

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday 9th December 2020

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BALL
Re: Okehampton Parkway Station

My question relates to the proposed Okehampton Parkway station, to be built on the eastern side of the town.

Previously, the Leader had wanted to wait until the Government confirmed the project, which was done in November's National Infrastructure Strategy. I appreciate that, currently, there is still no commencement date, but that is only a matter of time before it is confirmed, and could be early as January 2021.

This station is vital for the new rail service, as a considerable percentage of the population of the town live within walking distance of the proposed Parkway station, however even more importantly, it will also enable easier access off the A30 bypass for those travelling to Okehampton from further afield to access the rail network.

I appreciate there is already an amount from the Airport sale, ring fenced for the Okehampton to Exeter rail project. However would the Leader of the Council now consider putting aside additional provisional capital towards the build costs of the much needed Parkway station, to put us in a good position to start building as soon as is practically possible.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR DAVIS

We have been working very closely with Network Rail and GWR to progress the re-opening of the Okehampton to Exeter line. It is through our close working relationship with rail partners and stakeholders and lobbying behind the scenes that has gained momentum and traction with Government and we are led to believe the formal announcement is now imminent.

We have been clear through discussions with partners on the project that the reopening of the rail line between Okehampton Town Station and Exeter is the first part of a strategy for the Dartmoor line. Future phases will include a Parkway station, serving a wider catchment of West Devon, Torridge and North Cornwall residents and increased frequency of services.

As part of planning for the future phases we have used some of our Invest in Devon funds to deliver the Parkway feasibility study and we are currently funding platform design work to ensure that when the track renewals take place as part of the reopening, it is in the correct position to make delivery of a new Parkway station easier and more cost effective.

We have funds available to progress a planning application but as with other new stations at Newcourt, Cranbrook and Marsh Barton, we will need funding from a cocktail of sources, some of which would be a County Council contribution. We have been successful in achieving this in the past and I am sure this would be no exception.