

Local Transport Plan 3, 2011-26 – Devon’s Implementation Plan

(extracts)

4 Investment Plans – Capital

4.3 Devon-wide schemes with Torbay

4.3.1 There are a number of schemes that provide benefits across Devon and that are expected to be implemented jointly with Torbay, and in some cases, Plymouth.

Devon Metro

4.3.8 Devon Metro is an extensive plan to expand the role of railways serving Exeter and Torbay over the next fifteen years. Exeter is almost unique for its size in having eight railway stations within the city with four suburban lines feeding into it. The feedback from consultation indicates that rail has a major role to play in getting people into Exeter and Torbay, across Exeter itself and connecting with the national rail network for the rest of the UK. This is supported by data in the Evidence Base that shows significant increases in passenger numbers in recent years.

4.3.9 The Devon Metro concept brings together the network of lines feeding into Exeter from Barnstaple / Crediton and Okehampton (subject to confirmation of service provision), Torbay / Newton Abbot / Teignmouth / Dawlish, Exmouth and Honiton / Axminster. The key strength of the network is the ability to connect journeys across the city, from example from the Torbay line through to Digby and Sowton, serving the major employment location there. There is also growing demand to locations such as Barnstaple and Torbay for leisure and tourism as well as business needs.

4.3.10 There are two key elements to Devon Metro: additional stations at strategic locations to serve employment or housing growth and enhanced service levels and quality of rolling stock. The proposed additional stations within the fifteen year period of the plan are at Marsh Barton, Newcourt, Cranbrook and Edginswell (Torbay). A new station serving proposed growth east of Okehampton is anticipated in conjunction with the proposed new service by Dartmoor Railway between the town and Exeter. Longer term new stations will be considered for other locations including Monkerton (for Exeter Business Park and the planned growth in that location), Exmouth North and Cullompton. Monkerton and Exmouth North would require significant investment in additional track capacity on the Exmouth line.

4.3.11 Both the Greater Western and South Western franchises are due for renewal in the next few years. The Government has indicated that it expects to award longer franchise periods that will provide operators with greater flexibility of service provision. This will provide an opportunity for Devon to explore improvements to service patterns in conjunction with potential bidders. The Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy¹ produced by Network Rail supports the principle of increasing the service frequency on the Torbay – Exeter line to half hourly from 2016.

4.3.12 Design work on Cranbrook station has been accelerated to enable the development of the new settlement to progress. Construction is expected to start in 2012/13. The new station at Okehampton East is expected to be constructed in 2012 if the application by Dartmoor Railway to run services is successful. The station will be funded by Devon County Council.

4.3.13 Consultation on the overall Devon Metro concept was carried out through the Future of Transport in Exeter consultation in spring 2010 and received strong support. Rail was also a popular suggestion for further improvements in the wider LTP3 consultation. A full business case is being developed to justify the infrastructure investment from a number of sources including developer contributions and the Integrated Block. Additional track capacity at Cranbrook will be a significant cost and require a separate business case. Construction, if justified, may take place beyond the fifteen year period of the plan.

5 Market & Coastal Towns and Rural Areas

Devon Metro

5.1.3 Detailed information on the Devon Metro scheme was set out in the programme for Devon-wide schemes in the Exeter section of this document. The rail network is particularly important for many market and coastal towns and their rural hinterlands across Devon, giving them fast and direct links to Exeter and the rest of the national rail network. This is important both for local residents and businesses, giving them access to services and facilities in Exeter, and tourism, enabling visitors to explore parts of Devon that they might not otherwise visit. Tourism traffic, particularly in the summer, is a significant contributor to congestion and carbon emissions in Devon. Devon Metro is a key part of the strategy to reduce this impact whilst increasing visitor numbers and economic impact, helping to reduce car usage once in Devon.



Appendix 1: Summary Plans

Rail

Rail plays a key role in Devon for both local and longer distance journeys. Devon's distance from the major cities means that good rail connections, alongside strategic roads, are essential to the future economic growth of the area. This role is as much about goods and people coming in to the area, for example tourism, as the connections out. Rail has also played an increasing role in moving people within Devon as roads reach capacity at certain periods, particularly to, from and across urban areas such as Exeter and Plymouth. This has been reflected in the substantial growth in passenger numbers in the last decade, particularly on the branch lines feeding into Exeter.

The Devon Metro network provides the major focus for the development of local rail travel within the Devon area over the life of the plan and beyond. Exeter is at its heart but the benefits will be felt across the whole network, opening up new journey opportunities for both local people and visitors. Capital investment in new and improved stations form the foundation of the improvements, but these will be accompanied by a comprehensive approach to brand awareness and marketing, linking with the smarter choices approach above. Service frequency enhancements and higher quality and capacity rolling stock will also be essential components of the future network. Some improved rolling stock for local services has already been introduced – additional newer stock is subject to national decisions on the reallocation of stock elsewhere in the UK during 2011. More detail on this project can be found in Section 5 below.

The successful working with the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP) and ExeRail partnership of local authorities will be central to the success of the significant proposed capital investment. The DCRP has played a valuable role in raising awareness and promoting usage of two branch lines in the county, the Tarka Line to Barnstaple and the Plymouth – Gunnislake route. The proposed extension of the line to Tavistock will further strengthen the role of local rail travel in Devon, providing alternative options for travel for both local people and visitors in both directions.

The quality of stations, their facilities and immediate surroundings are integral to the journey experience and have a particular impact on the experience of visitors to the area. They are also important parts of the local built environment, often with high quality historic buildings and in a sensitive local environment. Exeter St Davids, Exeter Central and Newton Abbot are part of the Department of Transport funded National Stations Improvement Programme over the next two years which will see improvements to passenger facilities including booking halls, waiting facilities and toilets. The County Council is also developing schemes with partners in each location to improve the attractiveness and operation of the forecourts.

The integration of rail with other modes of travel in Devon will be an essential part of its future success. Access to and from the station has a significant impact on its level of usage. Digby & Sowton station in Exeter has been part of a national pilot programme of Station Travel Plans across the UK. This has looked at improving access by all modes and facilities at the station itself including an increased size waiting shelter, marketing and promotion (personalised travel planning, travel plans at nearby organisations, targeted leaflets and improved information at the station), new foot and cycle links to nearby destinations, cycle parking and security improvements. The full evaluation of the pilots will not be carried out until Spring 2011 but the Digby scheme has proved to be an effective way of the different delivery partners to work together to achieve common aims. Longer term the development of car clubs offers opportunities to add another choice to those arriving at rail stations and require a means of onward travel – see section 3.8 for more detail.

The County Council envisages developing station travel plans for a number of stations around the County, including those at proposed new locations, and will integrate well with the overall approach to Smarter Choices above. Current rail operators have indicated a strong willingness to work with the Council on these and provide support such as ticket incentives where possible. Other new innovative measures to further integrate rail into the wider Devon transport network will also be considered through this process. These include the establishment of car club vehicles at stations to serve the surrounding local community and businesses as well as visitors arriving from elsewhere. The station travel plan approach could form a basis for future new franchises.

The County Council has less direct influence over the future development of the longer distance routes out of the County. It does however have good relationships with the current operators and is working proactively with neighbouring councils to work towards agreed positions on key issues, particularly those affecting the awarding of the three new franchises on Devon rail routes (Greater Western, South Western and Cross Country) from 2013. This will then form a strong voice for the region to influence Department for Transport decisions. The proposed longer franchise periods of around 15 years are expected to encourage future franchise operators to have more control over certain aspects of operation such as stations and to be more innovative with service patterns and journey and ticket opportunities. The County Council will, with neighbouring authorities including Torbay, use this opportunity to encourage potential franchise bidders to engage with and support the Council's vision for rail in Devon including the Devon Metro.

Some of these key issues include promoting the electrification of the lines from Reading and Bristol to Exeter and beyond and the future of inter-city rolling stock serving the area. Electrification has already been announced from London to Reading, Oxford and Newbury whilst an announcement is awaited on a further extension to Bristol and South Wales. This and a further extension to Exeter have important implications for the future replacement of the current High Speed Trains operating to Paddington. The Government expects to make decisions on inter-city rolling stock in 2011 – if the replacement stock is also diesel, or the existing stock is refurbished, it will substantially delay the extension of electrification to Exeter. The area would then miss out on the journey time and flexibility benefits that it would bring. It would also be a missed opportunity to substantially reduce carbon emissions.