

Oral statement to be presented to the meeting of the West of England Joint Committee on 18 January 2019 by

Keith Walton Chairman, Severnside Community Rail Partnership

I would like briefly to outline to the Committee the work of the Severnside Community Rail Partnership. Founded in 2004 we are a Community Interest Company

We are the link between local communities and the rail industry. We work with local communities and a range of partners to identify and implement measures to ensure that access to local stations is easy and that stations are safe and welcoming. We sponsor and arrange funding packages for small - but significant- station developments.

Recently, we sponsored and funded a complete rebuild of Severn Beach station – the first and, so far the only, local station in the West of England to have been completely rebuilt – and at half the cost estimated by rail industry consultants

We developed, with the local community, a plan and funding package for a comprehensive improvement of Avonmouth station, replacing a derelict eyesore, and run down environment with new facilities and a community garden. The improvements – which will play a part presenting a more attractive public transport entrance to the enterprise area – were delivered on time and below budget.

We have sponsored, organised and arranged funding for community-based improvements at over half the local stations, including Keynsham, Yate and Yatton; Some other schemes are on hold pending completion of current Network Rail infrastructure improvements.

We are currently working on a project to restore the very dilapidated historic old Digby Wyatt signal box in the Temple Meads Passenger Shed. This will tidy up a much neglected part of the station and provide a small office and meeting area for the Partnership which will be made available for use by the wider community.

As well as station-based schemes, we also work to improve access to the railway, particularly by facilitating free-of-charge rail visits for disadvantaged communities. Special events are held on trains to encourage hard-to-reach groups to use their railway. During the journey they are encouraged to socialise and participate in an activity such as creative artwork.

Our rail familiarisation programme for year-six primary school pupils is designed to ensure those attending a school within walking distance of a station experience at least one rail journey so they have confidence to use the local railway independently as they progress to secondary school. We have also negotiated an innovative, low cost season ticket scheme for some secondary school pupils.

Many of our schemes have won Awards – and last October our work was recognised nationally when we received the top national award for our “outstanding Contribution to Community Rail”.

The Partnership’s running costs are funded by the local authorities and the rail operators. We bid for grants from various sources for our projects. I very much hope that the West of England Combined Authority will support our activities and enable us to continue to deliver a range of improvements to local stations and train services.

JOINT COMMITTEE – 18 JANUARY 2019

QUESTIONS

The following questions were submitted by the deadline:

- 1. Matthew Wood - Subject: Energy strategy**

Question from Matthew Wood

Subject: Energy strategy

In February 2018, I participated in a stakeholder event for the WoE energy strategy, funded by BEIS and delivered by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. My understanding is that this strategy was complete and delivered by Spring 2018, but it has not been published yet.

I enquired about its publication and was told it would be published in December, however it has still not been published.

Can the Mayor explain why this report has not been published and commit to publishing it within the next month?

REPLY:

The draft West of England Energy Strategy will be discussed at the WECA Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 23 January, and has been published with the agenda papers for that meeting. A copy of that document is enclosed with this reply.