

Destination Okehampton – Working Group

5th January 2017 – Conservative Club, Okehampton 1900- 20.40 hours

- 1) Present: Michael Ireland [Chair] Peter Back, Bob Rush, Sue Eberle, Jan Goffey, Maureen McDonald, Anne Johnson, Derek Webber, Paul Voaden, Brian Finch, Paul Vachon, Mike Davies, Christine Marsh, Chris Bligh, Lisa Bligh, Richard Wolfenden- Brown & Michael Moore.
- 2) Apologies: Kevin Ball, Clare Gladstone, Richard Proctor & Richard Searight
- 3) Welcome by the Chair: The Chair welcomed new members to the group from Bude & Holsworthy Rail Action Group and acknowledged Cllr. Black as the delegate from Hatherleigh Town Council.
- 4) Notes of the last meeting: Read for accuracy, with item 5 being corrected to show 240,000 available for the new Station, not 250,000. The notes were approved with an amendment to item 5.

Proposed CM and seconded CB.
- 5) Matters arising not already on the agenda: Cllr. Back [Hatherleigh] asked if the money for the Parkway Station was ring fenced. Cllr. Marsh stated that the money had to be used for the platform. After a prolonged discussion of this issue the Chair requested the meeting move to consider the rest of the agenda.
- 6) OkeRail Forum update: The Chair of OkeRail Cllr Mike Davies gave a resume of the meeting held on the 1st December 2016. He explained to the meeting how the three groups [OkeRail Forum, Destination Okehampton & OkeRail CIC] worked together for the objective of opening the line to Okehampton and then on to Plymouth. Reference was made to a presentation given by Andrew Ardley [DCC]; a discussion of arrangements for the special train [18th March] from Okehampton to London Paddington; Cllr Christine Marsh appointed as the contact with Aggregate Industries [owners of the line] and approval given for membership of the Forum to Richard W – Brown and Cllr Peter Moores.
- 7) OkeRail CIC – Update [Bob Rush]. Bob outlined the purpose of the CIC to the meeting. It is financially healthy with 1,200 pounds in a Lloyds Bank charity account. A discussion ensued around the possibility of crowd funding for infrastructure projects on the railway.

The current information and membership form was discussed with some members feeling there needed to be an online presence. It was agreed that Lisa Bligh and Richard Searight would work on 'online' access to OkeRail CIC including a Gift Aid form available from HMRC.

Actions: Michael [Bude] to send a copy of the gift aid form to Lisa Bligh.

- 8) Mayors response to the PRTF document '*Closing the Gap*' Cllr. Jan Goffery and Chris Bligh have prepared a draft response which was tabled at the meeting. Michael Ireland agreed to read and edit the document. The main point made by the Mayor was that both the priority for the Okehampton line and continuation to Plymouth had in her words been 'down shifted'. The arguments for the restoration of this service are strong and with an estimated 40,000 people living within 15 miles of Okehampton a strong business case could be made.

Chris Bligh [Rail Advisor to Destination Okehampton] stressed the need for adequate capacity on the line, so as the experience of the *Border Railway* is not repeated. It was agreed that better connectivity for employment in Exeter and Plymouth would be achieved by the reinstatement of the line.

Other comments from Paul Voaden who said when the Sunday Rover began there were six trains a day. Sue Eberle asked if the Group had contacted MP's? The Chair explained that a delegation had visited London. To conclude Chris Bligh said 'the problem comes if the Government only adopt part of the PRTF report.'

- 9) Okehampton – Exeter Rail public consultation event at the Parkhouse Centre, Bude

Richard Wolfenden-Brown informed the meeting that Bude and Stratton Council were to make a decision on the setting up of a Council working group to support the opening of services to Okehampton and eventually to Holsworthy and Bude. The Council was also considering a request for use of the Parkhouse Centre on the 18th February for public consultation event on the railway.

- 10) Special Train: Mike Davies introduced this topic and explained how the idea came about from a conversation on a train to London with the Chair [MI]. He told the meeting that Cllr. Ball's 'facebook' campaign has attracted expressions of interest from 340 persons, it needs to be stressed these are not bookings. Other parties were the Arts and Culture group [Dartmoor Section of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts] which meets in the Town, who have expressed a wish to book 1 complete coach (73 seats).

Michael Moore [Bude] read an article from the *Bude & Stratton Post* which gave details of the train, so we can expect bookings from this area.

Before bookings can open for the train via UK RailTours a track access agreement has to be reached with Dartmoor Railway.

Action: Christine Marsh agreed to work KB and others to achieve this objective.

11) Tavistock – Okehampton Rail Link [AJ] Anne Johnson reported that Tavistock Town Council had given support for an information day on the railway in the Pannier Market on the 11th March [9 am – 1 pm]. The possibility of having a community transport link bus to the Sunday trains for 2017 was briefly discussed.

12) Report on marketing plan for Okehampton & Pride in our Town survey [PV].

Cllr. Paul Vachon presented a summary of a SWOT analysis undertaken by the marketing working group. The following important points were made; to promote the town as hub for the area, and West / North Devon; a group had been formed to handle public relations and social media; a draft prospectus to be prepared to run a limited company /CIC.

Cllr. Vachon stressed that the aim was to develop a WEB site to promote Okehampton at an international level, with videos to promote the town. An application was also being made for a grant for 35,000 pounds to support this initiative. The aim was to have much of these actions ready by Easter 2017.

13) AOB. The Chair as is customary, went around the table and asked for item of other business, none were forthcoming.

14) Date of next meeting: To be agreed via Doodle Poll.

The meeting close at approximately 20.40 hours.

Dr Michael Ireland

Friday, January 6, 2017

