

Appendix 2

HEART OF WESSEX RAIL PARTNERSHIP and Somerset County Council

OBJECTIVES: Joint venture between train operator (TOC) and all local authorities served and connected together by the Bristol to Weymouth line. Overall objective **to raise awareness and increase use of the line**, to be achieved through 1) Building community involvement, 2) Improving information provision & promotion of the line's destinations/local economies, and 3) Improving station environments and facilities, including access to them by other modes of travel.

DELIVERY AGAINST OBJECTIVES

OVERALL. Passenger journeys: 705k in 2002/03: 1,806k in 2012/13. 3x national average growth rate, 2x FGW's Severn & Solent (S&S) region. "Share" of total passenger journeys in S&S region made on the Heart of Wessex Line up from 9.8 % to 14.3 % over the period. No change to service provision: for every 100 journeys made in 2003, 256 journeys now being made on the same trains. The partnership commissioned and funded a sound Business Case for improvement to services which was well received by the DfT, and included as a priced option in the aborted franchise renewal originally due for this year.

1) Building community involvement.

Since 2003, most stations "adopted" and today over 100 volunteers support and add value to partnership's work. Of 9540 hrs of voluntary time recorded in 2012, 2890 hrs was in Somerset. Voluntary work includes station enhancement, customer information and access improvements. 15% of annual budget used for a Community Project Fund. 26% of all grants made 2008/9 to 2012/13 = projects relating to Somerset stations/access/ promoting destinations.

Community Rail Working Party (CRWP): 23 lead representatives from communities along the line (7 from Somerset) attend all day workshops (min.3 per year) with TOC. Intensive focus on local needs results in creative joint solutions and a matrix of priorities and aspirations (short, medium & *long term). Efficient + effective means of allocating TOC resources to community needs for this route which represents less than 2% of the franchise /ensures focus on this minor part of the TOC's business. CRWP now recognised as primary consultee on the route for everything from services to TOC publications. CRWP passenger counts & overcrowding watch surveys have supplied the business case for capacity and timetabling improvements by the TOC.

2) Improving information provision & promotion of the line's destinations/local economies

Bristol to Weymouth Line Guide: 3x year, adjusts continually in response to customer comments & has become primary publication for the line. 35,000 of each edition into stations including London Paddington, Birmingham, Reading as well as whole of S West. Good niche marketing opportunity for local economies – Somerset regularly features for top leisure destinations that can be reached by rail. Somerset countryside also key feature of Car Free Walks/ Guided Walk promotions.

Focus on accessibility issues responding to regular feedback from CRWP, customers, train staff and station adoption groups' frequent direct customer interaction when working at stations. Station signage, walking routes, bus connections and other local information addressed with e.g. "Connecting Up" sheets on line and in print for train crews, station staff and volunteers.

3) Improving station environments and facilities, including access to them by other modes of travel

TOC: Community Wish List (CWL) = *Long Term aspirations from CRWP Matrix. 2006: New franchise included commitment to station improvements at the 50 largest of the network's 120 stations. None of our Somerset stations would have fallen into that category. CWL presented to FGW and delivered the following: Car Park for Customers at Frome Station; Expanded Car Parking at Castle Cary (50 additional spaces); wheelchair accessible toilet at Castle Cary; major renovations to ticket office & customer waiting areas, repainting and renovation of station buildings and exteriors Yeovil Pen Mill and Frome.

Community Rail: Projects undertaken by volunteer groups and individuals (designing, establishing and maintaining station gardens, environmental maintenance including recycling waste, community to customer notice boards, etc.); joint task forces for larger scale work include Frome Station, where 18 volunteers from all along the line have been specially trained by Network Rail to work on its property.

Access: Establishment and promotion of walking route from Castle Cary town to station, promotion (including posters, publications and station announcements, coordinated with both rail operators) and installation of bus stop at station for 68 bus in Yeovil.

C.P.P. 17/09/13