

FULL COUNCIL

26th September 2022

UPDATES AND INFORMATION

Councillor updates, conferences and events

Cllr Dredge (and Town Clerk) - DALC AGM – 5 October 2022

Cllrs Abbott and T Rea – Sustainable South Hams - 8th October 2022 (Notes attached)

Cllr Dredge – GWR Community Rail Stakeholder Conference – 17th October 2022 (Notes attached)

Cllr Dredge – Travelwatch South West General Meeting – 21st October 2022 (Notes attached)

Forthcoming training/conferences/representation

Cllr Abbott - New Councillor Training – October 2022

Cllr Brown – New Councillor Training – October 2022

Cllr Rea – Community Resilience Forum – November 2022

General Information

Christmas Festival

All Councillors are requested to be available on 25th November from 1pm to support the delivery of the Christmas Festival. Tasks will be allocated to suit individual Councillors. The event is open to the public from 4pm to 8pm. A further organising meeting was held on 25th October and a further verbal update can be given.

Christmas Day

Cllr Wilson, Louise Jones, Shirley Weeks, the Town Clerk and Administration Officer met to discuss the Christmas Day event. It was decided to hold a morning event with carols and a festive buffet, as well as provide hampers to those not able to make it to The Watermark. The provision of this event is a team effort including So Social & volunteers on the day, and the Town Council staff supporting the lead up, coordination and sourcing supplies and donations. Any one that wants to take part as a volunteer or attendee can ask at The Watermark, email, or call the town hall.

Butterpark

Having been waiting some time for action from Devon County Council Solicitors, and then a delay with our own solicitors we are now very close to going to market. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

Jonathan Parsons
Town Clerk

Report to Ivybridge Town Council
Monday 31st October 2022

Cllrs Victor Abbott and Tony Rea
Ivybridge and Bittaford residents Sophie Phillips, David Bell

Dear Councillors, Clerk & staff,
A colloquium was organised by Sustainable South Hams on Saturday 8th October at Kingsbridge Community College. We met at 10am and left at 2pm

As a report to this Town Council, we present a summary of experiences from us two Town Councillors and from two of the residents local to us who attended. There were more local residents in attendance and the inclusion of these two is just to provide a wider view.

The colloquium started with displays from many groups active in sustainability and a pressure group, Greenpeace. There was a centralised gathering and a review of some of the organisations present with their relevance to the sessions, and later, the opportunities presented through workgroups. Cllr Rea attended one on composting, Cllr Abbott on a Parishes & Towns Special Interest Group.

Carbon Savvy: We have a video we can run for the 15 minutes prior to a Town Council, possibly 18:40-18:55, entitled, "Know your carbon footprint to do something".

Cllr Rea's personal observations: I found the whole event informative and encouraging. There was much to learn about, for example, community composting, the 'Share Shed' project, community energy initiatives. I was especially interested in the Carbon Savvy work, and support the idea of this being made available to all councillors (as above). I have enrolled onto the Carbon Savvy's, Carbon Savers Plan.

Cllr Abbott found the introductory review useful, if nothing else for the Sustainable South Hams web pages (sussh.org). This led him to review the work done by ITC on the Climate Emergency (through the Tab, Groups & Find Group; the map hotlink to Ivybridge; variously View Declaration 19/037; View Plan (which links to the ITC website)). I look forward to supporting the working group.

Cllr Rea attended the Community Composting workshop.

With SHDC removing its garden waste collection service, this seems an alternative. It offers the prospect of communal composting, supported by SHDC (financially and/or in terms of chipping and 'turning' services, which produces a saleable output (compost). A good working example of a local community composting project can be seen working in South Brent.

However, the focus was on compost and community cohesion rather than on environmental impact and sustainability, in my opinion. For example, the system demands the use of heavy, diesel-powered equipment and (probably) a lot of driving around collecting green waste. There are several other issues which need to be taken into account. For example, a suitable plot or plots, insurance, community involvement, rodents (if food waste is added into the composting).

Cllr Abbott attended the Parish & Town Councils Special Interest Group. For the rural areas, the issue of drainage was a particular topic though we, Ivybridge, have remnants of this with water coming off the moor at locations in both west & east Ivybridge and causing overflows on occasion. Last year, as a District Councillor, I was involved in the clearance of a canalised drain at the back of a row of houses.

The speaker claimed 16% more rain than the 1960s though Kendon et alⁱ do not seem to support this.

Another issue was the local carbon footprint (see also the SUSSH website), though the figures appear to be based on national values and some un-publicised local (urban/ rural?) multiplier. Therefore, the methodology of arriving at the values for Ivybridge are unclear. Yet, the figures may provide a useful starting point to take council and personal action.

It would be good to ensure we take the Climate Emergency into account in all our decisions.

Comments by residents:

“I would say it was a very positive and encouraging event, SSH do a great job of bringing a broad range of people and organisations together.

It’s a great way to share your initiatives and find out about other things which you can tap into and a place to make new connections.”

“I enjoyed the SuSH event. I am particularly interested in communal energy, especially the Energy Local scheme and got some good contacts to enable me to take the project forward. We are at a very early stage at Moorhaven but it now looks like it might be beneficial to extend it further into the S Hams. More research needed. Early days...”

ⁱ Kendon M, McCarthy M, Jevrejeva S, Matthews A, Sparks T, Garforth J, Kennedy J, 2022, State of the UK Climate 2021, International Journal of Climatology, Royal Meteorological Society (RMetS) at <https://doi.org/10.1002/joc.7787>

GWR
Community Rail Stakeholder Conference
Held on Monday 17th October 2022
(Live audience and remote attendees)

The main speakers at the conference were:

Kevin Foster	MP newly appointed Rail Minister
Peter Wilkinson	MD Passenger Services Department for Transport
Andrew Haines	CEO Network Rail
Mark Hopwood	MD GWR

The conference was divided into 5 main themes:

1. Working in Partnership
2. Living Our Values
3. Kevin Foster's address to conference
4. Learning from each other
5. Being accountable –Delivering tomorrow's railways

Working in Partnership

The keynote speaker Peter Wilkinson emphasised how close we came to losing the railways owing to lack of finance during the Covid epidemic. The railways will never be the same again and the market has changed. Businessmen are now opting for remote meetings where the meeting is of relatively short duration. However, as far as GWR is concerned leisure journeys have held up well but overall passenger numbers are only 78% of pre-pandemic levels.

The Government bailed the railways out during the pandemic but they are not a top government issue now. However, the DfT will be fighting hard for the railways during the present financial crisis.

There are still 25 million people using the railways each week and domestic air travel is no longer seen as a threat to rail travel but the ongoing industrial action is having a significant effect on passenger confidence and hence on numbers and income.

A number of speakers talked of the benefit their charity received from working in partnership with GWR and Ian Harrison spoke about the LEP working with GWR to achieve a common aim. The LEP was conscious of the need for better connectivity both within the area and to other areas. He also explained the LEP's contribution to a number of projects in the area including making

Taunton station more accessible from the town centre, and work on a number of new or re-opened local stations including Okehampton and Marsh Barton

Living Our Values

There were a number of contributions under this heading explaining GWR's philosophy as a good employer encouraging staff to seek promotion and operating from a multi-cultural basis

The changing pattern of travel and needs of passengers must be catered for and due regard paid to both safety and the environment. There has been a 40.6% reduction in carbon emissions since 2017 and the use of fast-charging battery branch line trains is being progressed.

Further reductions in carbon emissions are being explored with suppliers.

Christian Irwin of SPEED (Swift Pragmatic Efficient Enhancement Delivery) spoke of breaking down barriers, challenging existing standards and thinking and operating differently.

He also spoke of what outcomes do we need at the lowest cost, what can we do to help passengers more?

Address by Kevin Foster MP

Mr Foster echoed the need for connectivity in the south west with regards to social/economic growth. He also drew attention a number of projects in the area including the new station at Marsh Barton (not yet open)

Railways have got to face up to the future without being so dependent on financial support from the taxpayer.

We must deliver what the community wants and keep our focus on what matters

Learning from each other

This session covered many individual topics including work done with educational charities, working with local groups to brighten up stations and station gardens, and also targeting specific groups to return to rail travel.

Revenue recovery has been slower than passenger numbers owing to the change of passenger mix and although the south west has recovered well, fewer passengers are travelling into London. Paddington, however, has done better than other London termini.

There are a number of new promotions being undertaken to tempt people back to the railway

Performance-wise it has not been a good year with industrial action, extreme weather conditions and infrastructure delays.

Being accountable –Delivering tomorrow's railways

Mark Hopwood spoke of financing becoming ever more difficult, particularly with the Chancellor's statement this day.

He also spoke of the effect of months of industrial action, the overall UK economic situation and rising costs both for passengers and the industry.

The current agreement with Government means that an annual budget has to be presented to Government.

GWR must look at efficiencies which will be very challenging but is still seeking growth and there are some great projects coming to fruition

Andrew Haines

Andrew again spoke of poor GWR train performance and the negative effect of the prolonged industrial action.

Regarding the industrial action, reforms would be needed to finance any settlement. There is no other funding available for this and there will be a loss of jobs.

Half a billion pounds of revenue has been lost owing to the strike action.

Ticketing is far too complex.

The profile of rail travel demand is quite different now to pre-pandemic patterns. Commuter travel on Friday mornings is only half of that on Wednesday mornings.

Conclusion

Although it was very interesting to listen to the upbeat presentations about partnership working, GWR values and so on, the overwhelming message from the keynote speakers was of the need to survive with a lower contribution from the tax payer and the fact that this, and the industrial action demands would mean that serious economies will have to be made, and long established working practices changed or abandoned.

Cllr Phillip Dredge
18th October 2022

TravelWatch SouthWest General Meeting
Held as a remote event
Friday 21st October 2022

The meeting was chaired by Chris Irwin Chairman of TWSW and the keynote speaker was Mark Hopwood Managing Director of GWR.

Chris Irwin's Introduction

Post – pandemic people are less likely to travel with more working from home, attending meetings via remote platforms, online retail, health consultations, together with the extraordinary economic situation we are experiencing including cuts in public spending.

Historically dark times bring about innovation. Now is the time to design blueprints for the future. We need a plan now! Train operating companies (TOCs) need to listen to their stakeholders and consider their contributions.

A sign of Government re-entrenchment is the shelving of 'Great British Railways' and the deferment of the goal for zero carbon emissions by railways.

Mark Hopwood's Address

Integration

GWR is continuing its policy of integrated transport with 'bus branch lines and joining up bus and train services in partnership with local authorities and bus operators.

Examples currently being developed include:

- Totnes/Salcombe
- Barnstaple/Lynton and Lynmouth
- Okehampton/Tavistock

There are plans for other such branch lines to be developed.

The scheme will include:

- Timetable co-ordination
- Joint marketing strategy
- Customer information
- Bus stop information
- Promoting the scheme through leaflets, posters and social media

Trials are currently being held utilising a driver-less bus from Didcot station to a local business park

GWR are also in co-operation with the west Cornwall shuttle bus service and Metrobus services. There are to be 4 forums to be held for TOCs, bus operators and local authorities to further develop the schemes. Again publicity and marketing will underpin any such schemes

Access to Stations

There will be more cycle space to encourage travellers to cycle to stations and a number of 'way-finding' schemes from town centres to railway stations. There is also a new home voucher scheme financed by S106 money for both buses and trains.

Performance

Funding for railways is limited or under threat. TOC contracts now have to agree an annual business plan and budget with the Department of Transport.

Leisure travel is increasing but business travel is down, which has a disproportionate effect on income. Savings will have to be made in line with Government policy. These are, and will be, difficult times.

Train performance has not been good enough and has been affected by extremes of weather, infrastructure problems, and industrial action. There will be no government funding for any pay settlement.

Promotion

- The Elizabeth Line is opening up Paddington and journeys to the west of England to a far greater potential clientele.
- New family tickets which are particularly attractive with the current price of diesel and petrol.
- New 'Famous 5' advertising campaign
- Direct work with destination marketers
- Joint marketing with social media

Investment

- Marsh Barton station
- Okehampton station
- Plymouth station
- Mid Cornwall Metro

Project Chuchward

This is to get rid of all the older designs of the diesel-powered fleet and replace them with either overhead cable electric-powered trains or those operated by 'fast-charging' battery trains which can be recharged during the normal turnaround time..

Mark Hopwood's wish list

- Western rail link to Heathrow Airport
- Decarbonisation and new trains
- Improved Cardiff/Portsmouth services
- Separation of Intercity services from local journeys
- Enlarged Bristol suburban network
- More new stations being introduced.

Cllr Phillip Dredge

21.10.22