

## **Restoring Your Railway – Heart of the South West – Report for Information**

### **Agenda item 6c appendix (ii)**

#### **Introduction**

Restoring Your Railway is a Department for Transport process which is MP led. It is understood that there will be £500m capital available during the life of the Parliament to re-open some closed railways. At this stage the process under way is aiming to identify potential projects, through bids to a 'New Ideas Fund'.

The initial expression of interest for each project is submitted by an MP, and that then followed up by a more detailed submission, including technical information. Projects which have successful bids to the New Ideas Fund will receive up to £50,000 to help prepare a Strategic Outline Business Case.

There are to be three rounds of submissions to the New Ideas Fund. The first was in February/March and the second in May/June. The third will be in November.

It is understood that 60 proposals were submitted to Government in the first round, and 50 in the second round. The Department for Transport has not published full lists of the submitted bids.

Government has assessed the first round bids and selected 10 for funding. Their intention is to assess the second round bids by August.

#### **Submissions within the Heart of the South West area**

The following submissions are understood to have been made within the first round:-

1. Re-opening from Bere Alston to Tavistock (Devon County Council)
2. Re-opening the complete northern route between Plymouth and Exeter via Tavistock and Okehampton (Consultants/academics)
3. Re-opening of Cullompton and Wellington railway stations (Mid Devon/ Somerset West & Taunton Councils)
4. Re-connecting the Gravity employment site (Huntspill Energy Park) to the rail network (Gravity)

One of these projects was within the initial 10 announced by Government on 23<sup>rd</sup> May as being allocated funding. This is the project for re-opening Cullompton and Wellington stations, and providing a train service to call at them. The LEP is involved as part of the partnership which submitted this bid.

It is understood that at least 4 projects were the subject bids in the second round:-

1. Extension of the East Somerset railway to Shepton Mallet, to provide a train service between Westbury, Frome and Shepton Mallet.
2. The creation of a light railway between Barnstaple and Braunton, on the former railway trackbed which is now a pedestrian and cycle path. The route would link to the main rail network at Barnstaple station.
3. Re-opening of the former railway between South Brent and Kingsbridge.
4. Re-opening between Frome and Radstock, to provide a train service between Westbury, Frome and Radstock.

Although not formally submitted as such, it appears that re-opening to Okehampton is now being treated by DfT as a Restoring Your Railway project.

## **LEP Role and Involvement**

The principle of re- connecting communities to the rail network aligns with the Local Industrial Strategy pillar on Infrastructure, and hence it is logical for the LEP to be supportive of those projects which have a sound business case. The LEP is already involved in some of these, notable the re-opening of stations at Wellington and Cullompton, and the re-connection of the Gravity Enterprise Zone to the rail network

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