

Appendix to the Town Team minutes April 2015

Presentation on the opening of Wilton Parkway – for Stonehenge

David von Zeffman briefly outlined the situation to date.

There had for many years been an appetite to re-open the station, but no business case had been made, to establish if it would be profitable or would always require a subsidy.

At the 2013 Wilton Carnival, 420 people signed a petition calling for the station to be re-opened, and DvZ made a submission to the LEP Transport Body for the station to re-opened. The proposal did not end up on the first list of preferred Swindon and Wiltshire transport projects, but was deemed suitable for further discussion at a later stage.

Matters have remained in abeyance. DvZ, however, having previously met with Horace Prickett and Paul Johnson, suggested that they present their case at a meeting convened by John Glen MP, at the end of March 2015. Although there was strong local cross-party support expressed at that meeting, it was initially in respect of an alternative proposed monorail arrangement, linking the Park & Ride sites at Wilton, Petersfinger on the Southampton Road, and on the London Road.

Horace Prickett, Paul Johnson and SWT argued strongly against the monorail proposal, and for the re-opening of a mainline rail station on the site.

Both gentlemen were present now to explain matters further to the Town Team

- The First Great Western TransWilts service has experienced a 145% increase in passenger numbers.
- *Barriers* - the reopening of the Wilton Station is not, in itself, so much of a problem as finding an Operator (FGW or SWT) to run a service and provide the rolling stock to carry the passengers.
- *Rolling stock* - however, with the electrification of the Great Western line, diesel rolling stock will become available. Scot Rail has already placed a bid, and some HST rolling stock has already been allocated from the Thames Valley.
- *Service operator* – South West trains stop at Salisbury. If they can be persuaded that Wilton would be a useful stop for Stonehenge, this would generate a lot of tourist traffic, which could link in via the Park & Ride and the Stonehenge shuttle buses - thus making the reopening of the station economically viable. In addition, the new development opposite on the former UKLF site, and further up the road at Fugglestone Red 2 would also generate valuable commuter traffic. It is understood that South West trains are open to persuasion, and so two operators are now showing an interest: South West Trains and FGW TransWilts service.
- DvZ raised the issue about the proposed site of the platform. This was the strip of land owned by Wilton Estate, north of the railway bridge on the left hand side, immediately before the Park & Ride entrance. A commercial planning approval had lapsed on the site. Cllr Prickett had spoken to Wilton Estate, which was open to discussion about the future use of the land. It was noted that the adjacent Park & Ride land had been leased to Salisbury District Council originally for 60 years.
- TransWilts CIC had asked English Heritage to include them as a stakeholder in EH's plan for Stonehenge. EH had agreed to this request, and the possibility of reopening Wilton station had been mentioned in a recent EH consultation. English Heritage is very influential, and is happy to include the proposed connection between Wilton and Stonehenge in its long-term management plan.

Page 1 of 3

- TransWilts explained the Network Rail GRIP process, and that they were already seeking consultant budget costings for the project. It was thought that the station could be re-opened at a build cost of £4.4m, including an overrun figure of 15%, and a keenness factor of 50%. TransWilts is happy to contract and launch the project. Network Rail doesn't need to be used for timetabling and construction, but TransWilts will use consultants that can obtain the necessary consents from NR.
- The existing road bridge over the railway also provides the necessary footbridge access to platforms— so that is already in place.
- TransWilts passenger volume is one of the fastest growing community rail routes at the moment, and is looking to extend the Westbury service to Salisbury and to Southampton airport, where there is a lot of slack in the existing service schedule. It is aiming to provide an hourly service from Swindon to Southampton Airport.
- A sensible timetable study needs to be undertaken, because if there is no viable service available, there will be no station.
- South West Trains' franchise is due for renewal, and it must have approval to run any new services. But it is hoped that with First Great Western and South West Trains supporting the project, plus the easy availability of the appropriate rolling stock, Wilton Station could be open, and serviced, together with additional services provided to existing stations by 2018. This is the timetable date for electrification of the Bristol-Paddington line and the release of diesel rolling stock.
- There is now a need to identify an organisation to lead the project and initiate it. Ideally this should be Wiltshire Council.
- The problem is that the Council is tied to using WS Atkins as its preferred contractor, which is a more expensive consultant.
- A more entrepreneurial route could be taken by TransWilts, using external consultants such as SLC Rail, who have delivered similar projects, for example Stratford upon Avon Parkway for Warwickshire County Council.
- The Town Council/Town Team could initiate the process, by identifying the source of the £100k needed to go through the initial GRIP process.
- A proper business case does need to be made, but this should be relatively easy, supported by local knowledge.
- A benefit/cost ratio of 2 is considered to be a worthwhile project, and the Local Enterprise Partnership needs to be pressed to apply for the necessary funding to deliver the project. Department for Transport approval can only be obtained if the LEP has previously agreed to apply for the funding. The project must show that no subsidies are required, and that it is viable ie deliverable and affordable, and not just the dream of a few "enthusiastic railway buffs".
- The Park & Ride sites are losing money and are heavily subsidised by Wiltshire Council. By including the Royal Artillery Museum at Larkhill, together with a cycle route and shuttle buses to and from Stonehenge via the proposed station, the project would provide a sustainable alternative to the A303 route to Stonehenge.
- A bus lane cannot be installed along the A36 Wilton Road to/from Salisbury.
- *Possible metro line* - it was noted that the signaling at Basingstoke was being upgraded, and this, together with the closure of the Salisbury Tunnel for repairs, may result in a temporary station being installed along the London road. Carriages, which will be using the main line track, will not be crash tested against

Page 2 of 3

- Although this will appear to support the alternative suggestion of a metro line, the metro carriages, which will be using the main line track, will not be crash tested against mainline rolling stock, and will not satisfy the safety criteria.
- The ongoing maintenance of the cars/carriages would be an issue, and how the service would be maintained when the cars were out of service for whatever reason. A turning facility would also be required.
- Freight operators are very circumspect with information regarding their routes and timetabling slots. These are fixed, but the operators don't have to use them, so there may be capacity. There is a push for more freight to be transported by rail, but there would not be an opportunity for freight to use the proposed Wilton station.

Questions

Q: Who would manage the project, if the £100k can be obtained?

A: TransWilts CIC would project manage the first stage, in conjunction with an external consultant such as SLC Rail

Q: What other funding is available?

A: The Local Growth Fund could be accessed via the LEP, which channels European funding towards such projects. It can also provide revenue funding, so it is quite entrepreneurial. The Local Transport Board is no longer receiving funding.

Q: Would additional money be required for the signaling?

A: No, the project costs will include the signaling.

Q: What is the timeframe for raising the initial £100k for the GRIP process?

A: It needs to be raised as soon as possible. It is possible to finance the GRIP process in stages, but the overall costs are likely to be higher.

Q: Will Wiltshire Council receive any money from the station?

A: No, just from the associated car park.

Q: Could the station be sponsored as a charitable venture?

A: No.