

Please reply to: Mr. N. Bray, 23 James Way, Hucclecote, GLOUCESTER GL3 3TE. Tel. 01452 615619. Email: nigel.bray@railfuture.org.uk

Mr. Simon Hankin, Community Rail Policy Advisor, Department for Transport, 4/19 Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, LONDON SW1 4DR.

19 March 2016

Dear Mr. Hankin,

Consultation on designation of Swindon- Westbury as a Community Rail service.

1. Railfuture is very much in favour of giving the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership more say in how the Swindon- Westbury service is operated, marketed and developed. In particular we strongly support the aims of boosting passenger numbers and improving connections to important destinations. We therefore welcome the Government's proposal to designate the Swindon- Westbury route as a Community Rail service.

2. This said, we believe designation should not constrain the geographical scope of a CRP, which should be able to support extension of the route and if necessary cross franchise boundaries. We trust that designation of Swindon- Westbury would not prejudice the aspirations of the TransWilts Community Interest Company and the Swindon & Wiltshire LEP to combine the Swindon- Westbury service with GWR's Westbury- Southampton and South West Trains' Salisbury- Eastleigh- Romsey services. The last mentioned is promoted by the Three Rivers Rail Partnership. Such a combination would improve the overall economics of all three existing routes through better utilisation of rolling stock, less idle time at Salisbury and Westbury, and direct journeys between Wiltshire and Southampton Airport.

3. We accept that infrastructure would remain managed by Network Rail but would expect the TransWilts CRP and CIC to have freedom to explore ways of opening additional stations such as Royal Wootton Bassett and Wilton Parkway, as well as promoting the train service itself. Given the success of the service in attracting four times the official forecast of passengers in the first year of the enhanced post- December 2013 service, it is essential that the CRP representing a designated Community Rail service is able to consult directly with Network Rail in order to suggest how additional stations and infrastructure might be funded.

4. TransWilts CRP won four awards for Rail User Groups at Railfuture's national Conference in November 2015. These were for the Best Campaign (Silver award for improved service via Melksham); Best Website (Silver award); Best Social Media campaign (for the Weymouth Wizard summer service); and Silver award for its Coffee Shop forum. Railfuture has every confidence in TransWilts CRP to promote and improve the Swindon- Westbury service.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Bray,
Secretary, Railfuture Severnside.