

Truro & Kenwyn Neighbourhood Plan

Meeting of the Transportation and Communications Working Group Thursday 14 December 2011 at 6.15 pm in the Municipal Buildings, Truro

Minutes

ATTENDEES: Councillor A Ayers – Truro City Council
 Councillor B Biscoe – Truro City Council
 Councillor R Ellis – Kenwyn Parish Council
 Councillor C Wells – Truro City Council (Chairman)
 Mr Matt Sidney – Cornwall Council
 Vicky Fraser – Cornwall Council
 Mike Moore – Road Haulage Association
 Mr Roger Gazzard – Town Clerk, Truro City Council

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor David Johns

Item		Action
1.	<p>Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2011 were approved as a correct record, following inclusion of the amendment below:</p> <p>Mr Matt Sidney noted his surname was spelled incorrectly on the last minutes.</p>	-
2.	<p>Rail Studies – Cornwall Council to Report</p> <p>Current Rail Situation Matt Sidney provided a wider context of the Great Western Rail franchise based on a study across Cornwall conducted two to three years ago. He reported First Great Western would not have further franchises after the end of 2012, and a new franchise, prepared by the Department for Transportation (DFT) in discussion with Cornwall Council, would be tendered from 2013. The route would go from Paddington to Penzance, through Oxford, Bristol, and South Wales, though it was pointed out other franchises may also cover the same route. It was clarified the original intention of the government was to have a fifteen year franchise period, but Great Western Rail felt due to work in the areas being covered, and the possible introduction of an 'Intercity Express Programme', a reduction made sense.</p> <p>Additionally, the 'Realising Potential for GP Rail' report made a suggestion of devolution, as it would provide lower cost, better value, and an improvement for passengers. More information would be known in the New Year, following government consideration.</p> <p>Mr Sidney outlined the objective of Cornwall Council: to improve frequency of service, to increase the capacity of carriages and of seats, to make rail travel more affordable, and to increase the amount of travel via rail for domestic use, and also in and out of Cornwall (intra and inter-travel).</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>MS</p> <p>MS</p>

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	<p>Members were informed the proposed franchise should meet the minimum requirements of the current franchise, with at least the same amount of services provided. As an example, Mr Sidney highlighted one of the conditions, which would be a Penzance to Exeter service running every thirty minutes, and a Penzance to Paddington service running hourly. Improvement to the Maritime Line was also cited, as well as the capacity on the line, with the view to add an extra carriage. Local authorities would also have more involvement.</p>	<p>MS</p>
	<p>Delivery Choices</p> <p>The delivery choices for the franchise were highlighted as follows:</p>	<p>MS</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Lobbying government. 2) Buying individual service increments, the option of which would go out with the tender for the franchise. 3) Local capital investment in infrastructure (it was noted the Truro Station improvement programme was currently on hold). 4) Total devolution (to the South West). 	
	<p>It was pointed out some work was ongoing, but there was little time left prior to consultation (January), with a response due in March. The DFT would be providing more information at the stakeholder consultation, and the tender for the deadline would be in the autumn.</p>	<p>MS</p>
	<p>An offer from the DFT was explained to members, outlining if Cornwall funded part of the franchise for three years, and it was successful, the DFT would then take it on and fund it.</p>	<p>MS</p>
	<p>Roger Gazzard asked if there were any short life rail lines in Cornwall. Mr Sidney responded there was the maritime network, which included structures such as the Tamar bridge. Mr Sidney pointed out the maritime line would not be devolved, and would still be funded by the National Rail Network, and therefore Cornwall would still pay a levy towards maintenance.</p>	<p>RG MS</p>
	<p>On a more local level, Mr Sidney referred to the Truro Rail Study, which looked to open more viable rail halts in the medium – long term. Mr Sidney informed members the opening of halts was only possible if higher frequency domestic travel was successful, as without viable, frequent routes the halts would not be used. Reliability of routes was an important factor.</p>	<p>MS</p>
	<p>Councillor Wells added he felt one of the long term goals was to extend the maritime line up to Newquay, and asked Mr Sidney what a realistic time frame for such a goal would be. Mr Sidney responded the Cross Country Study addressed this.</p>	<p>CW MS</p>
	<p>Councillor Biscoe spoke about a halt at Claremont Terrace in Truro, which he had previously discussed with Mr Sidney, with the view to open the halt to provide an access point to the rail network within Truro itself. Councillor Biscoe felt as the goal of the transport network was to service the community and to boost the economy, the halt at Claremont Terrace was suited to meet these goals.</p>	<p>BB</p>

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	<p>Mr Sidney responded by citing issues of cost of building, from the need to hang a station from the existing bridge, and additionally a road would need to be closed. Operational issues (with emphasis on the halt being so close to the existing Truro Station) would also need to be discussed.</p> <p>Councillor Biscoe replied to the above points, suggesting over the long term it would be cheaper to open the halt than to provide road developments to meet the same ends. Councillor Biscoe cited the Falmouth branch line, with its three stations, as an example of a successful scheme providing multiple stops within the same locale, concluding the case for opening the Claremont Terrace halt would be strong for inclusion within the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Councillor Biscoe also informed members he felt momentum needed to be kept up regarding rail studies, to make it possible to make significant and long-lasting changes that would cross multiple franchise tenders.</p> <p>Mr Sidney pointed out understanding business needs would help with decision-making within the Neighbourhood Plan, and may highlight areas of focus, adding South West Trains and Stagecoach Rail also expressed interest in tendering for the franchise. Councillor Wells proposed they, along with anyone else who showed interest, should be invited to a future meeting of the working group.</p> <p>Councillor Ellis added it was vital the rail network was viewed from two angles – inter and intra-county travel, as the two would have very different needs, though sometimes these needs would cross.</p> <p>Councillor Biscoe stated there was a direct relationship between transportation infrastructure and economic activity, and therefore an increase in the traffic coming into the county at a national level would result in travelling over the county (intra-travel) and contributing to the economy. Further, Councillor Biscoe pointed out Cornwall had unique features in its rail network, with Newquay the only station nationally allowing 125s, and therefore it should be in the interest of the National Rail Network to focus attention on the county and to make sure none of the stops or routes were reduced.</p> <p>Vicky Fraser informed the committee a Cross Cornwall Rail Study was commissioned by Cornwall Council to show the links between Truro, Falmouth, St Austell, and Newquay, and to explore if it was possible to reduce journey times and charges, as well as increasing routes.</p> <p>Options via Network Rail Vicky outlined the following options, which were currently being considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The reopening of the freight line between Penwithick and St Dennis junction. 2) Free-running between Falmouth and Newquay. 3) An increase in the frequency of the main line between Penzance and Par (to every thirty minutes) and a potential increase to Plymouth. 	<p>MS</p> <p>BB</p> <p>BB</p> <p>MS</p> <p>CW</p> <p>RE</p> <p>BB</p> <p>VF</p> <p>VF</p>
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	<p>Vicky suggested, when weighing up which option to choose, economic benefits needed to be considered, and not all of the land in the area of the first option belonged to Network Rail. Vicky confirmed the options would be discussed at a workshop with Network Rail the following day, and she also confirmed if option one was selected then it would be built into the agreement the tracks needed to be sufficient to allow for the passage of 125's. Further discussion regarding option one followed, which included the potential decrease in journey time between Newquay and St Austell, and a branch line able to provide rail access to The Eden Project.</p>	VF
	<p>Length of franchise was also discussed, with Councillor Biscoe expressing the view preparatory work could be conducted in one franchise period with works carried over into other franchise periods, resulting in long-term development despite the relatively short term franchise periods, and this should be included in the tenders.</p>	BB
	<p>Mr Sidney spoke about the goals of the working group within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, suggesting it was vital to secure the views of the general public regarding their use of the rail network, and to discover the reasons why they did, and didn't use trains, as the reasons may be different from those given by people who primarily used other forms of transportation such as buses or cars.</p>	MS
	<p>Mr Sidney pointed out while the unique features of rail travel provided an attraction for some people, to gain significant increases in the amount of journeys undertaken it was important to address basic travel needs such as cost effectiveness, speed of travel, and reliability.</p>	MS
	<p>Councillor Ellis added he felt younger people were less likely to apply for a driver's licence as car prices, the cost of petrol, tax, insurance, etc was increasing, and therefore it afforded an opportunity to maximise domestic rail potential and provide a transportation service within Cornwall which would give a reliable, cheap, and quick intra-travel option to those without cars as well as being a positive step in environmental terms.</p>	RE
	<p>Councillor Ayers supported this, reiterating Councillor Biscoe's suggestion of opening the Claremont Terrace halt, suggesting it was more likely to be used by people within Truro instead of Truro Station, as the latter provided a psychological barrier, being positioned slightly out of the town and up a hill.</p>	AA
	<p>Councillor Biscoe also suggested if the increase in frequency of trips between the three stations in Truro and Penryn was looked at it might illustrate domestic travel via rail was already happening in Cornwall, and provide weight to the proposal of Claremont Terrace halt.</p>	BB
	<p>Infrastructure Levy Councillor Biscoe informed members he felt an Infrastructure Levy should be incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan, therefore allowing proposals, such as railway development, to be viable long term.</p>	BB

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	<p>Mr Sidney responded it would depend on anticipated growth within the City if this was viable, and research could be done to provide evidence, though he wasn't certain if the Neighbourhood Plan was able to ask for supplementary funding. Councillor Wells informed him since Truro and Kenwyn Parishes were frontrunners anything was possible if it proved to work, and the Government would be looking to use it as a blueprint to advise other Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>Vicky informed members Convergence or Transition funding would be sought for the rail development, and Mr Sidney confirmed there were no stipulations on profit in exchange for investment, and if investment was given to build a particular site, once it had been built the agreement would be considered complete.</p> <p>Councillor Biscoe stated there was always the potential for conflict between transportation and economy infrastructures, citing his belief there had been a detrimental effect upon the trade in Victoria Square in Truro following the development of the bus shelter, and as such, the development of transportation networks should always enhance trade. Mr Sidney responded it was necessary to have bus access routes and therefore benefits would need to be weighed for each situation.</p> <p>Freight by Rail</p> <p>Mr Gazzard asked what Truro's current position regarding freight via rail was and Mr Sidney responded there was a study underway to investigate this, and so far response from supermarkets had been positive; they seemed keen to investigate cost effectiveness vs time to transport freight via rail. It was unknown if anybody would actually choose to transport via this method when presented with faster options.</p> <p>Councillor Biscoe impressed how important it was for Truro City Council to be aware of these considerations, which were to be presented to the Core Strategy, as they could also be considered in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan, if enough time was given. Mike Moore added Cornwall Council looked at the issue a few years ago, but it was decided for it to be effective significant volumes needed to be sent, as the decision to ship freight via rail would be purely based on cost instead of other factors.</p> <p>Councillor Biscoe stated new environment regulations would be introduced involving carbon emissions taxation, and therefore could have a large impact on supermarkets, forcing them to investigate alternative methods of shipping freight.</p> <p>Mr Moore concluded there was a Road Study for the A30 being conducted by Cornwall Council, though as of yet there was no update on the progress. Mr Moore said he would inform the group of any news.</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>CW</p> <p>VF MS</p> <p>BB</p> <p>MS</p> <p>RG</p> <p>BB</p> <p>MM</p> <p>BB</p> <p>MM</p>
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3.	Action Plan The following was agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Road Study would be looked at in the next meeting of the working group.• Following discussion regarding the importance of communications, and the link with transportation, particularly in relation to electronic communications, it was agreed the meeting after the Road Study meeting would focus on Communication Infrastructure.• Councillor Biscoe spoke about Truro being a port, and the importance of moving cargo via ship. It was agreed Andy Brigden would be invited to a future meeting.• The potential sale of the coach park was discussed, with no current suggestion of alternatives. It was agreed Vicky Fraser would bring the Bus Study to the next meeting.• For South West Trains, Stagecoach Rail, and any other bodies interested in the tender for the 2013 franchise to be invited to a future meeting of the working group.	ALL
4.	Date of Next Meeting Thursday 12 th January 2012 at 7:00 pm (changed from the previous time of 6:15 pm).	-