

Impact Assessment



Assessment of: Okehampton Interchange Station

Service: Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Head of Service: Jamie Hulland

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1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

Following the successful reopening of the Dartmoor Line in 2021, proposals have been developed to deliver a second station on the eastern edge of Okehampton comprising of a single platform station with associated transport interchange facilities. Funding for the delivery of a second station in Okehampton was secured in 2023 through a successful application to the Levelling Up Fund tranche 2.

2. Proposal, aims and objectives, and reason for change or review

The aim of the proposals is to provide an alternative to the private car for journeys between Okehampton and Exeter, and offering choice of rail travel for the wider rural area including West Devon, parts of Torridge and North Cornwall. In recent years, a significant amount of housing has been delivered on the eastern edge of Okehampton, however, from this part of the town the existing railway station is not easily accessed. It is proposed that a new station, named Okehampton Interchange, is constructed at the eastern edge of Okehampton, providing easy access to the rail network for people living in the area.

The station site itself will consist of a single platform station, with a station car park (offering disabled bays and some EV chargepoints), bus stop and shelter, improved cycling and walking routes between the station and the nearby residential catchment, as well as cycle parking. Provision of these additional facilities will create a genuine transport interchange, enabling multi-modal journeys, resulting in increased access to education, employment and leisure opportunities for all residents, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

The station location and inclusion of the station car park increases the station catchment area significantly, particularly as it is 2 minutes from the main A30 trunk road. This would provide a genuine alternative to the longer distance car journeys for people travelling to Exeter and beyond, from the majority of West Devon, and even as far as North Cornwall.

The benefits Okehampton Interchange would bring to the area include:

- Addressing the climate emergency through encouraging sustainable travel through modal shift away from the private car;
- Increased opportunities for people to thrive by removing transport related barriers to education, employment and services, consistent with the Levelling Up agenda;
- Maximising patronage on the Dartmoor Line helping ensure its commercial viability.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

Limitations

A significant risk to the delivery of the new station is the spending deadline imposed as a condition of the funding. Delivery of the station requires detailed and sensitive ecological works to be carried out to minimise the impact the new station will have on any protected species present in the area, for example dormice. To achieve this, certain ecological licences are required, with initial site clearance works restricted to specific times of the year. It is essential to adhere to these restrictions to help protect nature, and efforts to undertake ecological mitigation and biodiversity enhancement works at the earliest opportunity will enable completion of the works within the spending timescale.

Furthermore, the requirement to offset any habitat loss during the construction of the station with suitable, and crucially connected, land could limit the overall size of the construction land.

Alternatives

One alternative option would be to reduce the scope of the project by removing the transport interchange proposals. This would likely reduce the overall attractiveness of the station, particularly those travelling from further afield (i.e. rural West Devon, Torridge and North Cornwall) to access the rail network, which would impact on patronage levels.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

The people potentially affected by the proposals are primarily people living or working within the Okehampton area, as well as people wishing to travel by rail from the wider West Devon area. Therefore, the diversity profile for the Okehampton area is presented below, along with the wider West Devon area. Devon and England are used as a comparator.

Age

It can be seen below in Table 1 that the population in Okehampton has similar proportions of people in each age category as Devon as a whole, which is somewhat older than the

national average. The population in the wider West Devon region is proportionally older than Devon as a whole, with 28.5% of resident aged 65 or over.

TABLE 1 AGE (CENSUS 2021)

Geography	Total	% Age 0-19	% Age 20-64	% Age 65+
Okehampton	7,710	21.9%	52.8%	25.3%
West Devon	57,096	19.2%	52.3%	28.5%
Devon	811,638	20.3%	53.9%	25.8%
England	56,490,048	23.1%	58.5%	18.4%

The 2022 National Travel Survey (NTS), as can be seen below in Table 2, indicates that people aged between 17 and 20 make proportionally more trips by bus and surface rail than any other age group. Further, higher proportions of journeys made by people aged between 21 and 49 use surface rail than the national average.

In contrast to surface rail, younger and older people tend to be more reliant on buses, with those aged 0-16 and 65+ making a greater proportion of their trips by bus than the national average.

The proportion of trips made by cycle is seen to be consistent across all age groups, with no discernible patterns.

TABLE 2 TRIPS MODE PER PERSON PER YEAR BY AGE GROUP (NTS 2022)

Trips per person per year										
Mode		All ages	0-16	17-20	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Surface Rail	No.	15	6	27	28	21	23	17	11	3
	%	1.8%	0.8%	4.1%	3.5%	2.2%	2.3%	1.8%	1.2%	0.4%
Local Buses (outside London)	No.	23	24	68	25	18	20	17	16	27
	%	2.7%	3.1%	10.3%	3.2%	1.8%	2.0%	1.9%	1.8%	3.5%
Cycle	No.	15	14	10	11	18	25	20	14	7
	%	1.8%	1.9%	1.5%	1.4%	1.9%	2.5%	2.1%	1.5%	0.9%
All modes	No.	862	780	658	788	954	994	936	920	765

Ethnicity

The 2021 Census, see Table 3, shows that Okehampton, West Devon and Devon are considerably less ethnically diverse than England as a whole with 97% of the population in Okehampton and Devon being White, compared to the national average of 81%. In Okehampton and West Devon, people identifying as having Mixed or multiple ethnic groups form the largest non-white ethnicity with just over 1%.

TABLE 3 ETHNICITY (CENSUS 2021)

Geography	Total	% White	% Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	% Asian / Asian British	% Black / African / Caribbean/ Black British	% Other ethnic group
Okehampton	7,714	96.9%	1.2%	0.9%	0.2%	0.7%
West Devon	57,094	97.8%	1.1%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%
Devon	811,642	96.4%	1.4%	1.5%	0.3%	0.5%
England	56,490,048	81.0%	3.0%	9.6%	4.2%	2.2%

White adults are significantly more likely to live in a household with a car/van (85%) than either Black/African/Caribbean/Black British adults (68%) or people from other ethnic groups (75%). The proportions of mixed or multiple ethnic group adults and Asian or Asian British adults living in a household with a car or van are closer to the corresponding figure for White adults, at 79% and 83%, respectively. This indicates that Black people are more likely to be reliant on public transport than White people to meet their transport needs.

Health and disability

As is seen in Table 4, the proportion of people reporting to be in bad or very bad health at the 2021 Census is similar across all geographies considered, and is similar to the national average. The proportion of people reporting to be in very good or good health is slightly lower in Okehampton (79%) than in West Devon (80%), Devon as a whole (81%) and the national average (82%). Similarly, the proportion of people who are not disabled under the Equality Act increases as the geographical area increases.

There are proportionally more disabled people in Okehampton than the national average, with 8.6% reporting at the 2021 Census that their daily activities are limited a lot by disability, and a further 13% reporting that their daily activities are limited a little by disability.

TABLE 4 HEALTH AND DISABILITY (CENSUS 2021)

Geography	% Activities limited a	% Activities limited a	% Not disabled under the	% Very good and	% Fair health	% Very bad and
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	lot by disability	little by disability	Equality Act	good health		bad health
Okehampton	8.6%	13.0%	78.4%	78.7%	15.5%	5.8%
West Devon	8.2%	12.6%	79.2%	80.2%	14.4%	5.3%
Devon	7.7%	11.8%	80.5%	81.4%	13.5%	5.2%
England	7.3%	10.0%	82.7%	82.2%	12.7%	5.2%

The 2022 National Travel Survey reveals that on average, disabled people make fewer trips per year than non-disabled people, however they make proportionally more trips by bus than non-disabled people. In contrast, disabled people make proportionally fewer trips by surface rail than non-disabled people.

Gender

As in England overall, there are slightly more females than males in all geographies considered. On average, females make slightly fewer trips in total than males, but make proportionally more trips on foot or by bus than males.

Socio-economic

The proportion of households not deprived in any of the four dimensions (education, employment, health and housing), as can be seen in Table 5, is lower in Okehampton than the national average, while the wider West Devon region and Devon as a whole show similar proportions to the national average. The proportion of households deprived in three or four dimensions in Okehampton is similar to the national average, while in the wider West Devon region and Devon as a whole a slightly smaller proportion of households are deprived in three or four dimensions.

TABLE 5 HOUSEHOLD DEPRIVATION (CENSUS 2021)

Geography	% Household is not deprived in any dimension	% Household is deprived in one or two dimensions	% Household is deprived in three or four dimensions
Okehampton	43.8	52.6	3.7
West Devon	49.3	48.0	2.7
Devon	49.6	47.6	2.8
England	48.4	47.6	3.9

The 2022 National Travel Survey reveals that those in the lowest income quintile make significantly fewer total trips per year than those in the upper two quintiles. The proportion of trips made by bus are highest for those in the lowest income quintile at 6%, which

generally declines with increasing income quintiles. In contrast, the proportion of trips made by surface rail is seen to generally increase with increasing income quintiles.

TABLE 6 TRIP MODE BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (NTS 2022)

Trips per person per year							
Mode		All income quintiles	1 st income quintile	2 nd income quintile	3 rd income quintile	4 th income quintile	5 th income quintile
Surface Rail	No.	15	12	9	13	19	24
	% of all trips	1.8%	1.6%	1.0%	1.5%	2.0%	2.6%
Local Buses (outside London)	No.	23	46	29	18	11	14
	% of all trips	3%	6%	3%	2%	1%	3%
Cycle	No.	15	15	12	14	22	14
	% of all trips	1.7%	2%	1.4%	1.6%	2.4%	1.6%
All	No.	862	754	845	873	930	900

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

The following stakeholders have been identified:

- Network Rail – the owner and organisation responsible for operating, maintaining and renewing rail infrastructure
- Great Western Railway (GWR) – the train operating company who would lease the Okehampton Interchange Station from Network Rail. GWR currently operate trains on the Dartmoor Line and would stand to benefit from increased patronage as a result of the new station.
- Stagecoach South West and Dartline – the bus operators on routes serving the new Okehampton Interchange station. They could see an increase in patronage as a result of people using their bus to access the new station; however, it could reduce

patronage on the longer distance bus journeys to Exeter (Stagecoach service) if the station abstracts existing bus trips to rail.

- Sustrans – the custodians of the National Cycle Network, of which route NCN 27 runs nearby. The improved cycle links between the station and the town centre which will be delivered alongside the station could increase the usage and profile of the NCN route 27.
- OkeRail – a local group who campaigned for the reopening of the Dartmoor Line. The Okehampton Interchange Station proposals are likely to align with their goals.
- Dartmoor Railway Association – a volunteer organisation based at Okehampton Town Station. As with OkeRail, the proposals are likely to be aligned with the association’s goals; however footfall may be reduced with some trips reassigning to the new Okehampton Interchange Station.
- West Devon Borough Council – the local planning authority and partner in securing funding from the Levelling Up Fund for delivery of Okehampton Interchange. Delivery of Okehampton Interchange would benefit them as it may accelerate delivery of housing and employment developments in the town and support sustainable growth with more attractive alternatives to the car.

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment

- Census 2021
- National Travel Survey 2022

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

The plans have been developed through collaboration with key stakeholders, including Network Rail, Great Western Railway and West Devon Borough Council and the site has been allocated through the Plymouth and South Devon Joint Local Plan, which was subject to a statutory consultation process. More recently, the Levelling Up Fund submission received letters of support from a variety of stakeholders including the local MP, Peninsula Transport Sub National Transport Body, Okehampton Town Council, Network Rail, Great Western Railway, Stagecoach and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership.

Background information

8. Equality analysis

Under the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must consider how people will be affected by a service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of

opportunity and foster good relations across protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (for work), sex, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are: informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations; proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision); fair, necessary, reasonable, and those affected have been adequately consulted.

- a) Is this group negatively or potentially negatively impacted, and in what way?
- b) What could be done or has been done to remove the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage and inequalities?
- c) In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?
- d) What can be done to advance equality further? This could include meeting specific needs, ensuring equality of opportunity and access, encouraging participation, empowering people, making adjustments for disabled people and action to reduce disparities and inequalities.
- e) Is there a need to foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promote understanding) and help people to be safe and protected from harm? What can be done?

[Answer the questions above for each of the characteristics below. Use the data, consultation and research sections 4 and 5 as evidence. If carrying out an options appraisal, explore the pros and cons of each option for each characteristic. Delete this note]

All residents by geographic area

Increased access to the rail network could lead to abstraction of patronage from bus services operating along similar routes, adversely impacting the viability of the bus services. The impacts on bus services will be minimised by enhancing the integration between bus and rail through the design of the new station and there is expected to be an overall increase in numbers of people travelling by public transport.

People living in close proximity to the new station site may experience short term increased levels of noise and other construction-related pollution, such as dust. Additionally, there may be increased local traffic leading to and from the station site; however, it is expected to reduce car journeys through the town centre. The impacts of the construction work are considered to be proportionate insofar as any residents negatively impacted in the short term would be expected to benefit in the longer term, due to their

improved access to the national rail network. The station site is on the edge of an industrial estate, and therefore it is likely that significant noise and traffic is already generated in the local area, and so the impacts of the construction works are likely to be less perceptible than works in less industrial locations.

Age

Younger people (aged 0-20) and older people (aged 65+) are typically more reliant on bus services than those aged 20-64, as evidenced in Section 4. Furthermore, the proportion of older people in the Okehampton and West Devon areas is significantly higher than the national average, therefore potential bus service reductions due to abstraction to rail may have adverse impacts on younger and older people.

The provision of Okehampton Interchange station would advance equality by removing transport related barriers to opportunities for all age groups, including easier access to education, employment, health care and leisure facilities.

Disability (includes sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people

Disabled people are typically more reliant on bus services than non-disabled people, and therefore may be affected by service reductions should there be significant abstraction of passengers from bus to rail. The delivery of the new rail station is expected to increase the overall numbers of people travelling by public transport.

Although disabled people typically make fewer trips by rail than non-disabled people, efforts have been taken to increase the attractiveness by rail by ensuring the design has step-free access with suitable gradient ramps and the option of a lift providing a seamless connection from the car park to the single platform on the Hameldown Road side of the railway. Accessible links will also be provided from Hameldown Road, conveniently accessed from the footways and bus stop. The station project aims to enhance public transport accessibility for people with mobility issues, enabling them to reach a range of employment, education, retail and leisure opportunities.

The provision of the new station and transport interchange would advance equality by removing transport related barriers to opportunities disabled people and people with long term ill health are particularly in need of.

Race and culture: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion and belief, asylum seeker and refugee status, language needs

Evidence indicates that people of Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnicities, and people from mixed/multiple ethnic groups are significantly more likely to live in a

household without access to car than White people and so may benefit from an improved public transport offer.

The provision of the new station and transport interchange would advance equality by removing transport related barriers to opportunities for people of certain ethnicities and cultures, who are more reliant on public transport.

Sex and gender identity and reassignment (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)

Females are typically more reliant on bus services than males, as evidenced in Section 4 above, and therefore may be affected by service reductions should there be significant abstraction of passengers from bus to rail. The delivery of the new rail station is expected to increase the overall numbers of people travelling by public transport.

In the design of the station, efforts are being taken to ensure that the station includes adequate lighting, CCTV and information points to offer a secure, easily accessible and attractive facility to ensure that all users feel safe.

The provision of Okehampton Interchange station would advance equality by removing transport-related barriers to opportunities for people of all gender identities and including people who are pregnant or with prams.

Sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership if work related

It is not thought that there will be any negative impacts specifically affecting people due to their sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status; however, as described above, efforts are being taken to ensure that the station includes adequate lighting, CCTV and information points to offer a secure, easily accessible and attractive facility to ensure that all users feel safe.

Other relevant socio-economic factors and intersectionality

This includes, where relevant: income, housing, education and skills, language and literacy skills, family background (size/single people/lone parents), sub-cultures, rural isolation, access to services and transport, access to ICT/Broadband, children in care and care experienced people, social connectivity and refugee status/no recourse to public funds. Also consider intersectionality with other characteristics.

People on lower incomes are typically more reliant on public transport than those on higher incomes, as evidenced in Section 4. People in lower income quintiles are less likely to have access to a private car than those in higher income quintiles. Therefore, increasing access to public transport, through the new station and associated interchange, may

particularly benefit those in the lower income quintiles and increase access to economic and educational opportunities further afield.

9. Human rights considerations:

We need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).

There are no relevant human rights considerations for this project.

10. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 11, otherwise complete the environmental analysis information below):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	X
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

- Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

[If carrying out an options appraisal, explore the pros and cons of each option for each area]

Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost

[Insert text]

Conserve and enhance wildlife

[Insert text]

Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape

[Insert text]

Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage

[Insert text]

Minimise greenhouse gas emissions

[Insert text]

Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)

[Insert text]

Contribute to reducing water consumption

[Insert text]

Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level)

[Insert text]

Other (please state below)

[Insert text]

11. Economic analysis

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

[If carrying out an options appraisal, explore the pros and cons of each option for each area]

Impact on knowledge and skills

There is potential for bus service reductions should there be significant abstraction from bus to rail, which could make it more difficult to access educational establishments from certain locations in the wider geography, currently served by existing bus routes but not served by the railway. The integration of bus and rail achieved in the development of the Okehampton Interchange station will help minimise the likelihood of this occurring and it is expected to increase the overall numbers travelling by public transport.

The proposed new station should make it faster and easier for a larger rural catchment to access various educational establishments, such as Exeter College and the University of Exeter. This will enhance the opportunities for residents of these areas to improve their knowledge and skills.

Impact on employment levels

There is potential for bus service reductions should there be significant abstraction from bus to rail, which could make it more difficult to access employment establishments from certain locations served by existing bus routes but not served by the railway. The integration of bus and rail achieved in the development of the Okehampton Interchange station will help minimise the likelihood of this occurring and it is expected to increase the overall numbers travelling by public transport.

The proposed new station would make it easier to access major employers, such as University of Exeter, Exeter College, the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital etc. The new station would help remove transport related barriers to employment, with the expectation that the proposals would increase total employment, and enable individuals already in employment to gain better paying employment from rural West Devon where incomes are low.

Impact on local business

Certain local businesses may see a slight reduction in passing trade due to travellers changing routes or modes of transport as a result of the delivery of the Okehampton Interchange Station.

The new station should give employers access to a wider pool of labour, increasing their productivity. Congestion of the local road network, notably in Okehampton Town Centre, should also be reduced, reducing the transport related time and monetary costs incurred by local businesses.

Additionally, the new station may generate new trips to the area, with the reasonable expectation that those making such trips would spend money in local businesses, such as

shops and cafes, increasing their revenues. The cycle improvements increasing access to leisure opportunities is also expected to support local tourism businesses.