 7 - CRPO's Report & Updates including Railway 200 Events

SB had circulated his report. The main points arising were:

- The proposal from SWR for a Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole CRP was 'on hold'. Discussions with BC&P Council were ongoing.
- Vinyls for shelters at Dorchester South - these would include local visitor attraction artworks. **ACTION: SB would ask the Museum for its thoughts.**
- Totems at Wareham, Wool, and Dorchester South - these still awaited upgrading to enable local visitor information to be added. **ACTION: SB/AA.**
- Water butts at Dorchester South - PA expressed some frustration that these were still not a reality.
- Wool - Tank Museum posters and frames - SWR staff would be putting these up. This was an R200 project and PA agreed to chase her colleagues. Thanks to Tony Smale were expressed for his assistance.
- Purbeck Shuttle 200 - the ridership on Saturdays had not been significant, with little take-up. Lessons were being learned. KF noted that the Rural Mobility Pilot project for South East Dorset, funded jointly by Dorset Council and Western Gateway STB, was due to start work in January. Consultants were in place ready for the start.
- Travel with Confidence (TwC) - SB was keen to get involved but stressed that he would need support from partners if this was to be a success. PA and JJ said that they would help with that support via SWR Ambassadors etc. it was also suggested that Network Rail staff might help with volunteering. SB himself was prepared to work some extra hours when needed, if approved. He estimated that it might take him 14 working days (nearly 5 weeks of his time at 3 days per week). The offer from CRN (Motability funded) was the sum of £3,250, ring-fenced, as part of a multi-CRP operation. A minimum of twelve people needed to be helped. SB would ask South Wessex CRP if it wished to be involved. Steering Group supported the principle and asked for a further report in due course.

Agenda Item 8 - Swanage to Wareham Rail Link

This item was on the agenda at the request of Cllr Sutton of Swanage Town Council. However, Cllr Sutton was not present (PMN: after the meeting the Town Clerk confirmed that the councillor had formally resigned as STC representative to PCRP in September).

It was understood that Western Gateway STB and Dorset Council had agreed to proceed with a multi-modal study for South East Dorset in order to provide a stronger evidence base for the Dorset Metro scheme. Work on this study was due to commence in January 2026, with funding from Western Gateway and Dorset Council. In answer to a specific question from MWm AA advised that SWR did not have, nor would likely have, any spare diesel units available to run to/from Corfe for the foreseeable future. Any new units would await a decision as part of the DfT's National Rolling Stock Strategy in due course. In response to another specific question, MWm did not think that SR would be able to provide any services to/from Wareham without external financial support.

Agenda Item 9 - Reports from Group Members

Dorchester South

KF advised that there had been a significant number of responses to the LTP4 consultation. The expectation was that the revised Plan would be adopted in Spring 2026. Debbie Fiddik had retired and KF would supply a new name and email address for her replacement **ACTION: KF**. BE added that a new Chief Executive was in place, and that further redundancies were expected. She was pleased to say that Wareham level crossing was secure for the next four years at least. SB referred to the recent Highways Committee report and noted that the long list of schemes included the footway/cycleway between Norden and Corfe, and the Wareham 'Arc' project.

Network Rail

JW was pleased to announce that a Collaborative Working Arrangement had been signed between NR Wessex Route and SR. MS thanked JW for his efforts in this regard. The closure of the line between Dorchester and Poole for engineering works was taking place during the current week.

Swanage Railway

In FR's absence there was no formal report from SR. However, MWm gave some updates including:

- The intention to run services to a new Blue Pool Halt from May 2026. SR propose to run 90 days of services to the Blue Pool in on a shuttle service subject to successful planning application.
- Santa specials re-introduced and almost fully booked. Ghost Halloween trains introduced for the first time this year and were successful.
- The SR has enjoyed a good season.

Perenco

AR advised that negotiations on both the cycle route to Rempstone and the Furzebrook sidings lease were progressing.

South Western Railway

- PA advised that the Community Rail conference at Guildford had attracted over 130 participants. The Stakeholder Conference was due to take place in two days' time. The Inspiration R200 train would be at Southampton between 14th to 16th December and encouraged all to visit (PMN note: Inspiration is also due to visit Swanage during the February Half-Term week 2026).
- She noted that Holton Heath station would be 110 years old in 2026, and suggested that the Partnership might organise an event to make this occasion. **ACTION: SB/MS**.
- PA expressed the view that Core Funding for 2026/27 was 99% certain, perhaps with CPI uplift, subject to final DfT sign-off. However, she did not expect to have any Project Funding as a consequence.
- AA reported that Joint Business Directors were being appointed to SWR, as part of the Integrated Rail Business with Wessex Route, merging the teams. They were working towards a five year Business Plan (currently one year). However, there was a significant pressure on Budgets - efficiencies would have to be made.
- AA was working with Brewery Square at Dorchester on proposals to help the partially-sighted. He noted that a decision on the Access for All application for Dorchester South footbridge was 'imminent' - possibly the Budget speech might be the cue for a decision to be announced?
- Jurassic Coast marketing proposals continued to be worked on. SWR had gone out to tender for the Wayfinding works at stations, including the 'running In boards' at Wool and Wareham.

Swanage Town Council

No report

National Trust

AB had had to leave early, so no report was available.

CRN

- JJ noted that MS had stood down as a Board Member at CRN.
- The Impact Report was due out shortly.
- She confirmed that CRN funding could include Consultants' time and costs.
- She reminded that the Chair should attend a Briefing Session as organised by CRN.
- CRN had an arrangement with the Samaritans if PCRCP had a requirement at any point.
- JJ passed an update report to SB which was subsequently circulated to members.

Agenda Item 10 - Any Other Business

- SB to attend an 'Outcomes' training session with CRN.
- SB has been talking to Gary Shipp of CRN about working with Collaborative Mobility (CoMoUK) on climate action issues involving share transport. This is dependent on a potential joint application to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund
- BE mentioned winter-planting at Wareham - JJ confirmed that funding could be available.

Date of Next Meetings:

Steering Group - Tuesday 3rd March 2026 (Hybrid).

Stakeholder Group - Wednesday 13th May 2026 (online only).

MS – V2 - 26/11/25

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