

Agenda for Overview Committee

Tuesday, 26 January 2016; 6.00pm



[Members of the Committee](#)

Venue: Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL

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- 1 [Public speaking](#)
- 2 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2015 (pages 3 - 7)
- 3 Apologies
- 4 [Declarations of interest](#)
- 5 [Matters of urgency](#) – none identified
- 6 To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including press) have been excluded. There are no items that officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

Matters for Debate

- 7 **Enterprise zone update** (pages 8 - 12)
Update on the enterprise zone application since the last report to the Committee on 22 September 2015, from the East of Exeter Projects Director.
- 8 **South West Trains franchise consultation** (presentation)
Presentation from the East of Exeter Projects Director on the consultation.
- 9 **Overview forward plan** (page 13)
Included for reference is the forward plan of the Scrutiny Committee (page 14) and [current forward plan of the Cabinet](#).

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

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EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 17 November 2015

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 9.00pm.

***14 Chairman's introduction**

The Chairman welcomed the committee members to the meeting

***15 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers at this point of the meeting.

***16 Minute confirmation**

The minutes of the Overview Committee held on the 22 September 2015, were confirmed as a true record.

***17 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Graham Godbeer declared a pecuniary interest in item 22 below as he undertook some veterinary work for the Environmental Health Service.

***18 Draft Council Plan 2016-2020**

Members received the Draft Council Plan 2016-2020 that was presented to members by Councillor Tom Wright and Karen Jenkins – Strategic Lead Organisational Development and Transformation, following work undertaken by the Corporate Business Think Tank. The Draft Council Plan 2016-20 incorporated a new council ambition, 4 key priorities and actions, which were:

- Encouraging communities to be outstanding;
- Developing an outstanding local economy;
- Delivering and promoting our outstanding environment;
- Continuously improving to be an outstanding council.

as well as refreshed council values.

It was recognised that the Council Plan was a pivotal document, which set out the context of travel and key priorities for the council's staff and its members for the next term. It was an important document for informing our residents, visitors, town and parish councils, businesses and other partners about the Council's key priorities and how and where the Council would direct its financial and other resources.

Debate on the issue also included:

- Importance of supporting communities in East Devon;
- Opportunity provided for improved economic performance through the Council Plan
- Endorsement of the primary importance of neighbourhood local plans;
- Need for improved sports and recreation provision in East Devon;
- Speed of action and the need for sense of urgency should be portrayed;
- The Council Plan would be refreshed every 2 years;
- The main aims of the draft Council Plan fitted in well with the Greater Exeter agenda.

Councillor Tom Wright wished to thank members of his Think Tank and Karen Jenkins for the work they had undertaken on preparing the draft Council Plan 2016 – 2020.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the comments made at the meeting be noted and incorporated into the draft Council Plan, including endorsement of the importance of neighbourhood local plans.

***19 Exmouth Beach Management Plan**

The Committee received a report from John Golding, Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment, which invited them to consider and recommend the adoption of the Beach Management Plan for Exmouth.

The Chairman welcomed Alan Frampton from ch2m, who provided a report on the extensive technical work making up the Plan and which underpinned the recommendations made in respect of future management and maintenance of the beach, and hard engineering structures that maintained coastal protection.

The BMP recognised the importance of the Exmouth beach in terms of the amenity and coastal defence properties and outlined the ways in which the Council could manage and protect the beach and coastline. The BMP set out the management regime for Exmouth Beach for the next 5 years. In response to a question, Alan Frampton confirmed that Beach Management Plans (BMP) and Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) were produced for different reasons and the SMP was the more important of the two.

Debate on the issue included:

- Concern expressed over the future flooding of parts of Exmouth and that Pole Sands were being eroded. The sands were considered to protect Exmouth from flooding;
- Lack of local opinion obtained for the BMP;
- Dredging of Pole Sands could have an adverse impact upon Exmouth Beach;
- Concern expressed regarding difficulties in finding suitable funding sources for the work.

RECOMMENDED

that the draft Exmouth Beach Management Plan be adopted and the management, maintenance and monitoring recommendations be implemented, subject to concerns about obtaining funding sources for the work.

***20 Environmental Health Service**

Members noted that the Council's Environmental Health Services regulated a range of environmental and behavioural areas that helped people in East Devon to live in, work in and enjoy this outstanding place. The services underpinned a reasonable standard of wellbeing for all residents of East Devon; much of the day to day work of the service went unseen by the majority. The annual report for the service set out just how much the service did behind the scenes to prevent problems and where problems did arise how hard they worked to overcome these.

A member of the Committee expressed concerns about the lack of visible presence in East Devon of Dog Wardens to deter dog fouling. Andrew Ennis - Environment Health and Car Parks, reported on the success of dog bins in East Devon and that reports of dog fouling had reduced greatly in recent years, due to more responsible dog ownership.

RESOLVED

that it be recognised that the health, safety and wellbeing of our residents, workers and visitors were being safeguarded by the work of our Environmental Health teams. In particular to note that they continued to: inspect food businesses and investigate complaints about the safety of food; resolve complaints about workplace health and safety and promote good practice; investigate infectious diseases and prevent their spread within the community; prevent and control environmental pollution including the control of smoke, odours, flies and noise; promote and enforce public health and pest control legislation; provide advice on the likely impact of new development and on a variety of licensing matters; develop the Council's new permanent in-house pest control and dog warden services alongside a range of other duties including reporting bathing water quality and arranging funerals (where no other arrangements are being made to dispose of the body of a deceased person in the district).

***21 Environmental Health Licensing Policy**

Members received the report of Andrew Ennis, Service Lead - Environment Health and Car Parks, which sought Members' endorsement of the restrictions placed on residents running a business of home-boarding for other people's dogs and of the proposals for the proper regulations of new businesses providing day-care for other people's dogs.

The Committee noted that there were currently over 30 dog home boarders licensed in East Devon and it was likely that there were more than this unregistered

RECOMMENDED

1. that Cabinet considers and recommends to Council to formally adopt the conditions for home boarding of dogs as set out in Appendix A to the report;
2. that Cabinet considers and recommends to Council for formal adoption the conditions for Dog Day Care facilities set out in Appendix B to the report;.
3. that Cabinet considers and recommends to council the enforcement policy set out in Appendix C to the report.

***22 Local Government Boundary Committee for England Electoral Review Update**

The Committee considered the report of Mark Williams, Chief Executive, on the results of the member survey that the Committee had agreed should be carried out at its meeting on 22 September 2015 (minute 11 refers). Members noted that the response rate from EDDC Councillors to the survey was only 47%. Mark Williams, Chief Executive, reported that a further report on this issue would be made in February/March 2016.

RESOLVED

that the results of the member survey be noted.

RECOMMENDED

that it be recommended to Cabinet that the Council prepare a draft submission for the LGBCE on the basis of no or minimal change to the existing number of EDDC Councillors (currently 59).

***23 Overview forward plan**

The Committee discussed items for the forward plan, and agreed the following topics to be scoped before further consideration on how to proceed:

RESOLVED

That the forward plan include:

13 January 2016 – Draft service plans and budget 2016/17 jointly with Scrutiny Committee.

26 January 2016 – Discussion on planning policy and how this should be dealt with within the Council, possibly through a separate planning policy committee. Also update from Rob Murray on economic development.

9 February 2016 – additional meeting on the Refuse and Recycling contract award.

22 March 2016 – Sustainability.

Attendance list

Councillors Present:

Peter Bowden (Chairman)

Graham Godbeer (Vice Chairman)

Matthew Booth

Peter Faithfull

Pat Graham

Maria Hale

Ian Hall

Rob Longhurst

Councillors Also Present:

David Barrett

Jill Elson

Roger Giles

Geoff Jung

Marianne Rixson

Philip Skinner

Pauline Stott

Tom Wright

Officers

Mark Williams. Chief Executive

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead – Legal, Licensing & Democratic Services

John Golding, Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment

Karen Jenkins, Strategic Lead - Organisational Development and Transformation

Andrew Ennis, Service Lead – Environment Health and Car Parks

Janet Wallace, Principal Environmental Health Officer

Alan Frampton, ch2m Consultants

Chris Lane, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Apologies:

Mike Allen

Paul Diviani

John Humphreys

Andrew Moulding

Chairman Date.....

Report to: **Overview Committee**

Date of Meeting: 26 January 2016

Public Document: Yes

Exemption: None



Agenda item: 7

Subject: **Prospective Enterprise Zone**

Purpose of report: To provide an overview and update of the proposed Enterprise Zone.

Recommendation:

- 1. Notes the outcome of the Enterprise Zone application submitted by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership confirmed as part of the Autumn Statement**
- 2. Acknowledges the additional work that will need to be undertaken to develop a detailed business and defined geography before the zone can become operational**

Reason for recommendation: This report provides an overview of the Enterprise Zone proposal, its background and the next steps. The report emphasises that the proposed Enterprise Zone is not a live designation and considerable further work is required to develop a detailed business case and plan. Not least this will need to address future governance arrangements.

Officer: Naomi Harnett, Principal Project Manager
nharnett@eastdevon.gov.uk; 07580 297 059 / 01395 571 746

Financial implications: The report highlights the benefits and potential risks associated with approving the operation of Enterprise Zone(s) in the District. A programme of work is to be completed and presented to members before a decision can be made to bring this into operation.

The report highlights the risks associated with business rates income derived from the Enterprise Zone being committed to an agreement with the LEP for 25 years. This being at a time when the government is to change the local authority funding regime with the demise of the Revenue Support Grant as a core funding stream for local authority service delivery to that of the increasing importance of business rate income in taking its place. In East Devon the areas proposed for Enterprise Zone status are the main areas where the Council is likely to see any significant business growth and hence additional significant income.

An Enterprise Zone will attract significant business growth above that which would have been achieved without such status and careful consideration will need to be given as to the estimates of this additional growth, what return will come back to the district and what element can be used to support core funding of the Council from this, if any. These details will need to be considered with the impact on the Council's overall funding position made clear in order for members to be able to make an informed decision. This will need to be determined in the programme of work to be completed before a final decision is made.

Legal implications:	The legal team have not yet been asked to advise on the implications of an Enterprise Zone or its governance arrangements. The advice will be given when asked for but for the purpose of this report, there are no legal implications arising.
Equalities impact:	Low Impact The Council will fully explore potential impacts and mitigations of equality through the development of the business case and business plan.
Risk:	High Risk The proposed Enterprise Zone is a long term designation which would last for 25 years. The scale of the uplift in business rate revenues over this period is very substantial and the Council will need to carefully consider the relative merits of this designation, particularly as the Government has signalled that it intends to devolve business rates to Local Authorities from 2019/20.
Links to background information:	•
Link to Council Plan:	Working in and funding this outstanding place. The Council Plan identifies a range of activities to deliver economic growth – including developing ways to deliver economic benefits, promoting inward investment and working with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver growth.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 25th November the Chancellor confirmed as part of the Autumn Statement that the proposed Enterprise Zone submitted by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership had been successful along with another 18 Zones across the UK.
- 1.2 The proposal consists of five sites, four in East Devon and one in Sedgemoor. The East Devon sites consist of Exeter Science Park, Sky Park, Exeter Airport Business Park extension and the Cranbrook new community.
- 1.3 It is important to emphasise that the announcement in the Autumn Statements did not automatically confer operational Enterprise Zone status. Considerable further work will need to be undertaken over the course of the next 12 months to develop a detailed business case and agree specific arrangements, not least future governance arrangements. Subject to the sign up of key partners, this will then allow the Enterprise Zone to become operational.

2 Background

- 2.1 The latest Enterprise Zone initiative was established in 2012 as part of the long term economic plan to support business growth. As such Enterprise Zones represent the Government's commitment to long term economic growth.
- 2.2 There are currently 24 operational Enterprise Zones in the country of which the closest are Temple Quay in Bristol, South Yard in Plymouth and the Aerohub at Newquay Airport. The Government has signalled its intention to expand the number of Enterprise Zones in England to 41.

2.3 The benefit of Enterprise Zone status to potential occupiers are:

- Up to 100% business rate discount worth up to £275,000 per business over a 5 year period.
- Simplified local authority planning, for example, through Local Development Orders that grant automatic planning permission for certain development (such as new industrial buildings or changing how existing buildings are used) within specified areas.
- Government support to ensure that superfast broadband is rolled out throughout the zone, and, if necessary, public funding.

2.4 The government is also committed to actively working with Enterprise Zones to help unblock any barriers to delivery, such as Department for Transport support on transport infrastructure, DEFRA support on addressing environmental issues and UKTI advice on marketing zones to international investors.

2.5 Whilst the host Local Authority remains the collecting authority, Enterprise Zone status also requires that all business rate growth generated within the Zone goes to the respective local enterprise partnership. The expectation is that this is subsequently re-invested in to supporting the delivery of economic growth locally. Given that the Enterprise Zone designation applies for a 25 year period, there is clearly a very significant financial dimension to the proposal

3 Local outcomes

- 3.1 An Enterprise Zone has the potential to capitalise on existing economic development initiatives and accelerate the delivery of key strategic sites in the Growth Point area. The key strategic sites of Sky Park and Science Park are well placed to deliver accelerated job creation. They have benefited from considerable enabling investment, including through the Regional Growth Fund programme, such that the sites are now serviced and able to quickly accommodate potential occupiers.
- 3.3 Extending the Airport business park has the potential to support the development of existing businesses, the Airport and potentially the aerospace sector more generally.
- 3.4 Cranbrook has been included because there is a general recognition that to date there has been insufficient focus on the developing the economy of the town. Inclusion within the Zone offers the potential to support the development of new workspace and economic activity in the town alongside the delivery of new homes. This includes rising to the challenge of supporting the delivery of a 21st Century town centre.
- 3.5 Together the four sites offer the potential to deliver a wide range of new employment opportunities including a vibrant town centre. As well as realising the vision for the Growth Point area in terms of delivering new homes and jobs, this has the potential to transmit economic benefits to the wider District. For example planned service enhancements on the Exeter/Waterloo rail line will bring commuting benefits to places such as Axminster. This is alongside providing a wide range of new employment opportunities, some of which, for example at the Science Park, would not be available anywhere else in the District.
- 3.6 Through the development of the business plan we will review the impact the Enterprise Zone will have upon the East Devon economy, displacement of businesses within the sub region as well as benefits to the functional economic area. Enterprise Zones are considered useful tools for attracting inward investment and supporting the development of new jobs and businesses. They are also helpful in supporting sustainable growth of cutting edge technology and developing centres of excellence.

- 3.7 The business plan will also ensure that the Enterprise Zone sites receive targeted investment in skills and infrastructure to ensure that the legacy of the designation will improve local competitiveness.
- 3.8 As we gain further information from government we will be able to fully review the financial opportunities and risks associated with EZ status. This is particularly in light of the recent government announcement of retention of National Non Domestic Rates from 2020. Given that the proposed Enterprise Zone would cover over 2 million sq.ft. of new commercial space there is obviously a very substantial uplift in business rates involved.

4 Governance

- 4.1 The ultimate uplift in business rate revenues from the four sites will be in excess of £10m p.a. when fully developed. Enterprise Zone status requires that whilst the Council remains the collecting authority, the uplift in business rates should be reinvested in to supporting growth locally in conjunction with the Heart of the South West LEP. An important dimension to resolve will therefore be how this uplift is reinvested for the benefit of the District as well as the wider Heart of South West area.
- 4.2 At the heart of this is the form that the governance arrangements will take. A spectrum of potential options are available. These range from the LEP taking on programme management of the Zone through to the LEP having only a light touch role with all matters being managed locally and progress reports being provided for information only.
- 4.3 The precise form that these governance arrangements take will need careful consideration and negotiation. The arrangements will need to reflect the significance of the finance implications for the District and also consider the other Enterprise Zones in the Heart of the South West area at Plymouth and Sedgemoor.

5 Local Development Orders

- 5.1 The Council will need to work with landowners to develop Local Development Orders for the Enterprise Zone sites. These Orders will grant planning permission to specific types of development within a defined area. This will streamline the planning process for developers by removing the need to make planning applications to the local planning authority. This will assist developers by improving certainty of outcome, along with saving time and money.
- 5.2 EDDC will commission consultants to support the development of the Local Development Orders, this will ensure that the orders are finalised for the commencement of Enterprise Zone status. This will be developed in conjunction the Planning Service.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 It is important to emphasise that the announcement in the Autumn Statement did not confer automatic Enterprise Zone status for the sites mentioned above. Rather it signalled a start of a process which will lead to the formal designation being confirmed and operationalised.
- 6.2 Over the course of the next 12 months considerable work will be required to progress the following;
- A detailed business case
 - Site boundaries
 - Governance arrangements
 - Sign up from key partners

- 6.3 Engagement will be required with a wide range of partners including the LEP, Devon County Council, Exeter City and Teignbridge Councils along with Sedgemoor District and Somerset County Councils. Locally we will work with partners including Exeter Science Park Company and the Airport.
- 6.4 Moving forward a work programme is being developed with the Heart of the South West LEP which includes identifying key decision making dates. The work programme includes developing governance arrangements and undertaking detailed financial appraisals with partners. Work will also be undertaken to review the benefits of an Enterprise Zone in the context of the recent government announcement for local authorities to retain business rates from 2020. This will be reported to Cabinet for decision.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Enterprise Zone status has the potential to support the accelerated delivery of economic growth. This would compliment and build on existing initiatives and investments made to date. There are though significant issues to resolve and considerable work to complete before the zone status can be confirmed and operationalised. Further papers will be provided to Overview and Cabinet as this progresses and further information is received from Government.

Agenda item 9**Overview Committee****Overview Committee Forward Plan 2015/16**

Date of Committee	Report	Lead
9 February 2016	Recycling & Waste Collection contract – decision of new contractor	Andrew Hancock
22 Mar 2016	Sustainability Update on Flood Risk Management and Shoreline Management Plan Update on Economic Development Draft Annual Report	Ed Freeman Devon County Council Rob Murray

Work for scoping and allocation to the Forward Plan:

Proposed date	Topic

Agenda Item

Scrutiny Committee



Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan 2015/16
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Date of Committee	Report	Lead
17 Mar 2016	Performance monitoring report Quarter 3 2015/16 Beach Hut update	Donna Best
14 Apr 2016	Draft Scrutiny Annual Report	Debbie Meakin

Work for scoping and allocation to the Forward Plan:

Proposed date	Topic
	Review of public consultation to scope
	Portfolio Holder updates as required
tbc	Dunkeswell & Chardstock inclusion in list of settlements to receive a Built-up Area Boundary decision process
tbc	Review of the production process of the Local Plan

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION SOUTH WESTERN RAIL FRANCHISE

FROM –

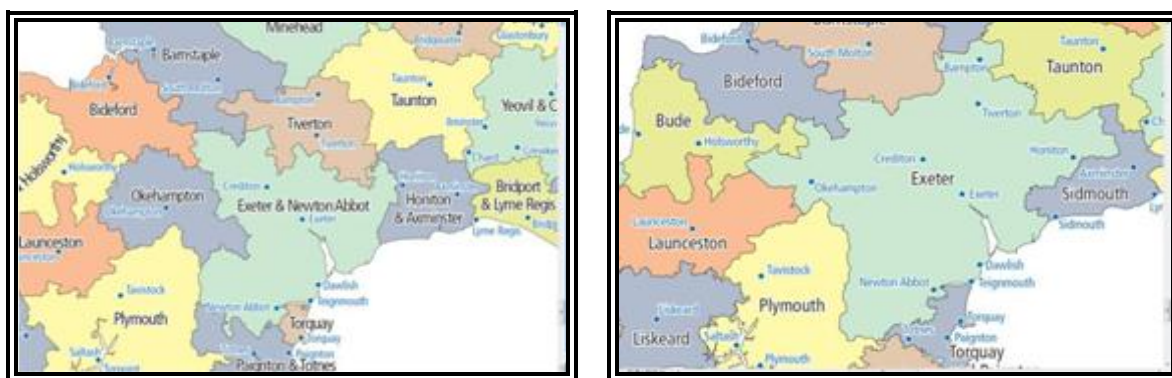
- EXETER CITY COUNCIL
- EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
- TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Note – text in italics is to aid understanding while this response is still in draft form. It will be omitted from the final response.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This response is submitted jointly by the above three councils which on 24 November 2014 formed The Greater Exeter, Greater Devon Partnership. While retaining their separate identities, the councils have signed an agreement which paves the way for joined-up decision making on planning, housing, resources and infrastructure. The Leaders of the three councils have endorsed this response. We have also discussed the requirements for the new franchise with other organisations, including Devon County Council, the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, the Peninsula Rail Task Force, and Travelwatch South West.
- 1.2 The Greater Exeter area is undergoing unprecedented growth. Exeter's administrative area has a population of about 120,000 but the city is an employment hub supporting a population of more than 500,000 people, with 19,000 additional jobs having been created in the city in the ten years to 2009. Figure 1 (from the Office of National Statistics) shows how Exeter's Travel to Work Area has increased between 2001 and 2011. Exeter's Core Strategy provides for at least 12,000 additional dwellings, 60 hectares of employment land and up to 40,000 square metres of net retail floorspace by 2026.

Fig 1: Exeter's Travel to Work Area, 2001 (left) and 2011 (right). (ONS)



- 1.3 Significant growth is also planned in East Devon, which has been proceeding towards a new Local Plan on the basis of a target of 15,000 new homes and 150 hectares of employment land in the period to 2026. There is also an expectation of continued strategic development, including house building, after 2026. A Fact Check Report from the Planning Inspector in January 2016 has indicated that the Plan is sound.
- 1.4 Teignbridge adopted a Local Plan in 2014 with a target of 12,400 new homes and 80 hectares of employment land by 2033.
- 1.5 The Greater Exeter area contains two Growth Points, one comprising Exeter and the west end of East Devon, and the other centred on Newton Abbot.
- 1.6 Rail forms a vital component of the transport strategy both for accommodating this growth, and for ensuring that Exeter continues to develop as a key economic centre. This applies at two levels:-
- 1.6.1 **The need for improved strategic connectivity**, to prevent Greater Exeter (and the whole South West peninsula) being relatively disadvantaged by the proposals for

electrification and new high speed lines elsewhere. Improvements are planned for the Great Western network, including the introduction of Hitachi AT300 trains and extra services to the Berks and Hants route, but the West of England line provides a useful alternative intercity route, particularly from Exeter and East Devon to destinations south of London, and it has further potential in this regard.

1.6.2 The need to support the growth of the local area. Devon County Council has developed the “Devon Metro” concept contained within its LTP3¹, designed to make best use of existing infrastructure through some well-targeted improvements, to underpin the growth planned through the various Local Plans. This will play an essential role in serving the wider economic footprint of Exeter in terms of its travel to work area. Two new stations have been opened this year, with a third planned at Marsh Barton for 2016. These are designed to serve strategic housing and employment areas including the new community at Cranbrook (on the West of England Main Line), which is due to expand rapidly towards a population of 20,000, in addition to being the closest station to major employment development sites and Exeter International Airport. Devon County Council has obtained a favourable feasibility (pre-GRIP 2) study into a second station at Cranbrook.

1.7 Coupled with the significant growth in patronage already being experienced by rail lines in Devon and the South West Peninsula generally, there is evidence that service improvements can themselves generate patronage². All of this needs to be reflected by an ambitious new franchise, and we therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation document.

2. The new franchise

2.1 Our interest in this franchise is in the West of England line. We welcome the comprehensive analysis in the Wessex Route Study and strongly support the most ambitious combination of options for CP6 set out in Table 5.10, namely capacity enhancements to enable an additional hourly service between Axminster and Exeter, plus hourly use as a diversionary route for Great Western intercity trains. We would point out, however, that at times this will need to accommodate diverted Cross Country trains as well. We are aware that these enhancements are now the subject of a GRIP 2 study and should be reflected in the new franchise (see 3.4 below). We are also in favour of permeable franchise boundaries, which would provide opportunities for bidders to put forward an ambitious offer. Subject to train paths being available, some services could be extended beyond Exeter St Davids to provide additional connectivity across Exeter, and/or direct services to London from North Devon.

2.2 Depending on its duration, the new franchise may also need to reflect a future timetable for full electrification, accepting that such a timetable is likely to extend beyond the end of the franchise. The catalyst for this could be creation of the Electric Spine, including the diversionary route via Romsey and Andover³, which if carried out in isolation would result in a patchwork system on the West of England line, with a third rail system from Waterloo to Basingstoke, overhead electrification from Basingstoke to Salisbury, and a final unelectrified section to Exeter. Extension of the overhead wires to Exeter, however, would enable the use of dual voltage EMUs (as on Thameslink), with the switch between systems occurring at Basingstoke during the station call. . It would also avoid the need for the train operator to maintain a non-standard fleet of diesel multiple units, and for the congested Main Line between Basingstoke and Waterloo to accommodate a mix of electric and diesel trains. In the event that electrification eventually reaches Exeter via the Great Western, it would in any case be necessary to electrify the West of England line to preserve its function as a diversionary route.

2.3 While the consultation does not specifically seek views on the length of the franchise, a relatively long term would be beneficial to the areas served by the West of England Line. Population and economic growth within the line’s catchment are the subject of robust forecasts, and provide a sound basis for investment in rolling stock and infrastructure which

¹ Local Transport Plan 3 for Devon and Torbay, at p56 ff

² ORR data shows that Axminster station’s entries and exits increased by 40% for the three years following introduction of an hourly service, compared with the three year period before the timetable change.

³ See for example Wessex Route Study para 0.93.

an operator with a long franchise could be called upon to deliver. The Chiltern line provides a useful analogy here, having benefitted from investment during a long-term franchise, to transform it from a secondary route between London and Birmingham into an inter-city service in its own right. The West of England Line has similar potential.

- 2.4 From our perspective, it would be unsatisfactory to proceed with a short award as this would inhibit long term investment. It is recognised that there are a number of aspirations whose exact nature and timescale are not fully known, principally Crossrail 2 and the Electric Spine, although these are likely to be sufficiently far into the future that they should not detract from longer term investment further west.
- 2.5 The following sections set out our responses to the specific consultation questions.

3. Response to consultation questions

3.1 Passenger Satisfaction

Do you support the key priorities that have been identified through the Transport Focus research?

These are -

Price of train ticket offers better value for money;
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel;
Passengers always able to get a seat on the train;
More trains arrive on time than happens now;
Less frequent major unplanned disruption to your journey; and,
Passengers kept informed about delays.

Are there other priorities you believe should be included to inform the new franchise specification?

We support the above priorities.

3.2 Franchise Objectives

Do you feel that these are appropriate objectives for the South Western franchise?

Are there any further objectives you believe should be included?

These are -

- 1 *Support the economy of the South Western franchise area by offering high quality rail services to, from and across the franchise with service levels that reflect the specific requirements of the different markets served including non-London flows, intra-regional and London-radial, while working within the affordability constraints on public funding.*
- 2 *Increase capacity to meet current demand and future growth, supporting the delivery of planned infrastructure works and rolling stock investments, whilst minimising disruption to passengers.*
- 3 *Deliver an excellent experience for passengers which leads to significantly improved passenger satisfaction. Particular consideration should be given to innovative solutions to improving the ticket purchasing experience, the expansion of smart ticketing, the quality of the station environment, on-train facilities, the punctuality and reliability of train services and the commitment to improve compensation arrangements.*
- 4 *Secure whole industry efficiencies and help reduce overall industry costs by working in partnership across the rail industry.*
- 5 *Secure short, medium and long term benefits from collaborative working*

practices and partnering with industry stakeholders such as Department for Transport, Network Rail and Transport for London, including supporting the development of emerging schemes such as Crossrail 2.

- 6 *Work with stakeholders to support local communities to deliver local transport integration, local regeneration and investment in and around stations through Community Rail Partnerships and other organisations.*
- 7 *Work with the Isle of Wight Council to secure a long-term sustainable solution for the future of the Island Line during the course of the next franchise that will enable it to become a self-sustaining business.*
- 8 *Improve social and environmental sustainability to reduce carbon emissions, use resources effectively, and build skills and capability within the business and supply chain.*

We support the objectives, particularly the prominence given to supporting the economy of the area as part of item 1.

Item 2 refers to “planned ... rolling stock investments”, but none of these are directed to the West of England Line. At the recent briefing in Exeter, we were also concerned to hear that no capacity improvements to the single track line west of Salisbury are regarded as “planned infrastructure works” despite being the subject of a Network Rail GRIP2 study which could potentially see them realised in CP6.

This is discussed in more detail in section 3.4 below, but we would wish to see Item 2 of the objectives expanded as follows:-

*“Increase capacity to meet current demand and future growth, supporting **and complementing** the delivery of planned infrastructure works and rolling stock investments, whilst minimising disruption to passengers.”*

3.3 Capacity

Considering the planned schemes to deliver additional capacity, what are your views on additional opportunities to deliver more capacity elsewhere within the franchise area?

Are there particular services or routes where you believe there is a need to introduce additional capacity to address overcrowding?

It may be possible to increase overall passenger carrying capacity by introducing different rolling stock that has more standing space and/or modifying the internal configuration of trains, including rebalancing first and standard class seating. Do you have views on these potential rolling stock changes?

For the Greater Exeter area, sufficient capacity should generally mean everyone getting a seat.

Local services into Exeter do not benefit from a captive market like services in, say, London, and having to stand reduces the train’s competitiveness with other modes, particularly the car. It also prevents using the journey productively by reading. The West of England Line has only the dedicated Class 159/158 fleet to work with, and the current operator has intelligently redeployed units from time to time in an attempt to match demand. Despite this, trains are frequently full and standing, particularly those which serve employment centres (such as Exeter, Salisbury and of course London) at peak times.

On the other hand, significant numbers use the line for the end to end journey of four hours, and the current seating configuration (2 + 2 with some accommodation at tables) is reasonably successful in balancing their needs with those of the shorter distance commuters. As mentioned above, the line has potential for development as an inter city route between Exeter and London to supplement the parallel Great Western services. Removal of the small sections of first class seating, and/or reconfiguration to 3+2, would prejudice development of the line in this way and would be a retrograde step. Neither of these options should be seen as a satisfactory substitute for the introduction of additional vehicles.

We would therefore wish to see the following in the new franchise:-

- 3.3.1 More complete peak local services into and out of Exeter. For example, there is a gap between the 08.17 and 09.39 arrivals into Exeter Central, making the service unattractive for commuters to Exeter from, say, Honiton with a fixed start time of 9am. The franchise should therefore require five services arriving in Exeter between 06.30 and 10.00. This could be achieved, for example, by running a six car train from Salisbury to Honiton, and leaving one unit there to undertake a round trip to Exeter to plug the existing gaps.
- 3.3.2 All trains to call at Pinhoe, in view of the increasing patronage and current and future residential and employment growth in the area.
- 3.3.3 Improved journey times between Devon stations and Waterloo, such as 2 hours 50 minutes from Exeter St Davids, and under 2 hours from Yeovil. The current operator is working towards two trains an hour as far west as Yeovil. Once this is achieved, the alternate trains which continue to (and from) Exeter could omit stops between Salisbury and Yeovil Junction, before reverting to the current pattern between Yeovil and Exeter (but with all trains calling at Pinhoe as mentioned above).
- 3.3.4 The above changes would enable a better choice of trains, and faster trains, to London in the morning, with arrivals at Waterloo before 08.30 and 09.30.
- 3.3.5 From 2018, the current Great Western direct award provides for Exeter to Barnstaple trains to be operated independently of the Exmouth – Exeter – Paignton services. When that award expires in 2019, the South West operator should be required to run some through trains between Waterloo and Barnstaple. A future Great Western franchise could then be designed around that.
- 3.3.6 More rolling stock is likely to be necessary for the above. Although the pool of class 158/159s is limited, best use is not made of these units at present. For example, some are leased to Great Western and another is used for the electrified Lymington branch. The franchise should require the operator to concentrate its diesel stock where needed.

3.4 Future impacts on demand

What factors may impact on demand for travel on the new South Western franchise, drawing on local impacts in particular? Please provide any evidence you may have.

As set out in the Introduction to this response, the Greater Exeter area is seeing rapid growth. During preparation of the Wessex Route Study, local planning authorities along the West of England Line were asked by Network Rail for numbers of projected dwelling completions for the next two Control Periods.

Station catchment	Projected dwelling completions to 2024	Projected dwelling completions to 2031
Exeter Central/St Davids	7038	9810
Exeter Central via Exmouth branch	1520	1620
Pinhoe	4353	5282
Cranbrook	4797	7210
Feniton/Whimble	704	704
Honiton	867	867
Axminster	1786	1962

The table above was supplied to Network Rail, showing projected dwelling completions for station catchments from Exeter to Axminster in the periods to 2024 and 2031. For station catchments we have recognised “park and ride” use from the surrounding hinterland and assumed that people will travel to their nearest station. We have included settlements for which the nearest station is on the Exmouth branch as they have the ability to change to the West of England Line at Exeter Central.

As mentioned in paragraph 2.1, we have supported the proposal (as part of Devon Metro) for an additional train per hour between Exeter and Axminster. In response to the consultation on the Western Route Study, we made the point that the infrastructure for this needs to be provided early in CP6, ie. 2019, which is commensurate with the timing of major planning applications and the projected increase in employment within this corridor. The combined half hour frequency is needed in order to provide an attractive service for commuters, enabling housing growth at Cranbrook, Honiton and Axminster to be sustainable by feeding the Exeter labour market.

The West of England line also has a role to play in enhancing the resilience of transport to the South West Peninsula. We support enhancement of the West of England line as a diversionary route for Great Western intercity trains. The planned upgrading of the A303/A358/A30⁴ over the next decade will result in considerable disruption to journeys by road, with a likely increase in demand for rail travel in addition to that generated by housing and employment growth.

Given that upgrades to enable more frequent services over the single track sections are the subject of a GRIP2 study by Network Rail, and are required early in CP6 to cater for the growth that is planned, they need to be seen as part of the context for the new franchise, to ensure that the operator provides the necessary services, which in turn necessitates having the rolling stock to do so.

The franchise needs to be accompanied by an infrastructure development plan, as has been the case with the new Northern franchise. This is the only way to ensure that infrastructure and services are planned in a joined-up manner. The two are completely interdependent – for example, the service pattern and arrival times of westbound trains at Yeovil Junction affects the locations of passing loops between there and Exeter.

Devon Metro envisages an Exeter-Axminster service being provided by extending Barnstaple-Exeter services through a Great Western franchise post-2019, although this is not the only way of achieving additional frequencies and credit should be given to bids which contain ambitious proposals in this regard. Some Waterloo – Barnstaple direct services would be welcome, as set out in paragraph 3.3.5.

3.5 Train Service Specification

Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to first and last trains on the South Western network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?

Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to weekend trains on the South Western network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?

First and last trains and weekend timetables are currently acceptable on the West of England Line through Devon, in contrast to services on other lines in the county served by the Great Western franchise, which are generally less frequent in the evening and on Sundays. We would not want to see any erosion of the current position.

Would you support a specification which is flexible enough to allow the operator to review how station calls are allocated to train paths in order to improve overall line capacity? What impact might this have on passengers?

Skip-stop working already occurs on the West of England Line in Devon and is not entirely satisfactory. A stop at Cranbrook was factored in to the timetable several years before the station was opened, and initially most trains stopped either at Pinhoe or at Feniton and Whimple. Pinhoe serves as a destination station for commuters from East Devon, including Feniton and Whimple, who were left without a satisfactory service. The operator has now made some changes to address this, but there are still gaps in the timetable and therefore in local connectivity. There has been anecdotal evidence of train crews occasionally stopping at the wrong stations, and more frequent examples of incorrect announcements, both of which are an inherent drawback of skip-stop working.

Having said that, the more recent changes to the service pattern were made on the basis of evidence of travel patterns collected by the operator, and consultation with the relevant local

⁴ See for example <http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/road-projects/A303-Amesbury-to-Berwick-Down>

authorities, and have therefore been better received by the travelling public than was the case with the original skip-stop pattern. Our view is that any flexibility granted to the operator in relation to station calls in the new franchise should be conditional on obtaining evidence and conducting consultation in this way.

Given the projected housing growth within Pinhoe's catchment (see above), we consider that all trains should stop there, as set out in paragraph 3.3.2. See section 3.3 generally for other specific requirements we consider should be included in the franchise.

As mentioned in paragraph 1.6.2 above, plans are emerging for a "Cranbrook 2" station, and if this materialises during the franchise, the operator should be required to work with the local authorities to agree train services and management arrangements.

Respondents are invited to propose any changes to the current service pattern which they feel should be considered and to explain their rationale, for example by identifying specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which should be reflected in a revised specification.

Respondents who wish to promote service changes should clearly identify these in their response to this consultation, as well as any supporting business case or value for money (VfM) analysis.

See response at 3.4 above. We consider that those increased service levels reflect what is required to enable the rail network to cater for future growth. As such they should be mainstream franchise requirements, rather than increments to be funded by a third party.

The franchise should therefore contain incentives for the operator to enhance services, such as the ability to retain a significant element of the additional revenue generated. The terms of the current franchise, which is now in revenue support, actually provide a disincentive to the operator to invest in improved services.

3.6 Performance and reliability

Are there any specific stations or services where you believe reliability or punctuality should be improved?

Where possible, please explain your reasoning when responding to this question.

On the West of England Line within Devon, the greatest impact on reliability and punctuality comes from severe weather events causing flooding and/or landslips. Clearly these are outside the control of the operator. However, this does highlight the need for infrastructure enhancements so that diverted Great Western and Cross Country services can use the line with minimum possible impact on the regular services.

3.7 Managing disruption

Respondents are asked to suggest what mitigating actions and steps the South Western operator should be expected to take to meet the needs of its passengers both during the planned disruption to the franchise as a result of enhancement works and when 'force majeure' events, such as extreme weather or unplanned events that impact the smooth operation of the network.

The industry as a whole is not particularly good at dealing with unplanned disruption, and the current operator does not stand out as doing this particularly well or badly. However the fact that trains to Exeter are operated out of Salisbury depot means that if the line is severed between these points, no trains run west of the blockage. For the future, credit should be given to bids which set out ambitious but workable proposals for:-

- Developing arrangements with the operator of the Great Western franchise for use of stock and crews to maintain services in the Exeter area.
- Improving information to passengers, coupled with making the most effective use of staff resources and help points. As a minimum, current levels of help point and RTI provision should be maintained.

- Improving the supply of prompt and reliable information to passengers during times of disruption, through conventional means and social media, including advice about alternative travel options.

Respondents are asked to consider whether they would support replacing first/last train services with alternative transport where it can be demonstrated that a longer period of engineering access for Network Rail would improve the infrastructure reliability and reduce disruption overall.

We are not aware that disruption on this line has been attributed to time constraints on engineering access. We now have a seven day economy which needs to be served by a seven day railway, and there is a body of evidence that replacement road transport is unpopular with customers. The above proposal would therefore be a retrograde step and should be resisted.

Elsewhere in Devon, Network Rail have been persuaded to work within shorter possessions over Saturday night and Sunday morning, enabling an operator to respond to customer demand for an earlier start to Sunday services.

3.8 Partnership working and collaboration

We are interested in your view on the best way to achieve efficient operation of this railway through partnership and collaboration. Please describe how such working arrangements might support this objective.

Engagement with Local Transport Authorities, LEPs and the Peninsula Rail Task Force is vital, as well as with the various District Councils which, while not being Local Transport Authorities, nevertheless take an active interest in rail and its promotion as a mode of transport.

As set out in section 3.7 above, credit should be given to bids which propose arrangements with the Great Western operator to maximise use of stock and crews during times of disruption, and on a more routine basis if this enables a more attractive service to be provided within Devon, for example as described in paragraphs 3.3.1 (plugging gaps in the morning peak) and 3.3.5 (through services to/from Barnstaple).

3.9 Community rail and other local partnerships

What opportunities are there for Community Rail Partnerships and other local partnerships to expand their role and range of activities to support local communities, businesses and other organisations?

Community Rail Partnerships (under the umbrella of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership) have been highly effective within the South West peninsula, in promoting rail travel, securing station improvements including through the use of volunteers, and gaining service improvements, such as additional trains on the Paignton branch following a successful bid for European funding. Within Devon, their activities have been limited to lines and services within the Great Western franchise. However, the fact that the West of England Line is a main line with services running outside the immediate area is not in itself a bar to establishment of community rail; the Riviera Line Community Rail Partnership's activities cover the section of main line between Exeter St Davids and Newton Abbot.

"Community" should include local businesses, and there are opportunities for engagement between the rail operator and current and emerging businesses along the West of England Line in Devon. For example, Exeter Science Park is an emerging development situated less than a mile from Pinhoe station, yet walking routes between the two are not particularly intuitive and the Park's transport information⁵ advises rail travellers to take a taxi from Exeter St Davids. Local authorities can play a role in introducing a rail operator to business organisations, to the advantage of all.

Credit should be given to bids which propose extension of the Community Rail principle to areas where it has not been adopted.

⁵ At <http://www.exetersciencepark.co.uk/location>.

3.10 Island Line

What factors do you consider should be taken into account in assessment of options for the Island Line?

Do you have any innovative proposals for how the Island Line might operate on a more self-sustaining basis?

Not for us to comment.

3.11 Third party funded changes

Are you aware of any proposals for third party funded changes?

Please provide details in line with the requirements set out above, or provide sufficient detail for further dialogue to take place to understand the proposals.

As indicated above, we consider that service frequencies should increase during the franchise to cater for growth. As such these improvements should be mainstream franchise requirements, rather than increments to be funded by a third party.

3.12 Stations

What improvements would you like to see at the station(s) you use to enhance your journey experience?

Please indicate the name of the station(s) and the rationale for your specific comments.

Whimble and Feniton stations have platform(s) too short to accommodate six car trains, which is inconvenient for passengers and will hinder more routine use of more than a single three-car unit on this section of line. Credit should be given to bids which propose to rectify this, in conjunction with any selective dualling that may be carried out during the life of the franchise.

Some stations have an increasing role as railheads for a considerable hinterland, and the operator should ensure that sufficient parking is available to satisfy demand.

3.13 Door-to-door journeys

What are your proposals for providing passengers better and safer access to different modes of transport at stations (including bus, car, cycling and walking)?

What opportunities exist for improved integration between modes, citing relevant examples to support your comments?

One of the disappointments of rail privatisation has been the lack of co-ordination between rail and bus services, even when operated by subsidiaries of the same group. There is scope for improvement, both in relation to ticketing and timetables. Credit should be given to bids which commit to this.

The current operator has been proactive in catering for cyclists at some locations on the network. There is scope for innovative facilities at stations within Devon, particularly Pinhoe and Cranbrook which are both linked by cycle routes to extensive new development, both residential and commercial. Credit should be given to bids which contain proposals in this regard.

Cranbrook is also the closest railhead to Exeter International Airport, and the operator should be expected to work with other parties to secure a connection which would enable the station to be marketed as connected to the airport. This could take the form of a conventional bus service, or a more limited service operated on behalf of the airport (for example) between the terminal, car parks, hotel, rail station and other facilities which could be better tailored to connect with arrivals and departures.

3.14 Fares and Ticketing

What are your views on the availability of retail staff and the ability for passengers to have widespread access to ticket buying opportunities (e.g. through new and improved approaches such as smart ticketing, increased advance purchase ticketing or via mobile phones), adequate measures to ensure vulnerable passengers are not disadvantaged, and more effective customer service by both station and on-train staff?

Do you have any evidence to support your views?

All stations on the West of England Line within Devon have ticket vending/collection machines and there should be a franchise requirement to retain these. However, the range of tickets sold by these machines is limited and does not necessarily offer the best value. Retail staff therefore continue to provide a valuable service for customers unable to use the internet or who understandably find the UK's railway fare structure bewildering.

For example, it is not intuitive that for someone able to commit to travelling on specific trains, two singles may cost less than a return ticket.

3.15 Smart ticketing

What are your experiences of using smartcard technology within the franchise area to date?

To what extent do you believe that smartcard technology could be used to manage passenger demand and to create an integrated journey experience for passengers?

Some customers of the franchise have experience of Transport for London's Oyster card, which is a convenient multi-modal solution for a network with a relatively simple fare structure. One of the frustrations for passengers in the UK is the lack of universal coverage, and the incompatibility of neighbouring smartcard systems (eg. Stagecoach "Smart", TfL Oyster and Southern Railway's "Key").

Given the complexity and fragmentation of the UK's public transport, use of contactless credit and debit cards, with the ability to charge fares at the most advantageous rate to the customer with calculations carried out on a back-office system (as with the London Travelcard caps) probably has the best prospect of evolving into a unified national system. However, smartcards limited to a particular operator and/or geographical area still have a role to play in encouraging "buy in" to use of public transport. Bidders should therefore be required to extend ITSO smart ticketing across the whole South West franchise area, and to work with local authorities who wish to introduce multi-modal ITSO schemes.

The current Great Western operator offers certain local season ticket products aimed at part-time workers commuting to Exeter stations, even without the use of smartcards. There is no obvious reason why a similar product could not be available to commuters using the South Western franchise.

3.16 Passenger Information

Are there areas of improvement in customer information and engagement you would like to see before, during and after your journey?

See response under 3.7 above.

3.17 Service quality

What areas of customer service within your end-to-end journey would you expect to see monitored and reported on to improve the service quality for passengers?

The key issue here is to minimise delays and cancellations, followed by achieving high levels of customer satisfaction (see response under 3.7 above). The franchise needs to include some clear targets and require bidders to demonstrate how they plan to ensure they are achieved.

Monitoring of satisfaction levels should not be limited to existing passengers, as that risks excluding the views of people who have ceased to be rail passengers, for example because of dissatisfaction with reliability or inability to pay the fares.

3.18 Passenger compensation

Please provide details of your experience with the current delay repay passenger compensation arrangements, and suggestions for how this might be modified in the new franchise to make compensation more transparent and convenient for passengers.

A new franchise should include arrangements that reflect best practice in the industry, including automatic compensation credited to a smartcard account or registered credit card, for passengers that have one.

3.19 Security and Safety

Do you have any proposals to improve security and safety at stations and on trains that you would like us to consider?

Please provide details of the stations(s) and/or train(s) where appropriate that have informed your comments, and provide supporting information where available.

Our experience is that SWT staff maintain a suitably visible presence on trains.