



PORTISHEAD RAIL SERVICES

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Project Overview

The project to re-open the Portishead line to passenger rail services is part of the MetroWest programme to improve local rail services across the West of England. This programme will use both existing and disused rail lines that feed into and across Bristol, operating frequent train services subject to a proven business case being made and infrastructure constraints. Phase 1 of the programme includes re-opening the Portishead rail line to passenger services and increasing the frequency of services on the Severn Beach and Bath lines. The project is being led by North Somerset Council on behalf of the four West of England councils (Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset). A further MetroWest Phase 2 project is also being progressed by the councils.

Delivering an Affordable Project

In March 2017 the scheme's outline design including GRIP3 (Option Selection) for a half-hourly train service was completed along with an updated scheme capital cost estimate. The amount of works required for this frequency made the scheme unaffordable, consequently it was decided to deliver the scheme in stages with initially an hourly train service (and possibly some additional peak time trains). This reduces the amount of infrastructure works required, which in turn reduces cost and lessens the impact on the sensitive environmental areas whilst still meeting modern safety standards.

The service will be operated initially using three carriage trains (with approx. 270 seats), and can be increased to five carriage trains in the future as the platforms for the new Portishead and Pill station will be sufficient for operating longer trains. Our ambition to ultimately provide a half hourly train service remains, however this would be a separate project (after the current project to re-open the branch line with an initial hourly train service), and separate funding and consents would be required.

Edition 9. Summer/Autumn 2017

Welcome to the summer/Autumn 2017 edition of our Portishead Rail Services newsletter.

The last 9 months have been very challenging with considerable unexpected cost increases. It seems to be a common problem in the rail industry with many projects across the UK having the same problem. Robust examination of all cost increases can be difficult and lengthy.

Despite these challenges, we are committed to the scheme and I am pleased to confirm that we will be proceeding with our Stage 2 formal consultation in late October 2017, see further details below.

Nigel Ashton,
Leader of North Somerset Council



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Revised Design for an Hourly Train Service

Since March 2017, we have undertaken a lot of technical work to re-scope the scheme and determine what changes can be made to the engineering design to reduce cost for an initial hourly train service.

Our findings simplistically are that no major railway infrastructure design changes are needed for the section of railway between Portishead and Pill, however the amount of infrastructure works to upgrade the existing freight line from Pill to Bristol can be reduced considerably. This means the following works that were needed for the original half hourly scope, are not needed for the initial hourly service:

- the line speed increase from 30mph to 50mph east of Pill to Parson Street Junction – is no longer needed,
- the extent of track renewal works and works to railway bridges, retaining walls and other structures – is reduced,
- the double tracking from Bower Ashton to Ashton Gate and new junction (Clifton Junc) – is no longer needed.
- the capacity enhancement to Parson Street Junction to provide a double lead connection with the main line – is no longer needed, and
- the traffic impact at Ashton Vale Road has reduced such that alternative highway access for Ashton Vale Road – is no longer needed.

The revised design work is due to be completed by the end of 2017, when a revised scheme cost estimate will be undertaken, validated and independently checked.

Land

While the reduced scope of the scheme has reduced the amount of land the scheme needs, there remains three key areas of land acquisition:

- Land required permanently to build and operate the scheme including both the railway and the highway works;

- Land required on a temporary basis only during its construction;
- Land rights which can be rights for a short period of time i.e. during construction only, or rights that are required permanently.

All the third party land owners have been identified and are being contacted. They will also be formally consulted on the scheme this autumn, see below for more details.

Stage 2 Formal Consultation

The re-opening of the Portishead Line requires planning consent under primary legislation and this entails applying for Development Consent Order, under the 2008 Planning Act.

In 2015 we undertook our stage 1 consultation, for which we had a large number of responses and a high level of support for the scheme. Since 2015, we have progressed the engineering design, the environmental assessment, the business case and wider technical work.

This autumn we will be launching our stage 2 formal consultation to explain how the scheme has developed since 2015 and in particular Portishead line which requires planning consent. We will also provide additional information about the wider scheme including our proposals for the Severn Beach line and the Bath Spa to Bristol line, which don't require planning consent.

The consultation will be open to the local community, land and property owners, statutory bodies, government agencies, local interest groups and wider stakeholders. The consultation is planned to commence from late October 2017 and close in early December 2017.

Further Information

If you have any questions or would like to be added to our email database please email us at: prs@n-somerset.gov.uk Information is also available at: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/prs and www.travelwest.info/MetroWest