

Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities	Agenda Item No. 7
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Report of the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, PAUL PHILLIPSON

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Rural Rail

1. PURPOSE

To inform the commission on Council actions and efforts to increase rail provision in rural areas.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise the information contained in this report regarding Council actions to increase rail travel and provision in rural areas.
2. Recommend ways to progress and develop any issues raised.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In the heyday of rail there were a number of rural stations in Peterborough. Rural stations existed at, for example, Eye Green, Thorney, Barnack, Helpston, Peakirk, Castor and Walton. The Peterborough City Council local authority area today contains only the Peterborough mainline rail station. It is a major interchange having both the north-south East Coast Mainline (ECML) and the east-west local services. There are no rural or suburban railway stations in the area today with the exception of those serving the Nene Valley preserved railway.

3.2 Bus Accessibility to Peterborough Station from the rural areas

A number of rural bus services call at the bus station which is close to the railway station. However these do not allow run at times that suit rail timetables and demand for rail travel. Demand responsive bus services to the rail station have been trialled from rural areas; in 2000 a service from villages in the north and west of Peterborough was established. This service was discontinued due to lack of demand. GNER ran a service from Hampton as part of their franchise requirements. This service ceased when GNER lost their franchise.

3.3 Studies of Rural Rail in Peterborough

A report was produced by Cambridgeshire County Council into a suburban Walton Station in 1997, this followed on from a study that examined the feasibility of a more rural station further north at Werrington on the GN/GE joint line (Peterborough-Spalding-Lincoln-Doncaster). Although there was evidence that these stations might have, at that time, had a positive cost benefit ratio over a 30 year period, there was little appetite at the time from Railtrack (predecessor to Network Rail) or the train operating companies to support such a proposal and no further progress was made.

3.4 The possibility of a suburban parkway type station at Hampton has been examined in a number of documents and land was originally allocated for a station in the section 106 agreement for the development. Excessive cost and lack of commitment from Network Rail and Train Operating Companies has resulted in a station at this location not being progressed.

3.5 In December 2005 Councillors Palmer and Swift produced a report to the Scrutiny Committee on Rail in Peterborough with particular reference to Hampton, Walton and Werrington. The actions agreed by committee following this report were to:

1. note the report;
2. recommend to Cabinet that the proposal for two stations should continue to be included in the Local Transport Plan and that a project group should be established to work on the proposal; and
3. discuss the report with Opportunity Peterborough.

3.6 **Rural Transport Focus of Second Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2)**

Prompted by work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee the LTP2 passenger rail section stated that "The council intends to establish a working party that brings together relevant representatives of both the Council and the rail industry to fully research the potential of additional stations to the north and south of Peterborough." To meet this requirement, rail issues have been progressed through a series of rail groups listed below:

- Association of Transport Coordinating Officers (ATCO) Eastern and South Eastern Rail Group
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Rail Group
- GN/GE Joint Line Steering Group
- East Midlands Trains Liverpool-Norwich Stakeholder Group
- Peterborough City Council has been represented on the First Capital Connect Cambridge and Peterborough Capacity Study
- Peterborough City Council are consulted by Network Rail on developments in the area
- Peterborough City Council is consulted on Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS)
- Peterborough City Council support the Community Rail Partnership on the Ely to Peterborough line developed by the Fenland Strategic Partnership
- Peterborough City Council has been involved with the Spalding and Peterborough transport forum, currently campaigning to reopen the Littleworth Station at Deeping St Nicholas in Lincolnshire.

3.7 LTP2 was informed by a rural transport audit that was carried out in summer 2002. A road show visited 25 parishes in Peterborough and was a comprehensive consultation exercise which allowed residents an opportunity to discuss transport issues and needs in their area. From the consultation it was clear that people living in the rural areas felt that bus service improvements would be the best way to address rural transport issues and since then subsequent work has reflected this.

3.8 **Programmed Rail Improvements in Peterborough**

GN/GE Joint line and ECML capacity enhancement:

- This line is currently being upgrade to carry more freight trains as part of a capacity relief scheme for the ECML so that mainline passenger service can be improved
- The line is being improved so that they are two freight paths an hour on the line
- Journey times for freight trains have to be similar to those experienced on the ECML
- Another aspect of increasing capacity on the ECML are the additional platforms 6 and 7 at Peterborough Station, these will be east of the current platforms
- Werrington Junction which is the junction between the GN/GE joint line and the ECML also needs to be improved so that freight services joining the GN/GE joint line will not cause disruption to trains on the ECML. A number of options for Werrington Junction are being examined currently and a preferred option will be developed
- Network Rail and Peterborough City Council are in discussion regarding issues at Fox Covert rail crossing, there was a motion from the Council Meeting on the 14 October urging Network Rail for safety improvements at this crossing
- Peterborough City Council will work with Network Rail as this project is taken forwards

3.9 **The Future: The Peterborough Long Term Transport Strategy and Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3)**

The possibility of stations at Werrington and Walton are highlighted in the developing Peterborough Long Term Transport Strategy. This strategy will form the evidence base for LTP3. LTP3 will become

policy in 2011 and set a long term transport strategy for the area to 2026. It represents an opportunity to revisit the case for further rail stations in Peterborough. At present it is envisaged that any proposals would centre on suburban stations, or more likely halts, rather than truly rural proposals. It is extremely unlikely that new rail lines will be constructed in the area in the future and any improvements are likely to centre on existing rail corridors.

- 3.10 It should be noted that very few new suburban or rural stations have opened in England in recent years, the main barriers being funding and lack of mainline capacity for short haul services. The Council has little direct control over rail services provision or infrastructure programmes, but it will continue to use its position of influence to obtain the best possible passenger and freight services for the area.
- 3.11 There may be opportunity to use the Nene Valley Railway to support the existing transport network in some way, and this is a matter that is kept under review.

4. LINKS TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

- 4.1 Rail travel fits with the visions and priorities in the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).
- 4.2 The Local Area Agreement (LAA) supports sustainable means of travel. The LAA is made up of a range of indicators that are linked to the visions and priorities in the SCS. Rail travel could help meeting many of the LAA targets including the following:
- improve per capita CO2 emissions (NI 186);
 - access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling (NI 175);
 - congestion average journey time per mile during the morning peak (NI 167); and
 - footfall within the city centre and district centres (GO4c).

The further development of rail would fit with the Peterborough's Environment Capital aspirations.

5. CONSULTATION/KEY ISSUES

Rail issues will form part of the consultation process for the third Peterborough Local Transport Plan.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Peterborough Local Transport Plan Submission for 2001/2002 to 2005/2006

The second Peterborough Local Transport Plan (2006-2011)

Peterborough Rural Transport Initiative Report November 2002

Investment in stations: A guide for promoters and developers June 2008 Network Rail.

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/rus%20documents/route%20utilisation%20strategies/network/ther%20publications/investment%20in%20stations.pdf>

Deeping St Nicholas Community Website:

<http://community.lincolnshire.gov.uk/deepingstnicholas/section.asp?catId=20699>

Source of information about London Mitcham Eastfields Station:

<http://londonconnections.blogspot.com/>

The Peterborough and Spalding Transport Forums Website:

<http://www.spaldingtransportforum.co.uk/>

7. APPENDICES

None

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