

Phil Norrey  
Chief Executive

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To: The Chairman and Members of  
the Devon and Exeter Rail  
Project Working Party

County Hall  
Topsham Road  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX2 4QD

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(See below)

Your ref :  
Our ref :

Date : 9 February 2017  
Please ask for : Wendy Simpson, 01392 384383

Email: wendy.simpson@devon.gov.uk

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**DEVON AND EXETER RAIL PROJECT WORKING PARTY**

**Friday, 17th February, 2017**

A meeting of the Devon and Exeter Rail Project Working Party is to be held on the above date at 2.00pm in the Committee Suite - County Hall to consider the following matters.

P NORREY  
Chief Executive

**AGENDA**

**PART I - OPEN COMMITTEE**

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2016, attached.

3 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Items which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.

4 Whimple Rail Users Group

Brief presentation by Professor R Betts on behalf of the Group.

5 Update from Network Rail

Mr D Northey, Senior Strategic Planner, Network Rail, to report.

6 Update from Great Western Railway (GWR)

Mr L Ward, Regional Development Planning and Programme Manager, GWR, to report.

7 Update from South West Trains

Mr A Smy, Stakeholder and Community Rail Support Manager, South West Trains, to report.

8 Update from Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership

Mr R Burningham, Manager, Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, to report.

9 Progress Report (Pages 5 - 16)

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment (PTE/17/11) on progress on a range of projects being undertaken jointly by Devon County Council and its partners, attached.

*Electoral Divisions(s): All Divisions*

10 Next Meeting

To set a date for the next meeting.

**PART II - ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Nil

*Members are reminded that Part II Reports contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s).*

*Members are also reminded of the need to dispose of such reports carefully and are therefore invited to return them to the Democratic Services Officer at the conclusion of the meeting for disposal.*

**MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO SIGN THE ATTENDANCE REGISTER**

**Membership**

County Councillors B Hughes (Chairman), K Ball, F Biederman, P Bowden (Vice-Chair), A Eastman, R Julian, J Mathews, D Sellis, M Squires, N Way, R Westlake, R Younger-Ross and A Leadbetter

**Co-opted Members**

R Sutton (Exeter City Council), T Wardle (Exeter City Council), B Bailey (East Devon District Council), B Deed (Mid Devon District Council), T Snow (Mid Devon District Council), J Flynn (North Devon Council), D Luggar (North Devon Council), J Goodey (Teignbridge District Council), R Prowse (Teignbridge District Council), I Doggett (Torbay Council), T Manning (Torbay Council) and R Longhurst (East Devon District Council)

**Declaration of Interests**

Members are reminded that they must declare any interest they may have in any item to be considered at this meeting, prior to any discussion taking place on that item.

**Access to Information**

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Induction loop system available



## DEVON AND EXETER RAIL PROJECT WORKING PARTY

15 July 2016

Present:-

Devon County Council:

Councillors Ball, Biederman, Bowden, Eastman, Julian, Mathews, Sellis, Way, Westlake and Younger-Ross

Exeter City Council

Councillors Sutton, Wardle and Leadbetter

East Devon District Council

Councillors Bailey and Longhurst

Mid Devon District Council

Councillor Snow

Teignbridge District Council

Councillors Goodey and Prowse

Torbay Council

Councillors Doggett and Manning

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25:

Councillor Greenslade

Apologies:

Councillors Hughes, Squires, Flynn, Deed and Luggar

**9** **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2016 be signed as a correct record.

**10** **Update from Great Western Railway**

(Councillor Greenslade attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(2) and spoke to this item).

Mr L Ward, Regional Development Planning and Programme Manager, gave a presentation which covered:

- passenger growth
- performance
- fleet update
- speed to the West
- stations investment
- depot investment
- community rail

Matters discussed by Members with Mr Ward included:

- the Tarka line - Barnstaple growth; the need for early train to Exeter St David's; and increased passenger capacity to be resolved by expansion;

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CABINET

DEVON AND EXETER RAIL PROJECT WORKING PARTY- 15/07/16

- the use of Class 143s on the Exeter – Okehampton Sunday Rover service when available;
- new developments leading to population growth at Exminster and Bideford;
- lack of crossovers at Teignmouth.

*[NB A copy of the presentation given is appended to these Minutes]*

## 11 Update from South West Trains

Mr C Loder, Head of Service and Pricing Strategy at South West Trains provided an update, and matters discussed with Members included:

- refurbishment of the Class 159s, made up of 3 cars/200 seats;
- availability of Wi-fi from the end of March - good feedback received;
- Cranbrook Station - dealing with around 100 people a day with busiest train being the 0710 from Waterloo;
- additional Yeovil – London morning train;
- popular Summer Saturday service to Weymouth;
- changes to timetable from December 2016 to cater for large capacity events e.g. Saturday rugby matches;
- additional stations and the difficulties with infrastructure and capacity;
- opportunity for direct route Barnstaple - Waterloo;
- two shortlisted bidders for the new SW rail franchise – SWT had operational capability to June 2017.

## 12 Progress Report

The Working Party considered the Report and presentation of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment (PTE/16/19) on progress made by the County Council and rail project partners since its February 2016 meeting and further planned work in 2016/17 on the following ExeRail and other projects:

- Peninsula Rail Task Force – final report to be submitted to Government shortly;
- Marsh Barton Station – interim stopping pattern currently with full calling pattern planned from December 2018;
- Exeter St David's – National Stations Improvement Programme funding secured;
- Exeter – Honiton – feasibility of second station; and the Network Rail GRIP 2 study on Exeter;
- Tavistock Extension (the Drake Line) – design options progressing;
- Exmouth – enhancements to Station;
- Service Enhancements on the Sunday Rover, Avocet and Riviera Lines;
- Tarka Line Strategy – partnership working to improve journey times and car parking;
- Bus Real Time Information at Stations – expected to go live in the autumn;
- Electric Bikes – Department for Transport funding secured by Co-Cars as part of Devon Metro strategy.

Matters discussed by Members with the Head of Service included, inter alia:

- recognition of all partners to the opportunities on the Tarka Line and those included within the Tarka Strategy;
- GPS fitted to electric bikes and the security managed by Co-Cars;
- the work ongoing in relation to the Tavistock (Drake Line) and the complexities of the scheme;
- timing of stops at Lapford and access difficulties.

Members questioned the Listed Building status of the 'red brick building' to the front of Exeter St David's station and Mr Ward from GWR agreed to check this and apprise Members at the next meeting.

*[NB A copy of the presentation given is appended to these Minutes]*

**13**

**Next Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the next meeting of the Working Party be held on Friday 17 February 2017 at 2pm.

The Meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.21 pm





## Progress Update

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

***Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.***

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the ongoing work on rail projects be noted.

### 1. Summary

This report provides an update on the range of projects being undertaken jointly by Devon County Council and partners since the July 2016 meeting.

### 2. Introduction

The Devon Metro strategy aims to make the best use of the local rail network to meet the challenges of growth across Devon. The County Council aims to achieve this by working with partners to improve the capacity and quality of the rail network and its accessibility.

The last six months has been another period of progress for rail in Devon, particularly with the submission of the Peninsula Rail Task Force report at the end of 2016. The Marsh Barton Station scheme is not yet on site but work is continuing to finalise the designs to meet updated Network Rail standards and secure the additional funding to deliver the scheme. Elsewhere land negotiations at Exmouth Station have been completed and construction works for the improvements are scheduled for the summer months.

### 3. Progress and continuing work in 2016/17

This section provides a summary of a range of projects jointly funded by DCC and partners including the ExeRail contributions from Working Party Authorities.

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

#### Marsh Barton Railway Station

The station at Marsh Barton, anticipated to serve thousands of people who work at the largest employment site in the city, is continuing to be progressed.

Construction has been delayed by a need to revise designs to meet changing Network Rail standards. This is likely to have an impact on scheme costs which are yet to be fully quantified. In the meantime the County Council has submitted a bid to the Government's New Stations Fund, the result of which is expected to be announced in the spring. If these issues can be resolved a construction start date will be available during the summer of 2017. The design stage is now almost complete and opportunities such as extended possession time at weekends are being examined to contain costs.

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## Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF)

The PRTF, including partners from Devon County Council, Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council, Somerset County Council and Cornwall Council, submitted its 20 year strategy report to government in November 2016. The PRTF Three Point Plan investigated ways to improve resilience, connectivity through improved journey times and capacity/journey quality. The group is currently awaiting a response from Government.

The schemes in Devon mentioned within the report include reopening the line from Bere Alston to Tavistock and Crediton to Okehampton, strengthening of sea wall at Dawlish, the flood defence scheme at Cowley Bridge and an enhanced frequency between Exeter and Honiton/Axminster. Key improvements to the two London main lines to Paddington and Waterloo were also central to the report.

The PRTF priorities can be summarised as:

	Short Term (2017-19)	Medium Term (2019-29)	Long Term (2030+)
RESILIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Development of critical Dawlish &amp; Teignmouth scheme.</li> <li>-Completion of Cowley, Hele &amp; Bradninch works.</li> <li>-Development of Exeter to Castle Cary improvements (see below).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Construction of Dawlish &amp; Teignmouth scheme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Completion of works and estuary sections of railway.</li> </ul>
CONNECTIVITY (Journey Times)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Development of business case for journey time improvements on Paddington line.</li> <li>-Exeter-Waterloo timetable study for redoubling of track between Salisbury &amp; Yeovil.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Construction of Paddington line improvements.</li> <li>-Passing Loops delivered between Salisbury &amp; Yeovil.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Further improvements to achieve improved journey times on Paddington line.</li> </ul>
CAPACITY & QUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-WiFi upgrades.</li> <li>-Development of Tavistock to Bere Alston scheme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Additional on-train capacity.</li> <li>-Services running between Okehampton &amp; Exeter and Tavistock &amp; Plymouth.</li> <li>- Additional passing loop(s) between Exeter and Honiton to enable half hourly frequency on this section as part of the Devon Metro strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Completion of northern route between Okehampton &amp; Tavistock.</li> <li>-Electrification.</li> </ul>

## Exeter > Honiton > Castle Cary/Waterloo - West of England Strategy

The County Council is a member of West of England Line Route Strategy Group – see Appendix I for a more detailed briefing paper on the role and activities of the group. There are two key elements of work being progressed on the Exeter – Waterloo route, the section between Exeter and Yeovil/Castle Cary via Honiton and Yeovil to Salisbury.

The County Council submitted a bid to the Government's Local Majors Fund seeking £2.5m funding for design work to improve capacity and resilience for the route between Exeter and Castle Cary via Yeovil. Future schemes would enable a half hourly frequency between Axminster or Honiton and Exeter as part of Devon Metro and an improved diversionary route for Paddington – Plymouth/Penzance services in the event of disruption between Taunton and Exeter. The bid was unsuccessful so the County Council will investigate alternative funding streams to progress design work.

## Exeter St David's

### *Depot*

Great Western Railway has commissioned consultants RPS to design the depot improvements required to accommodate the rolling stock needed from December 2018. This design work is currently at GRIP 3 stage and the initial phase is hoped to be on site in the summer of 2018 subject to DfT and Network Rail approval. The brief for the depot includes provision for a new shed, new staff accommodation and stabling for trains. There will be a phased approach with the shed and accommodation expected to be provided in the first stage.

### *Forecourt*

The County Council is working with GWR, Network Rail and Exeter City Council to develop a masterplan for the redevelopment and improvement of the station forecourt. The key features of this masterplan include the relocation of car parking and the number of spaces that would be required, promotion of space for commercial development in front the station building and the location of drop off points and bus stops.

## Exmouth Station

DCC completed the first stage of station enhancement works on the forecourt in 2015. The second stage of the scheme is being delivered by GWR using funds from the National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP). Land transfers between DCC and Network Rail have now taken place with construction works currently anticipated to start in the summer of 2017.

These improvement works will include access to trains via the front entrance at all times, improved internal building configuration and customer environment, a new ramp incorporating a seat to a better standard gradient, an automatic door and prominent signage.

The construction works for the new M&S Simply Food store, being built on the site of the bus station, are nearing completion. This will provide new facilities such as a café and help further enhance the environment around the station, improving its role as a gateway to the town.

DCC and East Devon DC (EDDC) will be working with other interested stakeholders in 2017 to further enhance the station's role as an interchange. This will include replacement of the

# Agenda Item 9

temporary bus shelter adjacent to the relocated bus stops with a high quality design and changes to the cycle route. Further discussions will take place on how best to use the remaining buildings adjacent to the station including the toilets. This will form part of a new masterplan for the area being developed by EDDC. It is hoped that the bus real time information display at the station will be operational shortly.

## E-bikes

The electric bike scheme in Exeter, the first of its type in the UK, was launched in October. One of the key objectives of the scheme is to improve the integration between rail stations in Exeter onward destinations in the city such as the University, the Civic Centre and County Hall.

Of the four docking stations currently installed, two of them are located adjacent to railway stations – Exeter Central and Digby & Sowton (which includes integration with Sowton Park & Ride and other bus services). In the short term, negotiations are in progress regarding a suitable docking station site at Exeter St David's while provision for one is also being incorporated into the design for the new station at Marsh Barton. A docking station is being provided close to Dawlish Warren station as part of the current Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) work with a further two close to Dawlish and Teignmouth stations proposed as part of a further bid to the CCF. Medium term projects include Pinhoe and Cranbrook stations as these are both located in eastern areas of the city where most employment is coming forward.

## Newton Abbot Footbridge

This scheme will extend the current footbridge at Newton Abbot Station so that the station can be accessed from both sides of the railway line. This will improve the accessibility of the station from Brunel Industrial Estate (including Teignbridge DC offices) and cycle routes to Kingsteignton, northern Newton Abbot and Decoy/Kingskerswell.

The scheme is close to being signed off at the GRIP 3 stage. It is intended to secure planning permission and the necessary land during 2017 so that the scheme can be delivered when funds become available.

Further work may need to be done at Newton Abbot that investigates the potential need for an additional platform due to the increased number of trains to Torbay in the future.

## Okehampton

The County Council is part of the OkeRail group looking to introduce additional services in the future between Okehampton and Exeter, over and above the current summer Sundays.

DCC is working with Dartmoor Railway CIC to develop options for a new station on the eastern edge of the town which would serve many of the residential areas including the new developments included in the Local Plan.

The authority is also working with rail operators, the DfT, Dartmoor Rail CIC and Network Rail to establish how a future service would be integrated with others in the area as part of the Devon Metro network. The provision of a service is very much down to the willingness and ability of a train operator to find the appropriate rolling stock and crew along with, in some circumstances, the agreement of the DfT to fund the costs as part of the franchise. The first indication of this will be through the South West rail franchise award due to be announced in April this year and which will be operational from August. Beyond that there may be opportunities through the new Great Western franchise from 2019/20. The

availability and ongoing maintenance/renewal of the private line from Coleford Junction to Okehampton is also an important factor. Any new or improved service is likely to require an 18-24 month lead in period from initial resource identification to enable paths to be established in the timetable development process.

## Tavistock/Plymouth

The proposed reopening of the line between Bere Alston and Tavistock was included within the Peninsula Rail Task Force report and it is hoped that an allocation of funds may be made available by Government to allow further scheme development work. In the meantime the County Council is continuing to negotiate with landowners to acquire remaining sections of land along the route.

The County Council is also working with Plymouth City Council, West Devon Borough Council, South Hams District Council and Cornwall Council to develop the future vision for the western element of the Devon Metro strategy in and around Plymouth. This is part of the infrastructure development work emerging joint Local Plan for Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon.

## Cullompton

Network Rail have been commissioned by Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane District Council and Cullompton/Wellington town councils to examine the feasibility of introducing rail services to the latter two towns through an initial timetable study. A range of scenarios are being considered that will determine the service pattern options and likely infrastructure required to achieve this without negatively impacting on anticipated future mainline service patterns to Bristol/Birmingham and London.

Any design work on the stations themselves would only proceed (subject to available funding) if a potentially viable service and infrastructure scenario was identified. The potential linkage with the proposed Culm Garden Village is acknowledged.

## Newcourt/Cranbrook Patronage

Cranbrook station has now been operational for over a year since its opening in December 2015. South West Trains has estimated a first year patronage figure of approximately 80,000 trips but this is still to be verified. Newcourt station, opened in June 2015, saw a patronage figure of approximately 73,000 in its first year. Both sets of figures are encouraging with potential to grow further.

These annual patronage figures are expected to rise in the next few years as further development comes forward in the vicinity of both stations. It is also hoped that Cranbrook station will benefit from an improved frequency in the medium term with the Devon Metro aspiration of achieving a half hourly service between Exeter and Honiton.

## Franchise Update – South West Trains/Cross Country timetabling

The award of the new South West rail franchise, serving the Exeter St David's to London Waterloo route, will be determined by the Department for Transport in April 2017. The incumbent operators Stagecoach and rival operator FirstGroup have bid for the franchise. The successful bidder will take over or continue the franchise in August 2017. County Council officers will meet with the new franchisee as soon as possible in the spring to establish joint working opportunities.

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Cross Country Trains recently consulted on a revised December 2017 timetable. The proposals for the new timetable included two trains per hour between Exeter St David's and Bristol Temple Meads through most of the day at the expense of extensions to Teignmouth/Dawlish and Paignton with the exception of one train a day. The final decision rests with the DfT and the outcome is expected to be known in February/March.

## Exe Rail Contributions

The contributions from each local authority in 2016/17 have been outlined in the table below. 2016/17 funding has been used to support a number of initiatives alongside other funding sources including:

- Supporting the promotional work of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership across Devon;
- Increased service frequencies on the Riveria and Avocet Line routes which have subsequently lead to the DfT committing to the continued funding of the half hourly Newton Abbot – Paignton frequency from April 2017 until becoming incorporated in the increased Paignton – Exeter service from December 2018;
- Initial three year operational costs for Newcourt station.

2017/18 contributions are still to be confirmed in most cases.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>2016/17 £'000s</b>
Exeter City Council	15
North Devon District Council	10.2
East Devon District Council	3.68
Mid Devon District Council*	3.5
Torbay Council #	0
Teignbridge District Council*	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.38</b>

\* Awaiting confirmation

# Torbay Council has directly funded the introduction of mobile phone ticket equipment for barriers at Exeter St Davids and Central

## **4. Consultations**

County Council officers regularly consult with train operators, Network Rail, district councils, DfT, Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership, Peninsula Rail Task Force, local groups and other key stakeholders to develop and deliver proposals and strategies.

Reports to the appropriate committee for capital schemes will detail the specific consultation that has taken place during its development.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

Much of the rail work is, or has been, funded through a combination of DCC Local Transport Plan Capital Programme, DCC On-Street Car Parking account, Local Sustainable Transport Fund (Access to Stations), European Regional Funding (INTERREG), along with contributions from ExeRail authorities, Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies. Funding packages will continue to be developed as opportunities arise.

## **6. Sustainability Considerations**

Developing rail opportunities can represent one of the most environmentally sustainable and effective ways to transport large numbers of people as part of a wider public transport strategy. It will also 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 as part of an integrated transport strategy.

## **7. Carbon Impact Considerations**

A well-used rail service can result in less carbon per person than the equivalent separate car journeys. Rail is one part of a wider local network which, when combined with other improvements such as walking and cycling networks, shared mobility options such as e-bikes, car sharing and car club vehicles and bus networks, helps individuals and families to limit their reliance on single occupancy car journeys.

A key element of the Devon Metro strategy is to support more intensive use of the rail network, making best use of the substantial fixed asset.

## **8. Equality Considerations**

Rail is intended to be accessible to all users 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 have major constraints. The specific equality implications of individual schemes will be assessed separately and detailed in individual reports.

## **9. Legal Considerations**

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

## **10. 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.

## **11. Options/Alternatives**

The Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 considered the role of rail as part of a wider strategy. The development of Local Plans involves the consideration of different transport infrastructure options to enable growth.

Committee reports for individual schemes consider the specific alternatives appropriate to that scheme.

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## 12. Reason for Recommendation

No specific recommendations are required as part of this report – it is for information and noting only.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

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

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Andrew Ardley

Room No. Lucombe House AB2

Tel No: (01392) 383528

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Nil

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sc/cr/progress update  
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## Briefing Paper to the Devon & Exeter Rail Working Party in respect of the West of England Line Route Strategy Group.

### Purpose of this report

To advise the Devon and Exeter Rail Working Party of the on-going work of West of England Line Route Strategy Group (WoEL SG) and raise awareness of the potential for improvements on this line both in Control Period 6 (2019 – 2024) and in the future.

The West of England [Railway] Line is the route between Worting Junction (west of Basingstoke) and Exeter via Salisbury and Yeovil Junction.

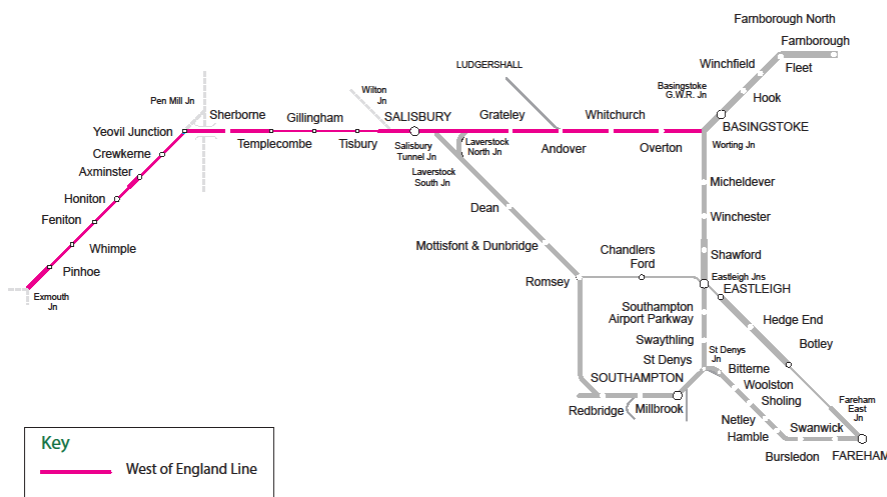


Figure 1 – The West of England line – Courtesy Network Rail

### The WoEL SG Vision Statement

*“To deliver a modern rail service through investing in improvements on the West of England line that facilitates the economic growth of Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Wiltshire, helping to make them attractive places to live, work or visit.”*

### Background

The severe weather incidents in 2012, 2013 and 2014 emphasised the vulnerability of the south west rail network to extreme weather conditions, which are occurring more frequently. It also highlighted the need for greater investment in rail to deliver resilience and connectivity for the region. Infrastructure improvements on the West of England Line (WoEL) could deliver the required resilience to the east of Exeter.

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The Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF)<sup>1</sup> was formed in early 2013 to co-ordinate partners from across the southwest peninsula to build and put the case for greater investment into the rail network for the region. The PRTF is advised by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail (NR) and has been selected by the Government as the representative body to identify and recommend strategic and local rail improvements for the South West Peninsula up to 2034<sup>2</sup>. The PRTF has produced a report<sup>3</sup> 'Closing the Gap', which sets out a plan for investment into the South West Peninsula's strategic rail network. The PRTF plan, officially launched to Government on 22 November 2016, has three over-arching aims:

- To improve the resilience of the network.
- To deliver faster journeys times.
- To deliver extra capacity to meet growth in demand.

The PRTF recognises the need for improvements on the WoEL, especially between Exeter and Salisbury, and hence seeks support from other authorities and LEPs along this section of the line. With this in mind a Strategic Officer Group (the WoEL SG) was formed in 2015 to consider the background work necessary to move forward improvements on the WoEL.

## **The Strategic Officer Group**

This Strategic Officer Group comprises nominated officers or representatives from the following organisations:

- Devon County Council
- Dorset County Council
- Somerset County Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
- The Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- South Somerset District Council (SSDC) – (Secretariat)
- Train Operating Companies (TOCs) – Currently South West Trains (SWT) on the WoEL and GWR on the adjacent Heart of Wessex Line and main Great Western London Paddington to Penzance (via Castle Cary) route.
- Network Rail

## **The Strategic aims**

There is no doubt from the PRTF experience that the DfT (Rail Executive) have a preference for LAs/LEPs working together. Similar experience elsewhere (e.g. Chiltern Railways and Border Rail), also indicates that working together can achieve significant results. Albeit that inevitably means some give and take. The principle though is that the wider regional goals can often deliver the more local aims. The business case also becomes easier to justify when the benefits are spread over the wider region.

It is therefore recognised that a similar concept to the PRTF is desirable for the WoEL SG if we are to persuade the DfT to advance the infrastructure projects necessary to deliver our Strategic aims.

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<sup>1</sup> The Peninsula Rail Task Force is a rail improvement campaign group comprising Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Somerset County Council, Torbay Council, Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. end of Control period 8

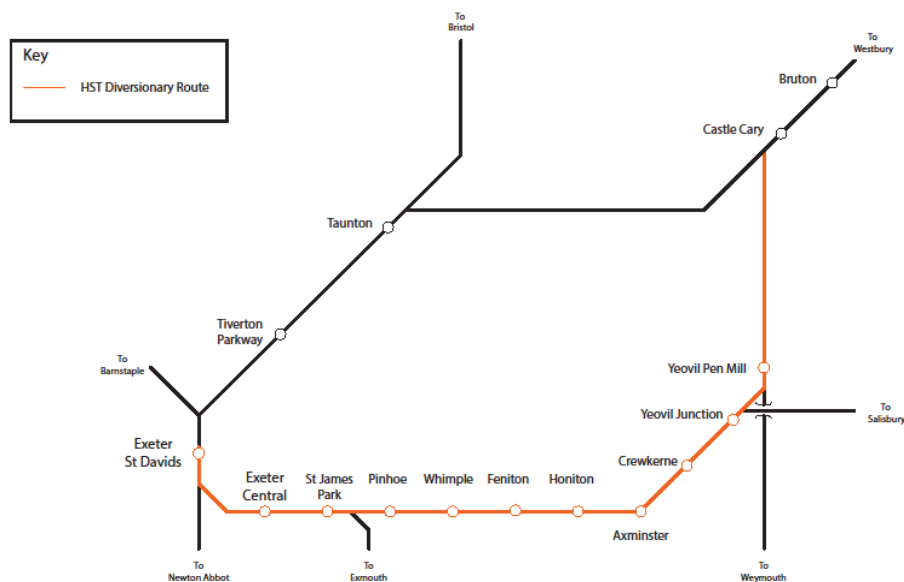
<sup>3</sup> 'Closing the Gap' the 20 year plan - for investment into the South West Peninsula's strategic rail network Peninsula Rail Task Force November 2016. <https://peninsularailtaskforce.co.uk/closing-the-gap-the-south-west-peninsula-strategic-rail-blueprint/>

The WoEL SG has 7 agreed Key Service Improvement Aims:

1. Diversionary Resilience (Improved line capacity to accommodate hourly Paddington trains and Cross Country Trains)
2. Improve connectivity with the Heart of Wessex line at Yeovil Junction, providing direct connections/services between Exeter and Weymouth including a South Chord at Yeovil Junction station.
3. Two trains an hour west of Salisbury and east of Exeter, with no deterioration in journey times or current service levels throughout the line between Exeter and Salisbury.
4. Yeovil to London under 2 hours and faster journey times from Weymouth and Dorchester (with the implementation of the South Chord at Yeovil Junction).
5. Relieve congestion and improve interchange/flexibility at Salisbury, including Wilton Parkway.
6. Operation of some daily direct trains from Waterloo to Barnstaple by extending some services that currently terminates at Exeter St David's.
7. Capacity: (a) sufficient parking at stations to cater for existing usage and likely growth; (b) sufficient train capacity to cater for the consistent patronage growth trends along all parts of the line.

## Current Work

Network Rail(NR) are currently considering opportunities for the 'Diversionary Resilience' of the line and considering options for improving infrastructure between Castle Cary and Exeter via Yeovil. The aim of this work is provide a diversionary route to the Exeter to Paddington GWR main line and simultaneously address overcrowding on the WoEL, primarily between Axminster and Exeter.



*Figure 1 – Castle Cary to Exeter (via Yeovil) Diversionary Route – Courtesy Network Rail*

NR hopes to deliver these improvements in Control Period 6 (CP6) (2019-2024) and they are currently working on a range of cost estimates for the various options for DfT's consideration and selection. It is hoped that the DfT will include the selected option(s) in the Initial Industry Plan (IIP) for CP6, the publication of which is currently anticipated.

# Agenda Item 9

South West Trains (SWT) implemented timetable improvements in December 2015. The passenger take up on these new routes has been good as were loadings on the trial summer Saturday and Bank Holiday Monday service, which were supported by Dorset CC to provide journey opportunities from Salisbury, Gillingham and Sherborne to Weymouth from Saturday 28 May 2016 until Saturday 3 September.

Further timetabling improvements have been introduced in December 2016 including:

- *Fridays only*  
2340 Waterloo to Salisbury is extended to Yeovil Junction
- *Saturdays only*
  - 0725 Exeter to Waterloo strengthened to 6 carriages.
  - 2020 Waterloo to Yeovil Junction extended to Axminster
- *Sundays only*
  - Additional 1710 Salisbury to Frome service via Warminster and Westbury.
  - 1852 Salisbury to Waterloo is extended to start back from Frome at 1804.

However the ability to deliver further improvements is constrained by the current infrastructure. For faster journey times between Exeter and London, significant infrastructure improvements are needed and to this end The Heart of The South West LEP (HoSW LEP) submitted a Transport Majors bid (July 2016) seeking £2.5m funding for "Capacity and Resilience for Exeter to Castle Cary via Yeovil, including Devon Metro". The bid had support from the Dorset, West of England, and Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LEPs. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful and alternative funding sources will be explored.

The WoEL SG has also established that there is now a need for a timetable study, to identify which elements of the Salisbury to Yeovil route should be restored to double track in order to give the best potential for service enhancements. The HoSW LEP has prepared a brief for this work and Network Rail has indicated a cost in the region of £13K/£15k. The HoSW LEP has sought contributions from the relevant Local Authorities to cover the cost.

## **Next steps for the WoEL SG**

The outcome of NR's 'Diversionary Resilience' work and any subsequent selection of options for inclusion in the forthcoming IIP for CP6 will give a firm indication of the infrastructure that will be delivered in CP6.

Similarly the outcome of the HoSW LEP's Majors Bid submission and the DfT's response to the PRTF's 'Closing the Gap' report could have a significant impact on the ability to deliver meaningful improvements on this line.

The delivery of rail infrastructure improvements at Yeovil will be key factor in determining to what degree and when the above strands of work and the strategic aims of the WoEL SG could be implemented.

The group meets quarterly (next on 31 January) to consider the above and will continue to work towards establishing a proven business case, with expert guidance for both NR and TOC representatives and to exhort the DfT (Rail Executive) to bring forward the necessary schemes to deliver the 7 key strategic aims.