

DEVON AND EXETER RAIL PROJECT WORKING PARTY

18 January 2019

Present:

Devon County Council:

Councillors K Ball (Chairman), M Squires, A Leadbetter, Y Atkinson, R Bloxham, J Clatworthy, J Hodgson, J Mathews, D Sellis, C Slade and N Way

Exeter City Council

Councillor R Sutton

East Devon District Council

Councillor B Bailey

Mid Devon District Council

Councillors B Deed and T Snow

Teignbridge District Council

Councillor J Goodey

Torbay Council

Councillor I Doggett

Apologies

Councillors T Wardle, R Longhurst, D Luggar, R Prowse and A Eastman

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Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2018 be signed as a correct record.

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Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

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Structure and Membership of Future Meetings

The Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment reported to the Working Party on the structure and membership of future meetings, following agreement at the previous meeting to develop the Working Party into a forum working with the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership.

A Devon Rail Forum was suggested as a future format, which would be managed by the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, with administrative support from the Council's Transport Service, independent of the Council's formal committee structure.

In discussion with Members and Officers regarding the new meeting format, the following points were made:

- that Councillor Ball continued as Chair for the first year;
- that Members considered the frequency, membership and format of future meetings, to be incorporated into the Terms of Reference;
- that membership be reduced to one Member per Local Authority (unless relevant to a local Member) thereby allowing other interested parties and/or user groups to input and attend;

- that unelected Members and voting rights be clear in the new format;
- that Network Rail and South Western Railway along with Great Western Railway be represented and attend the new meetings;
- establish if Plymouth City Council wanted to be included in the new format;
- suggested future agenda items included – finance and Local Authority contributions, an overview for freight on rail, Dawlish, and Marsh Barton; and
- that the date of the first meeting should be in June.

RESOLVED that draft Terms of Reference be circulated to the current Working Party by the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment for consideration at the next meeting in its new format.

* **23** **Update from Devon and Cornwall Partnership**

The Working Party received a presentation from Richard Burningham, Manager, Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership which covered the following:

- the Partnership worked primarily on rural branch lines, but not exclusively, extending from Axminster to Cornwall. It had arrangements with South Western Railway, and now covered the East Devon Line;
- Its core partners were Devon County Council, Cornwall Council, Great Western Railway, South Western Railway, Cross Country Trains, Plymouth City Council and the University of Plymouth;
- its core aims included promoting the use of trains, seeking improvements to services and facilities; boosting local economies of the places served via their rail link, and working to link the railway and community;
- passenger numbers had increased from last year;
- good marketing through their website which publicised the scenic branch lines; use of social media, targeted ads, printed publicity, work with South West Coast Paths and others;
- Foodie Guides on the Avocet Line; and
- improving Services through e.g. the launch of extra trains between Newton Abbot and Paignton and an all-year Tamar Valley line on Sundays.

Points raised in discussion with Members included:

- the Partnership had not explored freight on branch lines, as their focus was on the passenger service only;
- problems of overcrowding on the Tarka line and the use of only two-carriage trains;
- a new shared prosperity fund that would in the future be replacing the EU fund; and
- the problem of only two bicycles being allowed on trains, preventing group cycle travel.

* **24** **Update from Great Western Railway**

Lewis Ward, the Assistant Regional Development Manager at Great Western Railway, provided an update to the Working Party which covered:

- performance had improved in recent weeks with high speed services in particular seeing the benefit of the live electrification of the line between Newbury and Paddington thereby improving punctuality;
- performance improvement also around Bristol as a result of the Filton Bank Four Tracking;
- driver/guard training was ongoing creating crew shortages which impacted travel at weekends, but the training programme was soon coming to an end and benefits would be seen in 2019;
- phased timetable changes would take place during May and September, including a phased introduction of new and refurbished trains;

- 2019 would see more high-speed fleet working on mainlines;
- much work was going on at the Exeter depot to support the new faster trains, where the challenge was maintaining service as usual;
- the station gate at Exeter had been widened creating two new portals, plus the customer service section was also being looked at to speed up movement through;
- CCTV and Wi-Fi had been introduced at some stations, with real-time information now available at Polsloe Bridge;
- business discussions were ongoing regarding ticket vending machines;
- improved lighting and other works were due to take place on St Clément's Lane, off St David's Hill, Exeter, utilising match funding;
- a lot of engineering work would be coming up this year, with major works between Tiverton and Taunton and other pockets of work which may affect Sunday travel, advice was to check GWR website; and
- Access for All funding had been granted for the bridge at Totnes, and work on other locations was ongoing;

In discussion with Members and Mr Ward, the following points were made:

- that allowing more than two bicycles on trains was at the Guard's discretion, but longer distance trains did have other arrangements whereon bicycles could be booked;
- trains were being refurbished now for use on the Tarka line, although the work was slower than anticipated, it was expected to have five available by May;
- dialogue was ongoing with Network Rail on the accessibility of Polsloe Bridge and St Thomas, with stations being ranked in priority for higher footfall; and
- Great Western Railway would be happy to hear from local groups regarding the setup of cycle hire at Totnes.

RESOLVED that Mr Ward would revert to Councillors Doggett and Clatworthy respectively with updates on the toilet and lift facilities at Torbay; and the disabled access at Dawlish/Teignmouth.

* **25** **Update on Government Rail Review**

The Working Party noted the Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment (PTE/19/3) which provided an update on the Government Rail Review.

The Secretary of State for Transport had announced an independent review of rail franchising and structures following the widely publicised issues with the introduction of new timetables over the Summer, the surrender of the East Coast franchise by Stagecoach and issues with infrastructure projects.

The independent review would look at the whole rail industry and the first step of the review was a call for evidence which was available for online completion. The closing date originally set for 18 January 2019 had been extended to 31 May 2019.

* **26** **St James - Exeter City FC Match Days**

(Councillor Aves attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(2) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Working Party.)

In accordance with Standing Order 23(2), Councillor Atkinson had asked that the Working Party consider this item.

Councillor Aves welcomed the news that the Department for Transport had agreed to the platform two extension at St James Park Station.

Currently, the platform was only 37m long meaning that only one or two coach trains could stop, using only the front two doors. There was concern also about the safety of people wanting to disembark in a hurry, especially on conflicting match days at Sandy Park.

Network Railway had agreed, as part of the Devon Metro Strategy, that certain stations were going to have platform extensions and St James Park was one of them. An announcement from Network Rail on the extension to the platform later this year would be eagerly anticipated.

* **27** **Date of New Meeting**

A suggested date for the next meeting in its new format was Friday 7 June 2019 at County Hall.

The Meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 3.20 pm