

Progress Update

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- (a) the ongoing work on rail projects be noted; and**
- (b) Exerail funding partner Local Authorities confirm their funding offer for 2016/17.**

1. Summary

This report provides an update on the range of projects being undertaken jointly by Devon County Council and partners since the July 2015 meeting.

The Devon Metro concept aims to make the best use of the local rail network to meet the challenges of growth around Devon. We set out to achieve this by working with partners to improve capacity, quality and access to the rail network so that rail can fulfil its potential.

This year has seen further steps towards achieving the Devon Metro vision. After the opening of Newcourt Station on the Avocet Line in June, Cranbrook Station opened in December improving the accessibility of the new town significantly. Work is continuing to progress to deliver Marsh Barton in 2016/17 which will take the number of stations within Exeter into double figures. There is continued work taking place surrounding future improvements to stations such as Exmouth and Newton Abbot.

Meanwhile the Department for Transport has just completed consulting on the specification for a new South Western rail franchise that will start in 2017.

2. Progress and continuing work in 2015/16

The following summaries describe projects jointly funded by DCC and partners including the Exerail contributions from Working Party Authorities.

The Exerail contributions remain particularly valuable for us as a revenue resource for train service enhancements. Whilst many of the schemes described in this report are capital improvements, revenue resources are especially valuable.

Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF)

PRTF partners are currently undertaking the various strands of work which will feed into the 20 year investment plan for the South West peninsula rail network that was commissioned by government in late 2014. The PRTF Three Point Plan will come together into a single report. The PRTF three point plan aims to improve resilience, journey times and capacity/quality.

Newcourt Station

Newcourt station has now been open for 8 months after opening in early June 2015. Since the first trains stopped there, it has had good patronage with up to 5,000 people using the station on average every four week railway reporting period which exceeds the forecast for 2015 and is on track for the 2016 target which assumes continuing house construction and occupation within the station catchment.

There was a community event held in September 2015 that celebrated the opening of the railway station. Households in Newcourt were handed a travel pack which included a number of items that would hopefully increase the use of the station by raising awareness of the station, improving travel opportunities and by providing promotional offers in partnership with Great Western Railway.

Additionally there was a formal ceremony on Thursday 30 July when Rail Minister Claire Perry officially opened the station.

Marsh Barton Station

This scheme was approved in July last year with costs being estimated at £7.4m. The railway station is anticipated to serve thousands of people who work at the largest employment site in the city and it is hoped to ease congestion in the area.

The site clearance works have been completed and work is ongoing to prepare the necessary consents prior to a Network Change Application to Network Rail and ORR. This process includes liaising with train operators, especially freight operators to agree the interim and long term timetable. Construction is planned across the course of 2016/17 and the station is anticipated to be available for use in 2017.

Cranbrook

Cranbrook station was opened on Sunday 13 December 2015. The scheme was being delivered by Network Rail and experienced construction setbacks due to utility diversions and land issues.

The station has a single platform and is served by an hourly service in each direction on the existing Exeter to London Waterloo line providing easy access to the city centre as well as to major urban centres to the east such as Salisbury and Basingstoke. The railway station will play a major role in increasing the provision for a wide range of sustainable travel options for Cranbrook residents as it will further encourage commuters to opt for public transport rather than the private car.

As part of the Devon Metro concept to provide a high quality, high capacity and accessible network of local train services we are working to understand the potential for serving the next phases of growth by train. A study has been completed that establishes the feasibility of creating a second station east of the current station. The economic case for a second station is considered to be positive and the linear nature of the expansion towards the east and west of the current Phase 1 development means that rail is well placed to provide good access to key destinations around Exeter and beyond.

This study has also considered the proposed service enhancements along the Exeter – Waterloo route, including local enhancements at the Devon end of the line along with proposals for the associated passing loop and other infrastructure improvements.

Tavistock Extension (The Drake Line)

As part of the planning process, a developer contribution of £11.5m from the Callington Road development has been agreed towards the cost of reopening the line. This contribution covers approximately one third of the cabinet approved scheme cost and will be available to us when the housing construction and occupation is underway. The remaining funding would need to come from public funds when available. Devon County Council is set to discuss possible funding and delivery options with the Department for Transport this year.

Land negotiations are still underway with approximately 50% of the line in Devon County Council control.

As part of the preparation for the Development Consent Order Application (essentially the planning application for this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project) we are undertaking various environmental surveys and a study considering at the wider economic benefits of the scheme.

DCC is continuing to work with Network Rail to review and sign off the early design stages, which includes agreeing details such as structure design, viaduct refurbishment and signalling.

Progress will be steady during 2016/17 due to our limited budget for design work. We will be dependent upon either extra funds from external sources, or developer contributions being realised soon.

Exmouth

The following improvements have been made:

- Zebra Crossing
- Shared use path connections
- Fixed Signs
- Landscaping

Installation of a Real Time Information monolith sign showing real time bus departures and 'where to catch your bus in Exmouth Town Centre' is expected to be installed in February/March 2016.

This second stage of the scheme is being delivered by GWR in partnership with DCC using funds from the National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP). The step and ramp access is designed within site constraints and is designed to tie in with the Stage One works with designed integration of drainage and materials. Work is due to commence during spring 2016 subject land agreements being progressed to satisfaction of Network Rail.

Details of design have been refined in consultation with DCC design team and the Avocet line Rail User Group to result in a design with maximised entrance width, reduced clutter, and additional features such as ledge seating around the edge of the ramp facing onto the forecourt square area.

Land transfer arrangements from DCC to Network Rail, Rights of Access route agreed between GWR, DCC and Network Rail with Heads of Terms now agreed in principle subject to legal process.

The second stage improvements will include:

- Access to trains via front entrance at all times (rear ramp retained)
- New ramp to better standard gradient
- Seat incorporated into outside perimeter of ramp
- Ramp configured to avoid site constraints
- Automatic door
- Prominent signage in line with new brand

The third stage involves the redevelopment of the bus station and depot site, and provision of an interchange area with provision of bus stop facilities; public realm area and we are planning to follow up with improvements to the rail user car park, additional space for taxis, allocated spaces for rail pick up. The redevelopment is subject to a current planning application (Ref 15/2648/MFUL) which will be determined at the East Devon District Council Planning Committee.

Service Enhancements

The Sunday Rover train services between Okehampton and Exeter will operate in summer 2016 although DCC is engaging with community groups to establish a sustainable method of funding and operating a train service for future years.

The summer and Christmas Sunday enhancements on the Avocet Line are proposed for 2016, subject to funding. Recognising that these services are funded through Exerail contributions, GWR and DCC are looking towards a transition towards funding such services through fare revenue.

Tarka Line Strategy

DCC is working in partnership with Network Rail and Train Operating Companies secure the following improvements in 2016/17:

- Developing a new station car park for Coplestone
- Working with Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership to prepare surveys
- Negotiating train service improvements

3. Consultations

Where appropriate, schemes will be subject to the necessary level of scheme approval which according to the value of the scheme can be made by Local Member Decision, HaTOC, Cabinet Member Decision or Cabinet. Public consultation is undertaken where considered appropriate by officers, members or stakeholders.

4. Financial Considerations

Much of the rail work is, or has been, funded through a combination of DCC Local Transport Plan Capital Programme, Local Sustainable Transport Fund (Access to Stations), European Regional Funding (INTERREG), along with contributions from the Working Party Authorities, Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies.

5. Sustainability Considerations

The rationale for developing rail is that it can represent one of the most environmentally sustainable ways to transport large numbers of people and volumes of freight. In addition, development of rail will support significant housing and employment development around the county, especially in the Exeter sub-region where rail has the potential for moving more people and managing road traffic demand.

6. Carbon Impact Considerations

A well-used rail service involves less carbon than the equivalent separate car journeys. Making better use of rail will help it make an increasingly positive impact upon carbon.

7. Equality Considerations

The rationale of public transport is that it is intended for all to benefit from and as such there are no negative equality impacts associated with this programme. It is acknowledged that some stations and trains have particular access issues, some of which are beyond the scope of the working party to improve. The specific equality implications of individual schemes will be assessed separately and detailed in individual reports.

8. Legal Considerations

The lawful implications and consequences of the proposals have been considered and taken into account in the preparation of this report.

9. Risk Management Considerations

Where risks have been identified, such as working with external stakeholders or the implications of external change, the implications of those have been taken into account in preparing this report by allowing sufficient flexibility for the reallocation of funds to an alternative scheme or carrying over to a future year.

10. Options/Alternatives

Alternatives to investment in rail could include developing a strategy for increasing road traffic or enhancing bus services. However, those options have been considered with particular regard to the larger schemes, such as new or improved stations and development plan preparation and in many cases will be required in parallel to some extent. Rail forms a key element of the strategies within the Devon & Torbay Local Transport Plan.

11. Reason for Recommendation

Whilst there is no decision making required as part of this report, it is useful to update the working group and obtain feedback that could improve the process of rail development.

Dave Black
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Electoral Divisions: All Divisions in Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon, Teignbridge, South Hams and North Devon

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Nil

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