

Purbeck Community Rail Partnership

I attended a meeting of the Purbeck Community Rail Partnership (PCRP) on the 7th of April.

The meeting was attended by Swanage Railway, South-Western Railway, Network Rail, Dorset council, Wareham, Swanage and Corfe Castle parish/town councils as well as MoreBus and representatives from Friends Groups for Wareham, Moreton, and Wool stations. It was announced that Holton Heath and Dorchester South stations would also form friends groups.

It was announced that the 23rd to the 29th of May would be a national community rail week.

Various events were planned – see <https://communityrail.org.uk> .

The Community Rail Partnership Officer gave an update on the activities over the past 6 months.

I have her report and activity chart if anyone would like to see it.

Issues affecting Wareham

There was discussion about the pedestrian crossing at Wareham. This needs to be resolved as the down sidings at Wareham cannot be used until it is resolved. There is now a proposal for the crossing to be automated and this is currently being looked at.

The point was made that the work being done on the A351 at the moment was not in any way linked to the crossing. Since the proposal for an alternative approach to the bridge had been rejected the best solution would be automatic gates on the crossing.

It was stated that this works well elsewhere – for example in Poole.

South-Western Railway

SWR stated that a new timetable would be introduced in May which would reinstate the service of two trains per hour. This new timetable has now been published and will become effective on the 15th of May.

The Swanage Railway

SR stated that business had been very difficult during Covid and that it would take some time to recover financially. Passenger numbers were approximately a third down compared with pre-Covid. Furthermore some longer service members were stepping down and not necessarily being replaced.

They were actively discussing the lease at Furzebrook with Perenco and are hopeful of a resolution soon.

Because of the difficult financial situation a decision had been taken not to run the trial service to Wareham this year. It would now be delayed till 2023.

This was a very disappointing announcement.

The main problem was that contractors had to be appointed to crew trains on the Network Rail part of the line between Worgret and Wareham. The cost of the contractors would exceed any likely income from passenger tickets. In view of the overall financial situation the SR was facing a further loss could not be considered. This decision will be reviewed if the financial situation improves.

A diesel gala and beer festival is planned for 6th to 8th May. There will also be another major event in October

Friends of various stations.

Updates were given about activities on Moreton, Wool, and Wareham stations.

Stephen

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