

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION**

**CULLOMPTON AND WELLINGTON NEW RAILWAY STATIONS PROJECT –  
GOVERNANCE, PROCESS, PROJECT FUNDING AND NEXT STEPS**

**Cabinet Member(s):** Councillor Graeme Barnell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration  
**Responsible Officer:** Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

**Reason for Report:**

1. To set out proposed governance arrangements in order to seek to establish clear lines of decision making for the project going forward; and
2. To identify the next steps for taking forward the project.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the governance arrangements set out in Appendix 1 be agreed; and
2. That the overview of the process be noted.

**Financial Implications:** In 2016 Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council (now Somerset West & Taunton Council), Cullompton Town Council and Wellington Town Council agreed to contribute £100k towards feasibility work; the District Councils contributing £40k each and the Town Councils £10k each. To date £31,281 has been spent on timetabling and initial feasibility work.

It is estimated that to complete the first formal stage of the project, production of a Strategic Outline Business Case is needed. This will cost approximately £200-250k. The project has monies unspent from previous committed contributions towards the project amounting to £68,719, but there is clearly a shortfall which will still need to be funded. A government funding bid has been submitted and we await the outcome of that process. The financial implications will need to be reassessed once a decision on the government funding has been received.

Servicing the governance arrangements (set out in section 3 below) can be met from existing budgets.

It is too early to know how much it will cost to complete delivery of the two railway stations; however the Strategic Outline Business Case will establish an indicative cost. It will also provide a basis for exploring further funding opportunities. Importantly once a scheme has completed a Strategic Outline Business Case and satisfactorily progressed to the 'Decision to Develop' stage it is much more likely to benefit from government funding.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** As explained above there are existing funds available from partners totalling £68,719. Additional funding would be needed to complete the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) in its entirety. Once the partners know whether the government funding bid is successful a decision would need to be made as to whether to continue with the full Strategic Outline Business Case, undertake first stage of SOBC only or discontinue the project.

The Local Plan Review includes a site allocation for a Cullompton Railway Station.

**Legal Implications:** No significant legal implications anticipated at this time as a result of the governance structure proposed. Legal implications could arise throughout the project development process. Should these arise they will be reported to Cabinet through future update reports.

**Risk Assessment:**

Robust, suitable and appropriate governance arrangements for the new stations project are necessary to drive the project progress, allow it to operate efficiently and to build relationships with stakeholders. Effective governance arrangements will also ensure that best use is made of funding opportunities. The governance arrangements provide a structure within which the project will develop and be accountable.

Risks will be constantly reviewed as the project develops. Decisions whether to continue with the project will be made at each significant gateway milestone as explained later in the report. This will allow the opportunity to withdraw from the project should the risks outweigh the likelihood of satisfactory delivery.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** No equality issues are identified for this report at this stage. As the project goes forward it will need to consider the views from representatives from protected groups that the project has the potential to impact upon.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** The proposal for a new railway station contributes to all four corporate priorities of economy, homes, community and environment and is central to the delivery of many of aims identified within the Corporate Plan. It is a significant strategic project which could have a national profile.

**Impact on Climate Change:** The strategic outline business case for the new railway station proposal would need to part of a multimodal approach to catering for the demands from new development in the area. Sustainable transport is an important part of that assessment. The project would also need to consider pedestrian and cycle access.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 There have been long established aspirations to reinstate stations at Cullompton and Wellington. A key driver for delivering these projects is that both areas are proximate to significant planned growth. It is considered that

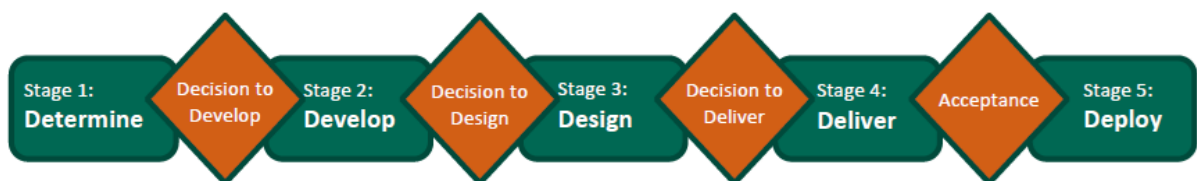
this can be part of a more general enhancement to the rail service between Bristol and Exeter.

- 1.2 A site for a new railway station, north of Station road in Cullompton, is allocated within the emerging Local Plan. Network Rail carried out a timetable study in 2017 to explore whether a service could be provided calling at Cullompton and Wellington. In January 2019 an initial feasibility study has been undertaken by WSP Consulting to check station arrangements fit within the allocated footprint and to assess if there are any signal issues. It concluded that subject to topographical, structural and ground investigation surveys, a new station at Cullompton could be accommodated. Signal D181 would however need to be relocated. Similarly Wellington was also assessed favourably.

## 2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

### ***Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline***

- 2.1 In March 2018 the Government published the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline 'A New Approach for Rail Enhancements' (RNEP). This process sets out the key stages that rail enhancement projects (including the provision of new stations) will need to undertake to be successful. There are five stages of activity separated by formal investment decision gateways. The first three stages, "Determine", "Develop" and "Design" relate to project development. The last two stages "Deliver" and "Deploy" focus on construction and at this stage all investment decisions would have been taken. Each of these key stages is separated by decision gateways to determine whether or not to proceed with the enhancement. The first three stages will all require a suitable and government compliant business case.



*Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline, A New Approach for Rail Enhancements, Department for Transport, March 2018*

- 2.2 The Cullompton and Wellington Railway Stations Re-instatement project is currently at stage 1. The project will need to have a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) before it can progress to the next stage. The SOBC will need to be agreed by Government before it will engage in "Decision to Develop" discussions. The following information will also be required to move through the "Decision to Develop" gateway:

- A description of a clear, benefit for rail users, which should be in line with the government's priorities for rail;
- A clear plan of action for the "Develop" stage, with anticipated costs for that stage;
- An indicative cost for the enhancement, were it to progress to completion;

- Assurance that other transport solutions and interventions have been considered;
- Demonstration that rail demand has been considered in the proposed enhancement; and
- An indication of whether the project might be suitable for private investment or alternative delivery models.

### ***Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP)***

- 2.3 In April 2020 Network Rail is set to embark on a Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) study for the Bristol to Exeter rail corridor as part of its long term planning process. This will replace the route studies that have been undertaken in the past. It is envisaged that this work will take approximately one year to complete. If the Cullompton & Wellington Station re-opening project Strategic Outline Business Case could be developed during 2020 it would provide an opportunity to inform Network Rail's CMSP work and raise its profile nationally.

### ***Financial Implications of Developing an SOBC***

- 2.4 Estimating the cost of an SOBC is not always straightforward given that every scheme is different. However officers have undertaken discussions with industry experts and considered the cost of SOBCs for station re-opening projects elsewhere and have arrived at a broad estimate of costs. It is estimated that, building on the existing work done to date, to complete an SOBC would cost approximately £200-250k. As explained in the financial implications section above the District Council, along with Somerset West and Taunton Council, have assisted the local MPs in submitting an expression of interest to the Department for Transport's (DfT's) 'Restoring your Railway Fund' under the ideas programme. Cabinet will be updated once a decision has been made as to whether the scheme has been successful in receiving government funding. At this stage a decision will need to be taken as to whether the full strategic outline business case is pursued.

## **3.0 PROJECT GOVERNANCE**

- 3.1 Governance arrangements are important so as to establish a structure for the project, identify decision making, reporting lines, linkages to wider activities and how stakeholders will interact and participate. It is also important to establish a clear governance structure to drive momentum, achieve progress against milestones and manage work streams.
- 3.2 Agreed governance arrangements would also assist in establishing a consensus over the approach to the project in terms of: respective roles and responsibilities for key aspects of the project, general project management, together with stakeholder engagement.
- 3.3 Work on this project has to date been based on meetings held by the Devon and Somerset Metro Officer meeting with the occasional meeting with MPs. At the last Devon and Somerset Metro meeting it was decided, in recognition

of the respective County Council's (i.e. Devon County Council & Somerset County Council) being unable to commit sufficient time/resource to be the project sponsor, that the two District Councils (Somerset West & Taunton Council & Mid Devon District Council) would undertake this role for the initial stages of this project. Also at this meeting it was considered that to move this project forward the establishment of clear governance arrangements were needed. Proposed governance arrangements are set out in Appendix 1.

#### 4.0 NEXT STEPS

4.1 Subject to approval of the above recommendations, the next steps to advance to the 'Decision to Develop' gateway of the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline would be as follows:

- If invited as part of government funding assessment, present scheme to the DfT 'Restoring your Railway' team, although we now understand that due to social distancing requirement projects are being assessed via board meetings held virtually;
- Assess level of funding available and consider the scale of additional District Council and partner funds needed to progress the project;
- Set up a working group to further refine the scope of the Strategic Outline Business Case requirements and initiate the procurement process;
- Establish contact with senior officials within the rail industry and the DfT to continue to raise the profile of the project;
- Ensure that there is engagement with Network Rail through the Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) process;
- Continue to seek funding opportunities,
- On competition of the SOBC, and it being approved by Government, undertake discussions with DfT as to whether the project should proceed; and
- If decision made to continue a review of governance arrangements would be needed.

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**Circulation of the Report:** Cllr Graeme Barnell

**List of Background Papers:** Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline 'A New Approach for Rail Enhancements'. DCLG prospectus locally led garden villages, towns and cities <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-network-enhancements-pipeline>  
Restoring Your Railway Fund Guidance (Department for Transport) January 2020  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/re-opening-beeching-era-lines-and-stations>