

**CABINET
8 MARCH 2022**

CULLOMPTON RAILWAY STATION

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer: Richard Marsh, Director of Place.

Reason for Report and Recommendations: The report presents an update in relation to the Cullompton Railway station project.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET: To note the progress in relation to the Cullompton Railway station project.

Financial Implications: No financial implications arise from this report. Funding for developing the project from this point onwards is being received by Network Rail from the Department for Transport (DfT), from the Restoring Your Railways Fund.

Budget and Policy Framework: The Mid Devon Local Plan (2013-2033) confirms the Council's ambition to seek to re-open the Cullompton railway station.

The re-opening of Cullompton and Wellington stations is wholly consistent with the overall Devon Metro approach – this initiative seeking to build upon exceptional rail patronage figures within the region (pre-covid), and subsequent strong recovery in rail usage, and deliver a more accessible and comprehensive rail-based transport offer.

Legal Implications: No legal implications are identified at this stage.

Risk Assessment: The report references amendments to governance arrangements to be made to support the effective and timely progression of the Cullompton railway station project. These amendments involve transferring the 'project lead' role from the District Councils (MDDC and SWTC) to Network Rail – with the District Councils continuing oversight as scheme promoters and involved in all levels of governance.

These revised arrangements are considered to lessen the risk to the Councils as Network Rail take on responsibility for the day to day project management of the projects and become responsible for ensuring the effective and timely completion of project deliverables, these deliverables being required to meet obligations set by the DfT through their grant of funding.

Equality Impact Assessment: There are no issues arising directly from this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The proposed re-opening of the Cullompton railway station contributes to all four of the Council's corporate priorities: economy, homes, community and environment. Successful delivery would also support the Council in realising wider corporate aims and objectives.

Impact on Climate Change: The re-opening of the Cullompton railway station is considered to be positive in terms of its impact on climate change: the project offers the scope to encourage a transition ('modal shift') towards rail-travel, which is more sustainable when compared to the use of, and reliance upon, private cars.

Furthermore, given proposals for the garden community at Culm, the re-opening of the railway station should allow the promotion of development which is less reliant upon private car ownership and therefore also more sustainable and accessible.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council has a stated ambition to see the re-opening of Cullompton station and this is supported through policy. To that end, the Council has been working in a close and productive partnership with key partners' including Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWTC), the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail (NR).
- 1.2 Further to the last Cabinet report (7th January 2021), significant work has been undertaken in relation to the Cullompton and Wellington stations and the projects have progressed well. Work included the development and submission, in January 2021, of a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) – this SOBC seeking to demonstrate the strong business case associated with the proposed reopening of the stations. The SOBC successfully demonstrated a compelling business case for re-opening and a strong value for money case. Councillors will be aware that this culminated in the confirmation, via the Autumn budget statement, that the Councils had been successful in securing a further £5m of funding (shared between the projects) to progress the Cullompton and Wellington railway station projects. The funding comes from the Restoring Your Railway, Rail Network Enhancements fund.
- 1.3 The further funding will allow the projects to progress at speed, developing a Final Business Case (FBC) and completing PACE 1, 2 and some elements of enabling deliverables. PACE stands for 'Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment' and is replacing the formerly used 'GRIP' process. PACE seeks to deliver rail projects more quickly, at lower cost and at a higher quality than traditional rail-delivery methodologies.
- 1.4 Clearly, given the partners' desire to expedite the delivery of both Cullompton and Wellington stations, the adoption of the PACE methodology is well suited to the projects.
- 1.5 Given the ambitions that exist around speed of delivery, the complexity and technical knowledge required to deliver rail-based infrastructure projects and the specific technical deliverables to be achieved through next phase of work, the partners agreed that it was timely to review the existing governance arrangements to ensure they are both fit for purpose and maximise efficiency, moving forwards.
- 1.6 Discussions have led to a shared view that some revisions to the current governance arrangements would be desirable and that it is appropriate, given the stage of the project and the future technical work required to be delivered

at speed, to transfer the project 'lead' role from the District Councils (MDDC and SWTC) to Network Rail (with support from their alliance partner, Great Western Railway (GWR)). Endorsement of this approach will be sought at the next Devon and Somerset Metro Board meeting in March.

- 1.7 The governance amendments are deemed desirable as Network Rail is well placed to lead the project given the intricate level of rail-specific knowledge and expertise required, as well as an understanding of procedures and processes through which to secure required and timely approvals and decisions in order to meet DfT requirements and key gateways.
- 1.8 In contrast, the Councils do not have the level of rail expertise required and are unfamiliar with the intricacies of rail-infrastructure project and programme management. Retention of the 'lead' role by the Districts would therefore be likely to add delay, cost and risk to delivery. It is for these reasons that the changes to the governance are deemed desirable as the project progresses in to the next stage of development.
- 1.9 Network Rail has committed to continuing to work collaboratively and proactively with the promoters (MDDC and SWTC) and to ensuring that wider land-use, access, masterplanning and community issues are looked at holistically as the projects develop.
- 1.10 Agreement has also been reached to ensure that the partners (MDDC and SSW&T) also retain active involvement in all levels of project governance. This will involve representation through the working group (meeting bi-weekly), the steering group (meeting monthly) and the senior stakeholder forum, the 'Metro Board' (meeting quarterly.)
- 1.11 Network Rail is now actively progressing work to continue the design development for the railway stations and is procuring further technical work to support the advancement of the projects'. Further update reports will be provided as work progresses towards key milestones.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

- 2.1 Note progress in relation to the progression of the Cullompton railway station project.

Contact for more Information: Richard Marsh, Director of Place (rmarsh@middevon.gov.uk)

Circulation of the Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet, Leadership Team

Background Papers – Cabinet Report: 7th January 2021; "Cullompton and Wellington New Railway Station project update."