

Virtual meeting of the Purbeck Community Rail Partnership (PCRP) held on 11th January 2023 and Current Update on the Wareham service

I attended a virtual meeting of the PCRP on 11th January.

Present were Swanage Railway, Swanage Town Council, Dorchester Town Council, Dorset Council, Friends of Wareham and Wool stations, South Western Railway, Network Rail, First Bus, the National Trust, and the Community Rail Partnership. The new Community Rail Officer, Steven Booth, acted as secretary and Mike Whitwam of Swanage Railway chaired.

1. The Accountable Body function for the PCRP has been taken over by the Hampshire CRP, who now pay Steven Booth. The Hampshire CRP is now undergoing accreditation.
2. The Community Rail Officer (CRO) gave an update.
 - Totem boards are going into Dorchester and Wareham.
 - Waterloo station celebrates its 175th anniversary in July and there will be some special events nearer the time. The station opened in July 1848.
 - Dorset council have announced that they will contribute £2K pounds annually to the PCRP. Southwestern Railway funding is still unsure, but a decision is expected in the late spring.
 - Beryl bikes have been installed at Wool station.
 - Resolution of the issues around the Wareham crossing is still at senior level within Network Rail and Dorset council.
3. Swanage Railway reported that the last year has been very challenging. Nevertheless, they have lots planned for this year and are aiming for an event each month.
4. Planning for a Wareham service is going ahead. It is expected to start in April or May and SR are keen to progress the service. It is planned that there would be four trips per day on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The service will need much cooperation with other authorities including Network Rail and South Western Railway. **See below for a current update on the Wareham service.**
5. Network Rail are setting up a plan to improve the Wareham up Bay which has sand lizards but nevertheless needs clearing and cleaning. The bay may need to be used in the future in connexion with the Swanage service. The trial service needs marketing and promoting.
6. The RSPB plan on running buses to and from Arne via various spots including Purbeck Park. This will be marketed more aggressively than was done last year.
7. A bid has been made for planters at Wareham and this is being implemented.
8. The friends of Dorchester station are up and running and the friends of Wool station are active as is Wareham.
9. Videos promoting the Jurassic coast including Corfe and Durdle Door were shown. These have been put on the Swanage Railway website.
10. Morebus has been busy in Bournemouth due to Yellow buses becoming bankrupt. They also reported that there were problems last year at Studland due to the roads being blocked by inconsiderate parking on both sides of the ferry. They were working with BCP, Dorset

Council and the police to resolve the parking issues. Morebus reported that they have sufficient qualified drivers.

11. It was reported that the Furzebrook siding issue has now been reenergised and Swanage Railway are in direct contact with Dorset council and Perenco. The delay has been caused by the absence of the Perenco lawyer who is now back in post and is working on the problem.

Stephen
Stephen Dru Drury
Corfe Castle PC representative at the PCRCP

Current update on the Swanage to Wareham Service.

The trial service will operate on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 4 April to 10 September 2023, with the first train departing Wareham at 11.19am and the last train leaving Swanage for Wareham at 4.20pm – giving visitors the opportunity to spend four hours in Swanage or Corfe Castle. The timetable is subject to change on special event days.

Swanage Railway will be using its restored and upgraded 1950s heritage diesel trains, used by British Rail across its network from the 1950s to the 1990s, to operate the eleven mile service - one mile of which will be on the Network Rail main line from Worgret Junction and directly into Wareham station.

This trial train service is the result of working in partnership with the Government's Coastal Communities Fund, the Department of Transport, the former Purbeck District Council, Dorset Council, British Petroleum, Perenco, Network Rail and South Western Railway. Valued stakeholders have made a far-sighted investment of £5.5 million to re-connect Swanage and Corfe Castle with the main line at Wareham; this included £1.8 million from the Government's Coastal Communities Fund to restore and upgrade the 1950s heritage diesel trains for running on the main line directly into Wareham station.

South Western Railway is supporting the Swanage Railway by giving customers the ability to buy tickets through to Corfe Castle and Swanage from any one of the 189 stations on the network.

On behalf of the Swanage Railway, the trains will be operated and staffed by West Coast Railways which is one of Britain's leading main line charter and special train operators with whom the Swanage Railway has worked on many occasions.

The four trains a day service from Wareham will be formed of a three-carriage heritage Class 117 diesel multiple unit that can have a one-carriage heritage Class 121 diesel multiple unit added at busy times, giving a total of 292 seats.

The two heritage diesel trains have been restored and upgraded for the Swanage Railway by specialist contractors who fitted the same technical, signalling and safety equipment that is installed on all other trains running on the national railway network.