

Destination Okehampton

Minutes of the meeting held on 1st August 2017 @ Conservative Club, Okehampton

Present: Sue Baxter, Chris Bligh, Brian Finch, Claire Gladstone, Jan Goffey, Andrea Kimber, Michael Ireland, Maureen McDonald, Mike Moore, Richard Searight, and Paul Voaden.

Apologies: Kevin Ball, Tom Baxter, Mike Davis, Christine Marsh, Peter Morris, Richard Proctor, Bob Rush & Steve Whitely

➤ Matters Arising:

Mike Moore [Bude] asked if the special trains Destination Okehampton proposed would bring visitors to Okehampton or trips for Okehampton residents? If it was hoped to run steam trains, it would be necessary to make contact with existing steam operators.

In a discussion that followed some important points were raised for consideration; timing; the need to coincide with something else in the Town to attract people, not just rail enthusiasts; it was suggested a heritage diesel train could be used to link with events such as the vintage heritage show in Merton and the Lynton and Barnstaple railway.

Action- members of Destination to communicate and bring ideas together

➤ Coffee Morning

The coffee morning had made £33.00 profit to be shared equally between OkeRail and the Community Archive. A donation from Kevin Ball is to be added to this from his locality budget.

Action – Has this money been released?

➤ OkeRail Forum :

Sue Baxter reported that the earliest possible date for the trial service to Okehampton from Exeter is December 2018. It was noted that there will be no *Royal Oke* special train in October because issues affecting GWR. Brian Finch reported that the car park for the Parkway Station was now being levelled.

Richard Searight argued that there was real need to be visible at different events. There was some discussion about the merits of print media and it was agreed that some papers for example the *Moorlander* and the *Post* series which covers North Cornwall had provide support for the line. It was noted that the *Rail Magazine* was effective for reaching a wider audience.

Action – contact Andrew Roden who is a local rail journalist.

➤ Summer Trains

The following points were made: less people coming to Okehampton when the weather is bad. Passenger numbers suffered because of problems with the timetabling and the lack of connecting bus services from the Station. The Mayor, Cllr Jan Goffey reported that the Chamber of Trade had responded to comments that there was not a lot to do in Okehampton on a Sunday. A letter of thanks needed to be sent from Destination Okehampton to the organisers of a new Sunday market.

Paul Voaden stressed the importance of train information being available in the Town centre, for example the display of posters in the Arcade. Posters and leaflets should also be available in Tavistock.

➤ Walks Leaflet and Town Guide

It was reported that the Town Guide is still being designed by Paul Vachon. It was requested that in addition the walks leaflet be updated for future years. In this context it is important to note that the remit of *Destination Okehampton* includes the development of inbound tourism to the area, the Guide and leaflets are integral to this goal.

➤ Bude Heritage Day

The Chair attend the Heritage Day at the invitation of the Mayor of Bude, Cllr. Peter Moores. The day focused on the Canal, Castle and lower wharf with displays from local groups in the Park house Centre. The impressed gained was that tourism information in Bude is excellent with good facilities and paid staff. For example Bude Castle has very good café / restaurant with heritage exhibitions for visitors.

A brief discussion took place on the merits of marketing being a role for the town clerks, but it was noted that this would be an extra duty.

Action – to look for tourism development ideas from other Councils

- Bus / Rail links to the Summer Sunday Trains

Reports on the proposed bus links from Tavistock, Hatherleigh and Bude were presented. Hatherleigh being the most successful with a bus planned for the 20th August to meet the first train and last return service from Exeter. The cost is to be met by Hatherleigh Town Council. No date for the Tavistock bus was given and the Bude link is proving difficult to arrange.

- 2018 Special *Royal Oke* trains

GWR is very supportive of the special train programme and is considering three possible destinations; Oxford & Stratford upon Avon, Tenby / Cardiff and London Paddington. The aim of these trips is to promote the case for the Okehampton line nationally and provide an affordable day out by rail for local people.

- AOB

Mike Moore reported that Scott Mann [MP for North Cornwall] welcomes the rail line on his website. Paul Voaden promoted the Hospice Coffee Morning and Brian Finch stressed the importance of building a customer base for the railway.

Date of next meeting - TBC.

Dr Michael Ireland , Chair - Thursday, 09 November 2017