

Devizes Gateway Station – Update

In May 2020, Wiltshire Council, working with the Devizes Development Partnership, was successful in being awarded funding (up to £50,000) from the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for Devizes Gateway Station.

The SOBC is the first stage in the DfT's business case process and sets out the case for change and the strategic fit (how the project would further local priorities and wider government ambitions). It also includes more limited information on the other four required elements of business cases: financial; economic; commercial; and management.

Following discussions with the DfT and a period of project mobilisation, in February 2021 Wiltshire Council commissioned its term consultant, Atkins, and Logictree Consulting Ltd to develop the SOBC. In addition to the DfT grant (referenced above), funding has been utilised from the Devizes Area Board, relevant S106 agreement(s) and Wiltshire Council.

The draft SOBC was produced in May 2021 and submitted to the DfT for comment. The DfT (with Network Rail) provided their comments on the draft SOBC in mid-July. While welcoming the progress made in developing the strategic case (the most important of the cases at this stage) and the level of stakeholder engagement, the DfT and Network Rail asked for further details on the following matters:

- Operational feasibility:
 - Train service specification
 - Freight services uplift
- Economic case:
 - Capital costs
 - Demand forecasting

The DfT requested that the above issues should be addressed to strengthen the SOBC and to provide the necessary confidence “...*that there is a viable, value-for-money option that could deliver the considerable benefit the project promises*”.

Given the above, Wiltshire Council has liaised with Atkins to develop a proposal to address the DfT and Network Rail comments. This is currently being considered in the context of available budgets and funding opportunities. Ultimately, it is anticipated that a revised SOBC will be submitted to the Devizes Gateway Station Steering Group for approval prior to submission to the DfT by the end of October 2021 at the latest.

If the SOBC submission is successful through the Restoring Your Railway process, the DfT will fund up to 100% of further development costs for schemes (i.e. for the development of the Outline Business Case and Full Business Case). In stating this as ‘up to 100%’, the DfT is encouraging scheme promoters to contribute to these costs through financial contributions or work in kind. The DfT has also emphasised that any local contributions made through the development stage will be taken into account when considering whether a scheme should proceed to delivery.

In the event the submission is not successful, the development of a strong SOBC will enable the Council to more readily take advantage of other funding opportunities as they arise.