

PROPOSAL TO INTEGRATE PENINSULA RAIL TASK FORCE INTO PENINSULA TRANSPORT STB

3 September 2020

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

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- (a) the Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF) becomes an integrated part of the Peninsula Transport Sub-National Transport Body governance arrangements;
- (b) the amended PRTF terms of reference be approved as set out in Appendix I.

1. Background/Introduction

This paper recommends integrating the Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF) within the Peninsula Transport Sub National Transport Body (PTSTB) governance arrangements. The successful partnership working of the five constituent local authorities and two Local Enterprise Partnerships through the PRTF provided the platform for establishing the PTSTB overarching organisation and it logically sits as a thematic sub-group of the STB. There are advantages in doing this as it will deliver further efficiencies with reduced duplication, including decision-making processes, communications activities and stakeholder engagement.

2. Main Text/Proposal

The PRTF was formed in response to the severe weather incidents of 2012, 2013 and 2014, which brought into sharp focus the vulnerability of the South West Peninsula mainline railway. The task force brought together the 5 local authorities of Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council, Devon County Council, Torbay Council and Somerset County Council and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly and Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnerships to produce a 20-year blueprint plan, 'Closing the Gap'. This document made the case for investing in rail to achieve a more resilient and better-connected railway, with greater capacity and comfort on services. The ability to speak with a single voice and engaging positively with rail industry leaders, stakeholders and Government with support from its MPs provided the strong foundation for establishing the Peninsula Transport Sub National Transport Body (PTSTB).

The PTSTB has now been operational since November 2018, with responsibility for developing the sub region's transport vision and strategy; prioritising interventions for its geographic area, and overseeing the budget for all its activities. PRTF and PTSTB currently have separate decision-making boards, separate communications activities and different stakeholder engagement forums, which slightly confuses the structure. There is duplication and inefficiencies, which could be addressed if PRTF was formally integrated as a thematic sub-group of the PTSTB.

PRTF would continue to meet as it is a well-established brand and recognised as the key forum for rail industry partners engaging with the peninsula on strategic rail matters. Responses to consultations, communications and meetings with Ministers/MPs will still be headed up by an elected member (Chair

of PRTF). The Chair of PRTF will be supported by local authority senior officers, the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Chair or Vice Chair of the PTSTB core stakeholder group ('Transport Forum'). With the exception of Torbay Council, the elected members who represent the constituent authorities on the PRTF and PTSTB boards are the same portfolio holders so there is logic for key decisions on strategic rail matters to be escalated to the PTSTB Board rather than the PRTF Board¹. The proposed responsibilities of the group are set out in the revised terms of reference in Appendix I.

There will be further efficiencies through the commission of a single communications contract to oversee all strategic transport activities of the PTSTB, rather than the current separate arrangements for PRTF and PTSTB. The PRTF will also be able to draw upon the PTSTB Transport Forum for any input to strategic rail matters.

3. Options/Alternatives

'Do nothing' was considered where the two separate board processes for PRTF and the PTSTB would continue to co-exist; however, this did not seem the most efficient way to operate.

The option to abolish PRTF is also not recommended. PRTF has established a strong brand, a position of recognition and traction within the rail industry and wider government. This is an asset which would be lost if abolished. PTSTB will include rail and freight strategies within the transport strategy for the South West Peninsula. Integration of PRTF and PTSTB will ensure that the strategic rail and freight issues are presented with 'one-voice' for the region.

In structure terms, the PRTF sits comfortably as a sub-group of the PTSTB which has a wider remit for all strategic transport matters. By adopting this formal arrangement there is potential for future modal sub groups to be set up as the PTSTB develops. Unlike on the PTSTB, the Local Enterprise Partnerships are able to vote on PRTF Board matters; however, LEP representatives will continue to influence all recommendations / papers put forward by PRTF to the PTSTB Board as agreement will be reached through consensus by PRTF members.

4. Consultations

This proposal was discussed at the PRTF Board on 23 January 2020, where the relationship between the modal focus of the PRTF and the wider remit of the PTSTB as the overarching strategic transport organisation was explained. Members recognised the need to retain the PRTF brand but could see the sense in simplifying the decision-making processes and combining the communications activities to cover all strategic transport activities of the PTSTB. PRTF activities are already funded and managed through the PTSTB.

5. Financial Considerations

There are expected to be financial efficiencies, particularly through combining the two separate PRTF and PTSTB communications activities into a single commission.

6. Environmental Considerations

At the current time, with the COVID19 restrictions in place, virtual meetings are in place, delivering carbon emission savings through a significant reduction in the need to travel. This is likely to continue

¹ in Torbay Council the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture sits on PTSTB and Climate Change Member Champion sits on PRTF

for the foreseeable future. In the event of a return to physical, face-to-face meetings, the proposed changes will reduce the number of meetings elected members need to attend, thereby reducing the need to travel. As membership of the PTSTB extends from Cornwall to Somerset, attendance at meetings can involve long distances so there will be some carbon emission savings as a result of this.

7. Other Considerations

This report has no specific equality, sustainability, risk management, public health or legal implications.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

The establishment of the PTSTB created an overarching strategic transport body responsible for developing and prioritising its strategic transportation plans across the Peninsula geographic area. The PRTF has a rail focus and therefore sits naturally within the PTSTB governance arrangements as a modal sub-group but it currently has separate decision-making and communications activity functions. By incorporating it within the PTSTB framework, it would retain the PRTF brand, which is well established with industry partners, MPs and Government. Through formalising these arrangements in line with Appendix I it would create a clearer structure and would deliver efficiencies in decision-making, communications activities and through future stakeholder engagement.

Appendix I

Peninsula Rail Task Force

Terms of Reference

1 Purpose

- 1.1 These terms of reference concern the Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF), which is a sub-group of the Peninsula Transport Sub National Transport Body (STB). It has specific responsibility for working with the rail industry to develop a prioritised investment plan for strategic rail improvements that support the rail objectives of the Peninsula's Regional Transport Strategy.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 PRTF was formed in 2013 to campaign for greater rail investment and create a 'fit for purpose' railway that would ensure the South West economy can thrive and grow. PRTF comprises the 5 Local Authorities of Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council, Devon County Council, Torbay Council and Somerset County Council and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly and Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- 2.2 A series of severe weather incidents, culminating in the severance of the railway at Dawlish in February 2014, brought into sharp focus the vulnerability of the South West Peninsula mainline with significant economic impacts affecting business, commuting, leisure, retail and education travel into and out of the South West Peninsula.
- 2.3 The South West Peninsula is an important economy with a population of 2.2m, with 1.1m jobs, contributing over £36bn of GVA to the national economy. The Peninsula has significant opportunities for sustained growth; however, improvements to the rail network to enhance resilience, connectivity and address capacity constraints are fundamental if the sub region is to fulfil its economic potential.
- 2.4 In 2016 the PRTF produced its 'Closing the Gap' 20 year Strategic Rail Plan, which is a blueprint that sets out the Peninsula's rail improvements to achieve the following objectives –

- A resilient and reliable railway
- Faster journey times and better connectivity
- Sufficient capacity and better comfort.

2.5 Following publication of the PRTF's Strategic Rail Plan, the Government and rail industry track and train partners have been successfully working with the PRTF to identify priority projects, which has seen significant investment and delivery of resilience, connectivity and capacity improvements across the geographic area.

2.6 This document sets out the revised terms of reference for the PRTF, following its recent inclusion within the Peninsula Transport STB governance arrangements.

3 Role

3.1 The PRTF will:

- Adopt a strategic role. It will coordinate local stakeholders, provide overall direction and identify options for schemes of strategic importance to the South West Peninsula economy. The PRTF will have regard to local rail improvement schemes current, scheduled or required in the future.
- Be responsible for the preparation of strategic rail plans in support of the STB Regional Transport Strategy and associated development workstreams. Responsibility for promoting local rail, travel to work area service enhancements remains with the constituent local authorities; however PRTF should include them.
- Ensure that future strategic rail priorities align with the relevant Peninsula Transport STB regional transport priorities as stated in reports and evidence base, i.e. the Vision / Transport Strategy, Carbon Transition Strategy, Freight Study etc.
- Commission analysis, business case development and technical assessment work for all elements of the existing and future Peninsula Strategic Rail Plans, including inputting to and supporting Network Rail's Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) work. The current plan will likely need a refresh as the STB develops its transport

vision and strategy and the PRTF will be responsible for overseeing this work.

- Regularly engage with rail industry partners to keep informed of latest rail developments (i.e. franchise announcements, reviews, consultations etc.) so that the PRTF can influence future plans and programmes.
- Prepare and submit responses to Government consultations on rail industry issues.
- Will secure a broad consensus on its strategic rail plans through a programme of consultation and engagement to ensure that the views of key stakeholders including Members of Parliament are taken into account and reflected in plans for the future of railway services to and from the south west peninsula. This will involve utilising the Peninsula Transport STB Stakeholder Group, which has representatives from major business and education institutions and transport operators and bodies across the geographic area.
- Use a robust evidence base on which to lobby for the required funding to deliver the Peninsula's Strategic Rail Plan improvement schemes and projects through Network Rail's Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) process.

4 Aim and Objectives

4.1 PRTF aim

Through the Peninsula Transport's Rail Strategy ensure an enhanced rail network is delivered, that will achieve an increased rate of growth across the South West Peninsula, realising economic benefits and increasing competitiveness with other parts of the country through improved connectivity.

4.2 PRTF objectives

The PRTF's 'Closing the gap' 20-year plan for investment sought to close the growing gap between the South West and the rest of the UK and gain Government agreement for the delivery of schemes that achieve incremental improvements to resilience, journey times, connectivity, capacity and comfort as quickly as possible. The PRTF has been and will continue to work closely with the Department for Transport, Network Rail and train operating companies to oversee delivery of the following; however, these are likely to be reviewed with the emerging refresh of the rail strategy, a greater emphasis on decarbonisation and reflecting upon the impacts of COVID19 impacts on

rail services:

4.3 Resilience and reliability

- Full protection of the coastal route via Dawlish
- Enhanced resilience of track and equipment at vulnerable locations, including north of Cowley Bridge and the Somerset levels
- Increased capacity on diversion routes, for example the West of England mainline
- Improvements to rolling stock to enable all year round services running during poor weather conditions on the seawall

4.4 Reducing journey times and better connectivity

- Upgrade signalling
- Increasing line speeds
- Reducing dwell times through better technology, including automatic doors, better passenger information about vacant seats etc
- Opportunities for discrete electrification

4.5 Increasing capacity and comfort

- Higher frequencies
- Increasing the amount of rolling stock available for service and ensuring
- Revised calling patterns
- Availability of continuous mobile connectivity to enable work whilst travelling

5 Membership

5.1 The membership for the PRTF will consist of the following–

Members

No. of Members

Peninsula Rail Task Force Chair (Cabinet Member elected by Peninsula Transport STB)	I
Cornwall Council (Senior Officer)	I
Devon County Council (Senior Officer)	I
Plymouth City Council (Senior Officer)	I
Somerset County Council (Senior Officer)	I
Torbay Council (Senior Officer)	I
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership (representative)	I
Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (representative)	I
Chair or Vice Chair of Peninsula Transport STB Stakeholder Group	I
Total	9

5.2 Appointments to the PRTF will be made through the usual governance procedure of constituent organisations.

6 Chair

6.1 The Chair of the PRTF will rotate biennially amongst the elected membership of the PT Board. The rotation will be defined alphabetically by Local Authority with no single organisation holding the chair for more than two successive years.

6.2 A year is defined as the municipal year of the host local authority.

7 Decision Making

7.1 The Chair of the PRTF will be responsible for signing off letters / consultation responses on all rail-related issues, in consultation with officers and Communications support contractors and will continue to consult with and meet Ministers / MPs.

7.2 The PRTF will be responsible for preparing the relevant papers / reports with recommendations referred to the Peninsula Transport STB Board with elected Members entitled to vote in accordance with section 9 of the

Peninsula Transport STB Constitution. Such recommendations will be agreed through consensus of the PRTF Members listed in section 5.1.

8 Meeting Administration and Support

- 8.1 Secretariat support will be provided by Plymouth City Council.
- 8.2 Written notice of meetings, along with the agenda and associated papers will be sent to members at least five clear working days in advance of any meeting. Late items will be distributed or tabled only in exceptional circumstances with the agreement of the Chair.
- 8.3 Officer technical support for the PRTF will be provided by Local Authority staff, representatives of the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the communications support team. Such officers will be required to attend meetings of the PRTF as necessary.

9 Agenda

- 9.1 The agenda of the PRTF will normally be prepared by the PRTF secretariat support officer in consultation with the Chair. Members of the PRTF will be invited to propose agenda items which are relevant to the priorities of the PRTF. Partner organisations proposing agenda items will be responsible for the production of all relevant reports and papers relating to that item.
- 9.2 Members of the PRTF may, from time to time, arrange for other individuals to attend meetings of the partnership in a supporting or advisory capacity with the approval of the Chair. Other officers or individuals may be invited to attend PRTF meetings to provide information or advice about specific matters, at the discretion of the Chair.

10 Frequency of meetings

- 10.1 The PRTF will meet quarterly to receive updates from rail industry partners and discuss any matters relating to its role set out in section 3. The date and time of the meetings will be fixed by the secretariat in consultation with constituent organisations.
- 10.2 Where required, extraordinary meetings can be held with the agreement of the Chair.

11 Conduct

- 11.1 Members of the PRTF will be expected to adhere to any code of conduct that applies to them.

12 Access to Information

- 12.1 The PRTF will be subject to access and procedure rules as set out in the constitution of the host local authority.

13 Communications

- 13.1 Communications support for PRTF will be managed by Plymouth City Council who are the lead authority for finance and communications for the Peninsula Transport STB. This will include responsibility for commissioning any specialist external communications support for website management, stakeholder engagement and lobbying activities.