

**Devon Rail Forum – Teams meeting Tuesday 22 November 2022**

**View from the Salisbury to Exeter line by SERUG Chair Bruce Duncan;**

**Many boxes into one.**

**Reality – As** expressed at our SERUG AGM in September 2022, where we welcomed Claire Mann, SWR MD and Mark Killick NR Wessex Route Director, and continuing primarily to work with SWR ( Andrew especially), GWR, and Network Rail, (Jaime Rockhill, Stuart Kistruck) we are proposing to deliver a “Vision Paper” for the development of the WOE line over the next 30 years.

This will use the existing CMSP, SOBC, as primary outcomes, with, de carbonisation / new rolling stock, and re-signalling at Salisbury and Exeter both safety specific and for CP7/8. Other enablers will be added where relevant and agreed by all parties. The short document will pull together all outcomes as known, and essentially provide one long term strategy, phasing for flexibility, delivery enablers and simple understandable outcomes.

You will be aware that with the CMSP,(Continuous Modular Strategic Planning) was completed in March/April 2020 and so provides an agreed working framework for infrastructure investment – it explains what needs to be done, and where . A copy of that Exec Summary is attached.

With the SOBC (Strategic Outline Business Case) nearing completion, thanks to Devon County 's funding, it provides an evidential base.

It is critical however that the current agreement between stakeholders, NR (Wessex and Western routes) and SWR, GWR continues.

However, there are a number of long-term issues that appear in boxes with little joined up thinking, and action to deliver such infrastructure investment. Most decisions are now made by Government and a lack of leadership and a guiding hand is always apparent, with little available funding. Working together, and a strong lobby base, is the only way of exerting pressure on Government to perform.

Although the “Vision” will be used primarily to present to the relevant MP's in the House of Commons, it should be used for any other interested party, Authorities, and including passengers.

This having considered, and spoken to some of the MP's on the line, we concluded a view that considered lobbying was required now

**The problem -**

Waterloo, Salisbury, Exeter (St David's) a past main line, now with 75.5% of single track sections west of Salisbury . This is a major performance and resilience challenge, an issue, whatever the cause, finds it difficult to recover the timetable without impacting on other services (both on and off the Wessex Route) or creating lengthy gaps by turning services short of their destination. At times of perturbation, West of England line services normally terminate/start at Basingstoke or Salisbury instead of going to/from London Waterloo. It is almost impossible for the line west of Salisbury to act as a diversionary route for the GWR main line, and freight,

without affecting the existing timetable and impact on signalling issues due to long GWR IET's. This "box" is resolved by the CMSP and soon completed SOBC.

More boxes to be considered outside the CMSP, the details are considered next - include replacement rolling stock, de carbonisation, re signalling at Exeter and Salisbury set for CP7/8. Catch up maintenance and keeping the line operational are enabling issues.

### **Investment within the CMSP Phase 1 –**

As with any overall long term strategy, there should be the possible programming in phases to achieve all the outcomes, the phase one would be first of the packages taken from the CMSP –

#### **Package 1a**

- A new loop in the Whimple/ Cranbrook area
- Extension of the Honiton Loop
- Giving Performance and resilience;
- Additional capacity (2tph to most stations between Exeter St. David's and Axminster completing Devon Metro aspirations.
- Incremental journey time improvements

#### **Package 1b**

- Extension of Tisbury Loop (westwards and/ eastwards)
- Performance and resilience
- Additional capacity between Salisbury and Yeovil Junction.  
Eastwards extension will allow 2tph to all stations  
Westwards extension will allow 2tph to some stations
- Incremental journey time improvements.

### **The other boxes –**

However these vital improvements cannot be taken in isolation, as – 1 and 2 are key outcomes - -

1) Re signalling is listed in CP7/8 for Exeter (NR Western) and Salisbury, (NR Wessex) must be considered within the strategy to ensure good planning and value for money.

2) Decarbonisation and new rolling stock requires a decision by Government on how – eg either/or /a mix of = electrification, OHL, or 3<sup>rd</sup> Rail in all or part, Diesel, battery, hydrogen ???

Supporting outcomes -

3) New rolling stock depot needed, more power etc

4) GWR service patterns from Okehampton/Barnstaple to Axminster (or Yeovil Junction ?????)

5) Connectivity issues with Heart of Wessex Line, Bristol – Southampton, etc

### **Future SERUG work –**

The final target for the CMSP conclusions is to achieve funding via inclusion in the RNEP (Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline).

Government funding will be the source for investment, and they are broke, but have tried to protect infrastructure spending for existing schemes. There is momentum which should not be lost, and with a General Election 2024/5 the political timing could be used to advantage.

So your “line” MP’s have a lot of work to do, especially Simon Jupp, (past Transport Select Committee now Permanent Secretary of Transport ? ), Ben Bradshaw, who all have been hugely supportive of rail improvement. Add to that Chris Loder (West Dorset and TSC) and Andrew Murrison (Wilts – Tisbury etc) and we will have to ask them to continue and increase their help and support.

We are hopeful to meet with all the relevant MP’s in the House of Commons in late February 2023 to do what we did in 2018, when SERRUG explained the issues overall, and asked for the then MP’s for help. They gave it, and after meeting the then Minister, the process for the CMSP was launched by NR.

The task to enable the MP’s, the DfT, and public to understand what needs to be done to achieve the investment and infrastructure solutions, its funding, and when it needs to be done, to achieve value for money.

### **Conclusion –**

This is just a start of an important element.

So what is the view from SERUG – lots more work of support and lobbying, working with interested parties, and taking into account a new world of revised passenger demand, limited supply of services (eg xx.50 off peak service WAT – SAL not in the Dec 2022 TT ) – DfT as a controller, H M Treasury as a cost control and not mindful of working to increase the fare box by extra passenger demand, SWR with very limited long term control and subject to a strict contract, possible increasing failures of 158/9’s as they get older, and a lack of a guiding hand for the railway.

All in all, the estimated costs of providing the new infrastructure, can be taken in part from the SOBC when completed, any evidence for de carbonisation, rolling stock, and safety critical re signalling, which along with any other evidence available, ensures the Vision document can be finally set, but in an understandable form and with simple objectives.



## Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) Exec Summary of conclusions.

### 1.0 Executive Summary

We are pleased to present an assessment of some potential investment choices for the West of England Line from London Waterloo to Exeter St. David's via Basingstoke, Salisbury, Yeovil and Axminster.

This work has been completed as part of the Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) approach adopted under the Long Term Planning Process. Industry partners, stakeholders and user/ passenger groups have participated in this study as part of the working group. This collaborative approach has helped to identify potential interventions to improve performance, accommodate growth and improve journey times. These interventions were identified by answering seven strategic questions:

1. What are the key markets that the West of England Line serves or needs to serve?
2. Based on the demand analysis, how is capacity best provided and managed on the West of England Line?
3. Where are the stakeholder priorities for improved journey times and by how much?
4. How can the West of England Line best support local and market growth opportunities?
5. What are the potential opportunities for onward connectivity from locations on the West of England Line?
6. What does the rail freight industry require of the West of England Line?
7. What is the extent of poor resilience and performance on the West of England Line, how can this be addressed and how can the West of England Line support the resilience of other lines?

March 2020.