

PURBECK COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETING

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON 13 MAY 2026



Present:

Beryl Ezzard of Dorset Council, Wareham Town Council, and Friends of Wareham Railway Station (BE - Chair), Mike Whitwam (MWm), Steven Booth (SB - Community Rail Officer), Mick Stone (MS - Secretary) of Swanage Railway, Andrew Ardley of South Western Railway (AA), Matt Richter of Wareham St Martin PC (MR) Paula Aldridge of South Western Railway (PA), Helen Sumbler of Corfe Castle Parish Council (HS), Jenni Jones of Community Rail Network (JJ)

Apologies: Emma Scott of Dorchester Town Council (ES), Jack Wharton of SWR/Network Rail (JW), Cllr Andy Hadley (AH), and Richard Barnes and Laurence Harrell all of BC&P Council, Kelly Flynn (KF) and Izaaz Munshi (IM) of Dorset Council, Richard Wade (RW) of Morebus/Go South Coast (RW), Cllr Jon Andrews of Dorset Council (JA), Ali Rodari (AR) of Perenco UK (RS), Frank Roberts of Swanage Railway (FER), Cllr Mike Bonfield of Swanage Town Council (MB), David Budd (DB) of Wareham Town Council, Tony Smale of Purbeck Transport Action Group and Friends of Wool (TS).

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

BE welcomed all to the meeting, including HS of CCPC, whose first meeting it was. The Chair noted that there were now no fewer than 35 colleagues who were invited to Stakeholder meetings.

Agenda Item 2 - Apologies for Absence

Recorded above.

Agenda Item 3 - Notes of the Stakeholder Group & AGM Meeting held on 1st October 2025

There were no comments or questions. The notes were confirmed, therefore.

Agenda Item 4 - Funding Report

SB had circulated his report which included an update on Funding. The figure held as at 5th May was £45,738. This figure would shortly be increased with the Core Funding due from SWR. He advised that there is scope to do more, particularly as CRDF is open for 2025/26 and SWR CCIF might soon be announced for the year.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item 5 - CRPO's Presentation

SB's report was then discussed. He made a PowerPoint presentation from which the following key points were made:

- The annual Reaccreditation process was due to commence soon, with SB starting work on the Annual Report and Budget Calculator. The meeting to discuss was due to take place in August.
- There was optimism that this process would move from an Annual to a Biennial basis.
- The Holton Heath 110 event was reviewed. Thanks were due to BE and others for making it such a success.
- Wool - new signage had been installed by SWR, which would assist with way finding for visitors continuing to Lulworth and Durdle Door.
- At Dorchester South, there was a local art project and over 100 decals had been installed in the new waiting shelters. Future proposals at the station included a new name board on the raised bed on the Down platform. It was acknowledged that the location of the proposed AfA footbridge might have an impact in that area. It was not known what the timescale for a decision on the footbridge/lifts was.
- Wareham - the vacant space in the main station building - SB expressed the view that a Community Hub was needed, for a variety of reasons. The 'out of town' location of the station made this particularly important, and the Wareham Station Strategic Station Plan (SSP) had indicated the need for refreshments and additional toilet accessibility, etc.

- AA explained that SWR's first priority was to ensure that the premises created a commercial return. However, it was recognised that some local community involvement was necessary if a Hub was to be provided. To this end, they were looking for a cafe operator to take on a part of the premises. There was a study going on to assess the architectural features of the 1886 building, so that a grant application to the Railway Heritage Trust (RHT) could be made. The general view was that a Study would be useful to assess local needs and potential users, and this might be part-funded via a CRDF grant application. It was clear that any community hub type use would need to demonstrate significant Social Value.
- This project would need further discussion within PCRp steering group. The Chair commented that there weren't enough volunteers locally for her to propose a use via Friends of Wareham station.
- The Secretary advised that he was in contact with Dorset Council concerning the potential Community Hub. The Chair thought a Victorian Tea Room might be appropriate. AA said he would speak to KF on the Hub idea. PA and AA referred to the Sherborne station proposal, which was similar, and indicated that it was taking a lot of time and effort to push forward. AA said he would provide a list of 'learnings' from the Sherborne project.
- **2026 Line Guides** - 5,000 had been printed and would be distributed via a local company. CRDF-funded.
- **Jurassic Coast Branding** - AA would send round an 'Information Pack' on this. SB expressed the willingness to contribute but not lead this exciting development. What should PCRp's role be?
- **Travel with Confidence** - Funded by Motability, via CRN. The first group of users would be taken by train and bus from Weymouth to Swanage, on 1st June. A second trip would be made later in the year. Monitoring and evaluation would be required to demonstrate the level of success in delivering the programme.
- **Purbeck Shuttle Bus** - PCRp had been advised that Dorset Community Transport had been successful in its bid to Dorset Council for a 3-year funding of the Purbeck Shuttle bus. This would involve a one day per week operation all year round, with a second day per week in late Spring and Summer, and a third day per week in the school holidays. All journeys would start and finish at Wareham Station. A lengthy discussion ensued, particularly around banners and social media publicity. AA referred to the need to include the service within the Jurassic Coast branding (see earlier). MR offered to do website updates. There was some concern that Blue Pool might not be offering much funding in 2026 because they expected SR to construct and operate a Halt nearby, to serve the attraction. It seemed unlikely that the Halt would be available in 2026 due to planning difficulties. The Secretary suggested that further discussions with Blue Pool take place in light of this development.

Agenda Item 6. Updates from Stakeholders

South Western Railway/Wessex Route

AA and PA reported that:

- The Access for All (AfA) application for Dorchester South was progressing, with two potential locations. The filled-in subway would be avoided to keep costs down.
- Dorset Council had proposed a Bus/Rail working group which SWR would be participating in.
- SWR was close to being able to include bus real time information to its stations at Dorchester South and Wool, with help from Dorset Council.
- Also at Dorchester South, there were plans to expand the station car parking area, possibly using section 106 funds held by DC.
- Re the Totems at Dorchester South, Wool, and Wareham, AA thought that we were close to being able to input bus real time info into those.
- 'Jurassic Coast by Train' posters had already gone up at 40 SWR stations, with more to follow.
- On the staffing front, Jack Wharton will join the SWR team going forward.
- The proposal by Bournemouth FC to increase its crowd capacity meant that SWR was looking at potential improvements at Pokesdown station to improve its ability to handle additional customers.

- Wareham level crossing - the temporary closure of the crossing while Dorset Council upgraded the gates - AA noted with disappointment that DC had not advised SWR of this.
- Wool Goods Shed - AA thought it was worth looking again at what might be done with the building.
- PA commented that SB was doing 'a great job' and hence was being funded on several fronts.
- The £6 ticket rail sale had commenced, the latest newsletter and Rail 200 booklet had recently been sent out.
- Community Rail Week would run from 1st to 7th June, and Cycling Week the week after.
- The Core Funding for 2025/26 had been agreed by DfT and PCRP would receive its share shortly. Thanks to PA's efforts there would be some uplift to reflect CPI.
- There was now expected to be some CCIF funding available in 2025/26, as well as some funding via the Social Development Fund, and for Biodiversity schemes.
- A big push would commence shortly on Social Value (SV). Each month a one page return would be needed on what had been achieved in terms of SV that month. We would need to ask ourselves 'why are we doing these things? Wool Goods Shed and Wareham Station schemes might be suitable for applications for funding for Feasibility Studies.
- PA asked that there be an item on each PCRP agenda going forward entitled 'Social Value', to reflect the growing importance of this area.
- PA would be enabling a meeting with SWR's Social Media team to make sure PCRP's needs were captured.
- In answer to questions raised, PA said that CCIF criteria would be made available shortly. AA said that the AfA proposal at Dorchester South would definitely be for Lifts.

Dorset Council

No report.

Network Rail

No separate report but covered in SWR report above.

Friends of Wool

No separate report.

Wareham Town Council

No report.

Community Rail Network

JJ said that arrangements for the Reaccreditation were in hand once a date and venue for the meeting had been agreed. She confirmed that CRDF applications were now being invited. 'In kind' support could now be used as part of a CRP's matched funding. She was looking forward to Community Rail Week.

Morebus

It was understood that Summer services in the Purbeck area, would be much the same as in recent years.

National Trust

No report.

Perenco UK

No report.

Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Council

No report.

Swanage Town Council

No report but it was noted that Cllr Mike Bonfield would be representing STC going forward.

Swanage Railway

In FR's absence there was no formal report. However, the Chair reported briefly on a recent meeting with the CEO of SR, Abbie King. She advised that it had been a productive meeting. SR was concentrating on its own business for now and there appeared to be little prospect of SR operating trains to/from Wareham for the foreseeable future in view of the costs involved.

MR advised that he was assisting SR with its application for Heritage Lottery funding for the modification of 2 x coaches to make them accessible to modern standards.

Purbeck Transport Action Group (PTAG)

No report but the Chair was able to comment on some improvements in hand at Purbeck Park. SR had now taken over the former office in the cob building.

Friends of Wareham Station

The Chair referred to the upcoming summer planting and the offer of help from Carey's Garden Centre. Efforts would now be put into South & South East In Bloom.

Regarding the replacement of the gates to the level crossing, BE offered DC's apologies for not informing SWR.

Corfe Castle Parish Council

HS reported that the Council was supporting a bid to Dorset Council for funding towards a feasibility study into a minibuss service for the south Purbeck and Swanage area.

Agenda Item 7 - Q&A

These were dealt with during discussion of the agenda items, but there were additional questions as follows:

- SB asked about the size and weight of motorised wheelchairs which could be carried on trains. MR commented from his own use and perspective.
- PA asked if BE would be standing down from the station Friends' group at Wareham, as she had suggested she might. BE said that she would continue as there was no-one to replace her. There needed to be a push for new volunteers.
- The SWR station manager (Ajin) had the issue of the tap 'in hand'.
- SB commented regarding the need for volunteers that he would raise the issue with the relatively new Volunteer Officer at SR - Kelly Griffin.

Agenda Item 7 - Any Other Business

None.

Date of Next Stakeholder Meeting & AGM - probably late September, in person at Wareham Youth Centre - to be advised.

MS - 16/05/26 v2

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