

DEVON AND EXETER RAIL PROJECT WORKING PARTY

19 January 2018

Present:-

Devon County Council:

Councillors M Squires (Vice-Chair), Y Atkinson, I Hall, J Hawkins, J Hodgson, J Mathews and N Way

District Councils:

Councillors R Denham, Exeter City Council, B Bailey, East Devon District Council, R Longhurst, East Devon District Council, B Deed, Mid Devon District Council, T Snow, Mid Devon District Council, J Goodey, Teignbridge District Council, Councillor R Prowse, Teignbridge District Council, and I Doggett, Torbay Council.

Attending in Accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors A Davis and B Greenslade

Apologies: -

Councillors K Ball, T Wardle, J Flynn, D Luggar, R Bloxham, A Eastman, D Sellis, C Slade and A Leadbetter

(COUNCILLOR SQUIRES IN THE CHAIR)

* **9** Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2017 be signed as a correct record.

* **10** Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **11** South Western Railway update

(Councillor Davis (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure Development and Waste) attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the meeting and Councillor Greenslade attended in accordance with SO 25(2) and spoke to this item).

(Councillor Deed declared a personal interest in this matter by being in receipt of an occupational pension from South Western Rail)

The Working Party received a presentation from the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment on the South Western Railway covering on an update on:

- the December 2018 Timetable Consultation: this included the main issue for Devon with the speeding up of trains and whether to drop Woking or Clapham Junction calls and the expectation that new plans via the timetable consultation page would be available on the website later in spring and then final timetables produced in autumn 2018 once they had been reviewed by Network Rail;
- RMT Strikes and there being no news of further dates;
- introduction of additional stakeholder management across SWR;
- Delay Repay had reduced to a 15 minute threshold;
- SWR had won 3 awards at October 2017 Community Rail Awards; and
- SWR Community Rail Conference held on 13th February 2017 in Southampton.

Members indicated their preference for the Woking call to be dropped rather than Clapham Junction which they felt should remain.

* **12 Great Western Franchise Renewal**

(Councillor Davis (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure Development and Waste) attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the meeting and Councillor Greenslade attended in accordance with SO 25(2) and spoke to this item).

The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure Development and Waste reported that she was attending to listen to views of the Working Party to help formulate her response to the Consultation on behalf of the Council and local authority partners.

The Working Party received a presentation from the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment on the consultation on the Great Western Franchise and draft initial views of Devon County Council, subject to approval by the Cabinet Member, covering:

- confirmation by the Department for Transport (DfT) that the current GWR franchise award has been extended from 2019 to March 2020 and was now consulting on a possible further two year extension from 2020 to March 2022 (with an option to extend by a further 2 years to 2024) and that the two year extension would be taken up if the winning bid did not offer good value for both taxpayer and passengers (reverting to a full new 7 year + franchise competition);
- that the consultation closes on 21st February 2018;
- the DfT had issued a 'Request for Proposal' to GWR in mid-2018 and the DfT aimed to secure an agreement on terms of the two year extension towards the end of 2018; and
- the Franchise extension (or new long-term franchise) started in April 2020 but the above dates were challenging and could slip.

Within the consultation there were 18 questions in total and the Meeting focussed on 11 of the most important relating to:

- the potential splitting of the franchise (Q2);
- Adding to or transferring routes from the franchise (Q3);
- Improvements to train frequencies (Q5);
- New stations or lines (Q6);
- Reductions in journey times (Q7);
- Direct services / improved connections (Q8);
- Other train service enhancements (Q10);
- Rolling stock priorities (Q12);
- Accessibility (Q13);
- Station improvements / connections between transport modes (Q14); and
- Priorities for fares and ticketing (Q15)

The proposed County Council response included the following points in respect of the above questions:

Q2: Franchise Split? Key Issues:

- Management focus – but could this be done through business units?
 - Ability to invest in improvements;
 - Cross subsidy;
 - Rolling stock flexibility and the ability to manage disruptions / special events;
 - Complexity of fare structure;
 - Network Rail working with an extra operator;
 - Co-ordination of services including connections;
 - Attractiveness to the bidding market; and
 - Political visibility at national level.
- **Current view:** One franchise but with two business units?

Q3: Adding to or transferring routes from franchise

- Add St James Park (Exeter) to Honiton to complement SWR services / enable half hourly frequency and provide cross city links from Barnstaple / Crediton; and
- Flexibility to allow SWR services to share the Barnstaple / Okehampton route.

Qs 5 & 10: Improvements to train frequencies / enhancements

- Paddington – Exeter St David's semi-fast service to become hourly (2 hourly from December 2018) with possible extensions to Paignton;
- Half hourly frequency between Plymouth and Newton Abbot (December, 2018 proposed 50 minute gap?) with hourly frequency at Ivybridge;
- Half hourly frequency between Exeter and Honiton / Axminster;
- Two hourly Okehampton – Exeter Central with possible extension to Pinhoe (combined half hourly frequency Crediton to Pinhoe with extra service in between);
- Hourly clock face Exmouth – Paignton for longer period Monday - Saturday and Sunday daytime; 15 min frequency to Digby / Newcourt longer term;
- Later train Exeter – Barnstaple Monday - Saturday;
- Hourly service for Cullompton and Wellington if stations were opened at these locations; and
- service long term improvements to Plymouth – Tavistock.

Q6: Proposed New Stations

- Marsh Barton;
- Cullompton;
- Okehampton Parkway;
- Tavistock; and
- Support for Edginswell (Torbay)

Q7: Reducing Journey Times

- Support reducing Paddington – Plymouth / Penzance journey times;
- All 'fast' services should still call at Tiverton Parkway, Exeter St David's and Newton Abbot with some stopping at Totnes (though some Tiverton calls could be replaced by an hourly semi-fast service);
- Introduction of Okehampton / Crediton to Exeter service could enable Barnstaple service to be speeded up by transferring some stops; and
- Hourly 'local' Exeter – Honiton / Axminster service could enable Waterloo services to be speeded up by transferring some stops.

Q8: Direct Services / Improved Connections

- Retain direct Paddington services for Tiverton Parkway, Newton Abbot and Totnes at similar frequencies to now; and
- Exeter: Cross-city Okehampton / Crediton to Pinhoe and Paignton to Exmouth

Q12: Rolling Stock

- Short term to 2022/24:
 - Improved reliability of refurbished local fleet;
 - additional units of existing type to support additional services / frequencies as outlined in Qs 5 & 10 and ability to manage older local fleet reliably; and
 - begin procurement process to replace existing local fleet (which would be 35-40 years old) in the new franchise from 2022/24.

Qs 13 & 14 Stations and Accessibility

- Support the priorities in document;
- Accessibility:
 - Dawlish and Teignmouth ;
 - Starcross (including access to the Exmouth ferry);
 - St Thomas (but possible alternative at Marsh Barton); and
 - Polsoe Bridge
- Other improvements including intermodal connections:
 - St David's forecourt; Pinhoe; Digby & Sowton; Marsh Barton; Newton Abbot; Tiverton Parkway, Barnstaple etc.
 - More focus on the 'last mile' to / from the station e.g. e-bikes.

Q15: Fares and Ticketing

- Agree with the priorities in document;
- Emphasis on contactless and mobile ticketing;
- Flexible season tickets;
- Combined rail and bus day rangers for Devon, South Devon and Exeter area; and
- Retain and promote the Devon and Cornwall Railcard.

The Chair for the meeting reported representations from Councillor Ball indicating his objection to any split of the franchise, stating that the more lucrative aspects helped to underpin the routes that provided an important connection to communities that would otherwise struggle. He suggested that any split could also have a major detrimental effect on the aspiration of the Devon Metro. He was also cautious about a two-business unit arrangement but that it could be a workable compromise. He was content with the suggestions made for line improvements especially Okehampton / Barnstaple lines and their potential running through onto the SWR line to feed the science park. He also felt that the fast services through the County should be protected and the new franchise should improve this and not reduce them. The other suggestions around new stations were also important.

Members' discussion points with the Head of Service included:

- support for one larger franchise rather than two smaller ones to help achieve economies of scale and associated investment leading to improved services;
- the importance of the reinstatement of a new station at Cullompton and Marsh Barton in particular;
- reference to the need for additional stations to serve growth points in Alphington, Cranbrook and the Airport;
- the need for direct rail links from Barnstaple to London (and or via Exeter); and
- integration in accordance with the greater Exeter Strategic Plan process, including intermodal ticketing and improved access from rural communities.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Deed, **SECONDED** by Councillor Snow and

RESOLVED that the views raised by Officers be endorsed along with emphasis on the points raised above by this Working Party, for consideration and inclusion in the County Council's response.

Members discussed future arrangements including ideas around additional informal meetings. This would require further consideration by the Chair, other Members and Officers for report back to the Working Party.

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held on Friday, 13 July 2018 at 1.30 pm.

The Meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 3.50 pm