

DEVON AND EXETER RAIL PROJECT WORKING PARTY

19 FEBRUARY 2016

Present:-

Devon County Council:

Councillors B Hughes (Chairman), K Ball, F Biederman, P Bowden, R Julian, D Sellis, M Squires, N Way, R Westlake and R Younger-Ross

[NB: Councillors Bowden and Westlake attended up to and including Minute 30]

Exeter City Council

Councillor R Sutton
Councillor A Leadbetter

North Devon Council

Councillor D Luggar

Teignbridge District Council

Councillor J Goodey
Councillor R Prowse

Torbay Council

Councillor I Doggett

Apologies:-

Councillors A Eastman, J Mathews, T Wardle, B Bailey, D Foster, R Chesterton, P Heal, J Flynn and T Manning

1 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2016 be signed as a correct record.

2 Updates

(a) Network Rail

Mr D Northey, Senior Strategic Planner, West Country, Network Rail gave a presentation on his role and the Route Study process which involved developing options as part of the long-term planning process both for providing better services to meet local demand and infrastructure improvements to help achieve wider economic benefits, focusing on the work currently taking place relating to the Tarka Line (Exeter - Barnstaple).

Mr Northey referred to the importance of contributions by local authorities, the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and the Tarka Rail Association to the Tarka Line study and welcomed and encouraged early engagement by local authorities in this and other Route Studies when they took place. He also offered to follow up specific operational issues within the network that Members might wish to raise.

Matters discussed by Members with Mr Northey included:

- recent, pre Route Study improvements on the Tarka Line;
- the balance between faster Exeter - Barnstaple services and improved/additional stopping services for local stations on the Tarka Line;

- the passenger survey due to be undertaken in March 2016;
- a possible new station between Exeter and Dawlish (and related network capacity);
- regular services on the Exeter - Okehampton Line and their potential impact on the West Devon economy and connectivity throughout Devon;
- work by the Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF) on the impact of regional housing growth;
- the remoteness of much of rural Devon from existing railheads;
- Network Rail's feasibility study of long-term resilience of the rail route through Dawlish and Teignmouth (due to report shortly), consultations with local communities on emerging proposals and circulation to the Working Party;
- how local authorities, elected representatives and communities could contribute to Route Studies and the network planning process generally.

(b) Great Western Railway (GWR)

Mr M Greedy representing GWR gave a presentation which covered:

- the growth in rail travel across Devon - above forecasts and the regional average;
- journey figures for Newcourt Station, Exeter - well patronised since opening in June 2015 and on course for exceeding the predicted 80,000 annual footfall;
- performance of Devon services - Public Performance Measure of 93.9% over last year;
- GWR Direct Award franchise (September 2015 - April 2019);
- High Speed Services - improved services and the introduction of Hitachi AT300 High Speed Train (HST) fleet;
- journey time "*Speed to the West*" study (to be funded by GWR);
- South West local services - improved rolling stock; service frequency etc;
- stations investment - £50m of Franchise investment in addition to that from local authorities;
- Community Rail - investment in Community Rail Partnerships; Customer and Communities Improvement Fund.

Mr Greedy summarised the position as follows:

- GWR was transforming services through: new and updated rolling stock; increased capacity; higher frequencies; and faster journey times for High Speed Services;
- there was continuing strong passenger demand and focus on performance;
- there was continuing significant investment in stations and community led projects;
- working with the County Council was key to maximising opportunities and increasing the relevance of rail services.

Matters discussed by Members with Mr Greedy included:

- promotion of the Tarka Line (Exeter - Barnstaple), advocacy role of the Tarka Rail Association and ticket deals;
- improvements at Exeter Central Station;
- survey of journey figures for Newcourt Station, Exeter and origins/destinations of passengers;
- modifications to trains to prevent breakdowns due to seawater immersion on coastal lines;
- improved services for Crediton (new early morning service; late evening service; through service to London);
- continuation of improved services for Paignton on Riviera Line (Exeter - Torquay) following initial European funding;
- Paignton - London Saturday service;
- Exeter - Okehampton Summer Sunday service - user surveys; capacity; through tickets;
- parameters of Customer and Communities Improvement Fund;
- line through Dawlish and Teignmouth - proposed wave-breaking reef;

- circulation to the Working Party of information on the “Speed to the West” study;
- the maximum speed of the Hitachi AT300 trainset operating in diesel mode, and engine isolation on AT300s;
- luggage/wheelchair provision on refurbished rolling stock.

(NB. South West Trains were unable to be represented at this meeting but were prepared to respond to any issues that Members may wish to raise)

3 Progress Report

The Working Party considered the Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation & Environment (PTE/16/11) on progress made by the County Council and rail project partners since its July 2015 meeting, and further planned work, on the following ExeRail and other projects:

- Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF) - 20 year investment plan for the South West Peninsula rail network to improve resilience, journey times and service capacity/quality due to be completed by Summer 2016; multiple strands of study work underway;
- new stations - Newcourt; Marsh Barton; and Cranbrook (opened in December 2015);
- Tavistock extension (Drake Line);
- Exmouth Station access improvements;
- Tarka Line (Exeter - Barnstaple) strategy;
- Newton Abbot Station eastern access;
- service enhancements - Exeter - Okehampton Line; Avocet Line (Exeter - Exmouth); Riviera Line (Exeter - Torquay); and Exmouth - Paignton Line.

The Report highlighted the further significant progress during the year towards achieving the Devon Metro vision of making the best use of the local rail network to meet the challenges of growth around Exeter and referred to the completion by the Department for Transport of its consultation on the specification for a new South Western Rail franchise starting in 2017.

Sources of project funding included the County Council’s Local Transport Plan Capital Programme, the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (Access to Stations), European Regional Funding (INTERREG) and contributions from partner authorities, Network Rail and train operating companies.

Matters discussed by Members with the Head of Service included:

- Cranbrook Station - official opening by Andrew Jones, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport on Monday 22 February 2016;
- Barnstaple Station access and car parking improvements;
- Newton Abbot Station access improvements - through access for non-rail users;
- Copplestone and Eggesford Stations - car parking;
- Crediton Station - bus flag.

The Working Party noted the ongoing work on rail projects and asked partner authorities to confirm their ExeRail funding contributions for 2016/17.

4 Next Meeting

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Working Party be held on Friday 15 July 2016 (2.00pm).