

# Chard / Chard Junction > Chard Parkway?

08-08-22 **Everything you need to know about plans for new Chard Parkway railway station**  
[https://www.chardandilminsternews.co.uk/news/chard\\_news/20607855.everything-need-know-plans-new-chard-parkway-railway-station/](https://www.chardandilminsternews.co.uk/news/chard_news/20607855.everything-need-know-plans-new-chard-parkway-railway-station/)



A new Somerset 'parkway' railway station could be delivered in the coming years with new businesses and transport links to local villages.

Chard Junction railway station served the villages south of Chard for more than 100 years before it was closed in March 1966 as part of the infamous Beeching cuts.

Somerset County Council stated in late-July that it had "no firm plans" to reopen the station, adding that it could cost around £60,000 just for an initial study to see if it would be viable.

But local county councillor Connor Payne is not taking 'no' for an answer, and is pushing forward with proposals for a 'parkway'-style station on the site with the help of nearby businesses.

Here's everything you need to know about what is being proposed:

## **Where is Chard Junction?**

The former station lies on the mainline between London Waterloo and Exeter St. David's, a short distance from the village of Tatworth and mere metres from the Dorset border.

The station used to provide a direct link to Chard via a branch line, but this was also scaled back and closed in the mid-1960s, with Chard Central railway station being turned into retail outlets and much of the trackbed on to Ilminster now forming the Stop Line Way cycle route.

The line is currently served by South Western Railway, which runs hourly services in each direction stopping at Crewkerne and Axminster.

The site also lies near the Chard Junction Quarry, which is operated by Aggregate Industries.



The former Chard Junction railway station on Station Road near Tatworth.

### What is the county council's current position?

Councillor Mike Rigby, portfolio holder for transport and digital, stated at a full council meeting in Yeovil on July 20 that the council supported the reopening of Chard Junction in principle but had not allocated any funding in its budget for initial feasibility work.

He said: "There are currently no firm plans for a reopening of Chard Junction station.

"However, we have recently begun discussions with local representatives about the process that might be followed to build a high-level strategic and economic case for that. This would examine the current transport issues and identify whether rail is the preferred option for solving them.

"It would also examine the potential value for money that a rail solution might deliver, based on an assessment of future demand, capital and operating costs.

"I do need to make you aware of the fact that there is currently no funding identified for carrying out this work, estimated at up to £60,000, or any clear funding pathways for a new station if that's determined to be the correct way forward.

"But it is on the radar and we are working towards those goals that I've set out."

### What is the plan for Chard Parkway?

Connor Payne was elected in May as one of two councillors for the Chard South division, which includes everything in Chard to the south of the A30 and the villages of Tatworth and Forton near the Chard Junction site.

Rather than simply reopening Chard Junction as a halt-style stop with occasional services, Mr Payne is pushing for a parkway station – along the lines of Bristol Parkway or Tiverton Parkway, which could serve the nearby villages and provide means of onward travel to Chard and other nearby towns.



Mark Wheaton of JB Wheaton & Sons with Councillor Connor Payne .

He said: “Typically, parkways have various business centres around them, like retail parks. We’re not being quite that ambitious, but we are looking for somewhere where there is opportunity for business development.”

Mr Payne has already secured the support of Mark Wheaton of JB Wheaton & Sons Ltd., which owns the land on the southern side of the railway line.

Following a meeting on Wednesday (August 3), Mr Payne said: “For many years Mark wanted to see a Train Station at the Chard Junction site – so much so that he purchased the land at the site in order to protect it from housebuilding later down the line.

“He says the potential for sites on both sides of the track is limitless, and JB Wheaton & Sons are looking forward to supporting the project in a variety of ways to ensure its completion.

“Mark has already stated that he would like to re-purpose his disused land to build a car park and several small businesses, to subtract cost from the overall project, with a vision of return investment in the future.”

The owner of the former Dairy Crest site, on the northern side of the line, is said to be “extremely interested in re-purposing his land to bring investment and attract tourism”.

### **What kind of service would the new station have?**

One of the criteria by which the DfT judges bids to open new railway stations is whether or not they will increase journey times – especially those to and from London.

In the past, efforts to reopen Chard Junction have been resisted on this basis – with some arguing that it would lead to the closure of either of the two stations around it.

Mr Payne said there were “ways around this”, either by finding additional capacity elsewhere on the line or by running a new service which could miss out some of the smaller stations between Exeter and Salisbury.

The Salisbury to Exeter Rail User Group (SERUG) has been pushing the government for years to redouble key sections of the track through Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire, allowing twice as many services to run per hour in each direction.

In the shorter term, new passing loops at Crewkerne and Whimble, and a longer loop at Tisbury, could help to implement this.

In addition to delivering new passenger services, a new “freight line” could be included, allowing Chard Junction Quarry and other nearby businesses to “slim down their road operations” and cut carbon emissions in the process.



Catchment area for Chard Parkway railway station, as well as existing stations in Axminster and Crewkerne. Picture by Connor Payne.

## **How will people get to the station?**

During the local election campaign, Mr Payne said he would fight for a shuttle bus which would travel between Chard and the station through the neighbouring villages.

He will also be speaking to Buses of Somerset about the scope for redirecting the 30 route, which already travels between Chard and Axminster via Tatworth, to serve the station.

Mr Payne said on Wednesday (August 3): "After discussions today, a local business may wish to invest in an electric shuttle bus system, timed to match the rail times, which has a circular route through Tatworth, Chard and surrounding villages at a minimal cost for customers.

"There would be several designated 'Train Shuttle' pick-up and drop-off locations on the circular line, in more residential areas.

In the longer run, there may be scope for extending the Stop Line Way beyond Tatworth, possibly following the route of the former railway line leading to Chard.

A new report into the future of the Stop Line Way is expected to come before South Somerset District Council's area west committee before the end of the year.

Mr Payne concluded: "There is a wide gap between Axminster and Crewkerne (including Chard, Ilminster, Thornfalcon, Combe St Nicholas, Tatworth and more) that needs a rail connection due to the vastly increasing population.

"Over 2,200 more houses are being built in Chard, with proposals for a ring road around Chard. We have the threat of climate change, the need for greater investment in south Somerset and poor public transport.

"We are now in a position where this is a viable solution."

## **What happens next – and how do I get involved?**

Mr Payne will be meeting with Jonathan Roberts on August 22, to see how the campaign group RailFuture can be more closely involved in the push for the new station.

Mr Payne said: "Jonathan has over 40 years' experience in working with clients on national, regional, and international projects and campaigns, at technical, local authority and parliamentary levels.

"He has advised transport public and private sectors, local and regional government, promoters, and developers.

"He is a long-standing adviser to RailFuture, a leading independent organisation which campaigns for an improved railway network to underpin economic growth, environmental safeguards and the well-being of communities.

"They promote effective rail freight capacity as well as improvements to principal passenger rail corridors and rail restoration schemes."

A new board will be created to drive the station project forward, comprising local MPs Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) and Chris Loder (West Dorset) along with local councillors, officers and representatives from both Network Rail and South Western Railways.

This is expected to hold its first meeting in either September or October and begin preparing an initial business case at a cost of around £15,000, with local businesses willing to assist in the funding of this.

If this case is deemed appropriate by the Department for Transport (DfT), a second more detailed business case (costing around the £60,000 quoted by Mr Rigby) can be drawn up as part of a formal bid to the government's restoring your railway fund.

In order to keep the board on its toes, a residents' steering group will also be created to allow the public to have their say and feed in ideas on a regular basis, with the first meeting due to be held in late-August.

To register your interest in being part of the Chard Parkway Residents Steering Group (CPRSG), visit [www.cognitofirms.com/CouncillorConnorPayne/CPRSGRegistrationForm?fbclid=IwAR34B16L2ZarnmNrM2bOxi3aCd6Yu4HCtv-KYrA8GNYXlr058ki86b1D5Qs](http://www.cognitofirms.com/CouncillorConnorPayne/CPRSGRegistrationForm?fbclid=IwAR34B16L2ZarnmNrM2bOxi3aCd6Yu4HCtv-KYrA8GNYXlr058ki86b1D5Qs).

If all goes well, the new station could open by 2028.



28-07-22 See: <https://m.facebook.com/cllrconnorpayne>

26-07-2022 **"No firm plans" to reopen Chard railway station**

<https://www.chardandilminsternews.co.uk/news/20579975.no-firm-plans-reopen-chard-railway-station/>



**"No firm plans" to reopen Somerset railway station**

*There are “no firm plans” to reopen a Somerset railway station – and the cost of taking the first step towards this could be up to £60,000.*

*Chard Junction railway station served the villages south of Chard for more than 100 years before it was closed in March 1966 as part of the infamous Beeching cuts.*

*Local residents and campaigners have been pushing for the station to be reopened, arguing it will reduce road traffic to the nearby towns of Axminster and Crewkerne and provide the area with better links to Exeter and the wider south west.*

*But Somerset County Council has said that there are currently no firm proposals to reopen the station on the table and that it has no means of funding an initial study into any new station on the old site.*

*Local resident Ian Beckey questioned the amount of progress being made on the project when the full council met in Taunton on Wednesday morning (July 20).*

*He said: “What progress is being made on reopening Chard Junction railway station?”*

*“Since Chard is a fast-growing town and in need of both good bus, coach and train links to London and the south west region.”*

*The former station lies on the mainline between London Waterloo and Exeter St. David’s, a short distance from the village of Tatworth and metres from the Dorset border.*

*The station used to provide a direct link to Chard via a branch line, but this was also scaled back and closed in the mid-1960s, with Chard Central railway station being turned into retail outlets and much of the trackbed on to Ilminster now forming the Stop Line Way cycle route.*

*Chard will see significant housing growth in the coming years, with the town expanding to the south and east as more applications within the Chard Eastern Development Area (CEDA) come forward.*

*The Snowdon Grange development of 200 homes is currently being constructed on the A358 Tatworth Road, with two other major developments being planned for the sites immediately to the south.*

*Councillor Mike Rigby said the council supported the reopening of Chard Junction in principle but had not allocated any funding in its budget for initial feasibility work.*

*Councillor Connor Payne, whose Chard South division includes the former station site, made reopening the station a central plank of his campaign in the May local elections.*

*He petitioned Tatworth and Forton Parish Council to support the reopening of the station on July 7 but the council voted against the motion.*

*Posting on social media after the meeting, Mr Payne said: “Over 900 people voted for me, knowing that a train station was my number one priority when elected.*

*“There is money in a government pot waiting to be used. That money won’t be reallocated. If it’s there, we need to use it, or someone elsewhere will get it.*

*“I have planned for traffic increases on Station Road, and as a county councillor, I get a small improvement scheme, which I am looking to use in that area to slow traffic for when a train station is put there, to mitigate speeding.*

*“In the long term, it’s crazy to think this won’t help the environment.”*

06-12-2017 **Chard station campaigners get boost for transport dream**

<https://www.chardandilminsternews.co.uk/news/15702811.chard-station-campaigners-get-boost-for-transport-dream/>



**Chard station campaigners get boost for transport dream**

***PASSIONATE*** campaigners who have worked for a decade to have Chard Junction station reopened have received a boost after the transport secretary announced plans for railway lines closed in 1960s.

*Chard Junction station was one of 2,363 station which closed in 1960s.*

*The announcement from Transport Secretary Chris Grayling coincided with a meeting between campaigners, Chard county councillors, and the cabinet member for transport and highways, John Woodman.*

*Andrew Turpin, the district councillor for Tatworth and Forton, said: "This is a new and exciting opportunity.*

*"Surrounding the station live around 20,000 people, including Thorncombe, Winsham, Tatworth and Forton, but with only a thin spread public transport provision with no Sunday or evening service."*

*The recent meeting also saw Chard Junction campaigners call for an expansion of the Devon Metro scheme to reach South Somerset.*

*Cllr Turpin added: "The outcome was that together with Devon County Council, SCC would revisit this. With this announcement, I find this all very exciting - a real opportunity."*

*Chris Grayling said he wants to identify which routes would boost the economy, encourage house-building and ease overcrowding.*

*An SCC spokesman said: "Rail has potential to be an important part of the transport mix in this county.*

*"We welcome the interest and attention from the Transport Secretary and await detail of any additional support to help local communities take projects forward.*

*"As things stand, the barriers that were there before still remain – the significant costs needed to demonstrate the viability of potential schemes in terms of passenger demand and construction costs. Then constructions costs of any scheme should it be deemed viable."*

*Gemma Verdon, county councillor for Chard South, and Amanda Broom, county councillor for Chard North, were also at the meeting.*

*Cllr Verdon said: "Investment in Chard Junction Station from private companies, for a commercially viable solution, is essential to boost the local economy and encourage house building.*

*"We wait to see more detail on how this would be taken forward and how the major issue of funding, for example for initial feasibility studies, will be addressed."*

*Cllr Broom added: "With congested roads, and limited public transport in many areas, reopening stations will only be a positive for local economies and residents.*

*"Our public transport is life-limiting for many, not just in rural areas, but in key towns such as Chard, residents deserve a decent transport network.*

*"We argued, and will continue to argue, that any form of investment by SCC, or other interested parties, such as developers, will deliver economic benefits - something Chard and the surrounding area desperately needs."*



**Chard Junction, pictured in 2008** (Image: Steve Roberts)

*With the recent start of the new south western rail franchise, and more people travelling on Britain's trains than ever before, the time has come to look at opening new stations across Somerset.*

***Somerton** and **Frome** MP **David Warburton** has been banging the drum for a new station to serve Somerton and **Langport** for a number of years, while **Taunton** Deane MP Rebecca Pow has been campaigning for a new station at Wellington.*

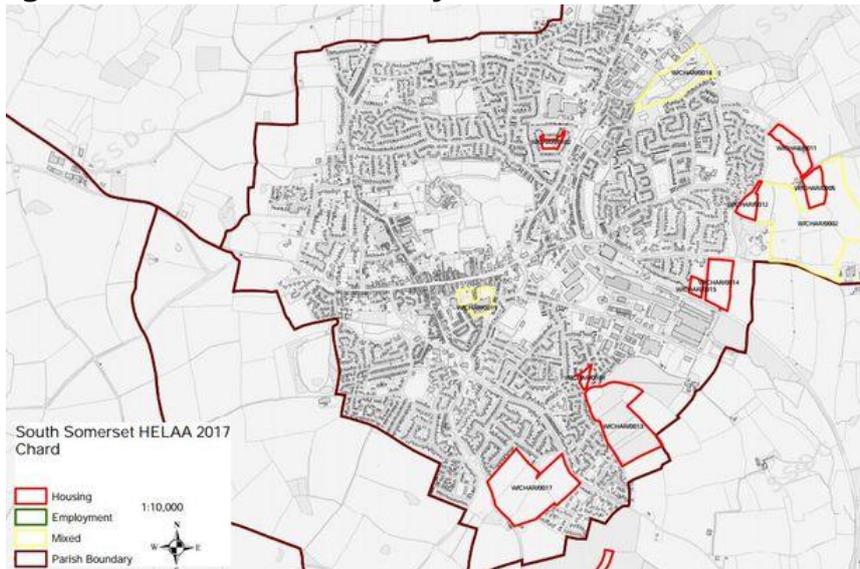
*Both of these are good options, and should be pushed forward, but there is also the matter of **Chard** Junction - a former station south of Chard which closed to the public in 1966 during the Beeching cuts.*

*More than 50 years on from this short-sighted decision - which also saw whole sections of the line reduced to a single track - this could be the perfect time to give Chard and the nearby villages the connectivity they need in the coming decades.*

*The proposition has attracted some degree of political support, with local MP Marcus Fysh and district councillor Andrew Turpin both calling for action on this matter.*

Here are five very good reasons why this station should be reopened:

## 1. Chard is set to grow - and it will need infrastructure



**South Somerset District Council has identified a number of Chard sites which could be developed**  
(Image: South Somerset District Council)

*Like many towns in south Somerset, Chard is expected to grow in population over the coming decades.*

*Earlier this year South Somerset District Council published the results of its most recent Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), highlighting sites in the town where housing or business units could be built.*

*Sites for mixed use development have been identified on **Crewkerne** Road, as well as between Beeching Close and Touches Lane in the north-east of town. Additionally, there are housing-only sites set aside in the east and south of the town, including designated areas west of Forton Road and east of Henderson Drive.*

*Not everyone moving to Chard will work in the town (regrettable as that may be), and having a railway station nearby will give options for people needing to commute, thereby taking vehicles off the already congested roads.*

## 2. It will improve rail connectivity for people living in the area



**The new South Western rail franchise includes services between London and Exeter**  
(Image: South Western Railway)

*If you currently live in Chard and want to travel by train, you currently have to drive either 8.5 miles to Axminster station or 9.2 miles to Crewkerne station. Not everyone can either afford a car or is physically able to drive, which reduces their independence.*

*It's not just people in Chard itself that we need to consider: there are plenty of vibrant Somerset villages in the surrounding area that would benefit from being near an active station, including Tatworth and South Chard near the site itself.*

*And it's not merely about creating a woolly sensation of feeling good: high levels of personal mobility - where in terms of health or ability to travel flexibly and independent - has been tied to better mental health and wellbeing, something which we should all get behind.*

### 3. It's more environmentally friendly than additional cars



Traffic jams are becoming a fact of life in the south west

*Trains travelling on the line between London Waterloo and Exeter St Davids may be diesel-powered rather than electric - admittedly, that isn't ideal. But travelling by train is still much more economical and environmentally friendly than using your car.*

*The Campaign to Protect Rural England has campaigned vociferously against more cars on the road and more road-building, arguing [in its recent report](#) The End of the Road? that schemes to increase road capacity only lead to worse traffic jams and more out-of-town development.*

*CPRE Somerset branch chairman Chris Lewis said: "Any money that is available [for road-building] should be spent on repairing potholes, public transport, and harnessing new technology to make more efficient use of existing road space."*

*If you can't stand current traffic jams, imagine how much worse they will get without a suitable alternative to the car.*

### 4. It will bring jobs to the area



**Chard Junction, pictured from the air in 2015** (Image: Jeff Farley)

*Being close to a railway station is attractive for businesses, particularly those which seek to trade far beyond their particular pocket of Somerset.*

*Railway stations in the 21st century are often built with this in mind, with either more homes or business units being constructed as part of the deal. In the Marsh Barton area of Exeter, a new station is currently being built to serve the sprawling industrial area, with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) estimating that its presence will create another 2,000 jobs.*

*Even on a smaller scale, it isn't too much of a stretch to see a thriving business area growing up around a new Chard Junction station. Just look like at what has happened at Crewkerne, [Sherborne](#) or [Gillingham](#).*

*[Yeovil](#) MP Marcus Fysh, speaking on the subject in 2015, said: "Reopening Chard Junction would be a major boost for the people of Chard and local businesses, making Chard a more convenient place to live and work."*

