

 <p><b>COTSWOLD</b> DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p><b>CABINET - 12 APRIL 2021</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>AGENDA ITEM 11</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS A BUSINESS CASE FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE FORMER RAIL CONNECTION BETWEEN KEMBLE AND CIRENCESTER</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr. Rachel Coxcoon - Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Climate Change and Energy Email: Rachel.coxcoon@cotswold.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>James Brain (Forward Planning Manager) Tel: 01285 623540 Email: james.brain@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>The Cirencester Community Rail Project has been successful in a bid to the government's Reopening of Railways Fund. The government will fund 75% of costs, up to £50,000, to prepare a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the restoration of passenger rail services between Kemble Station and Cirencester Town Centre. Cotswold District Council has been asked for a contribution towards the feasibility study.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p><b>NONE</b></p>
<p>Recommendation/s</p>	<p><i>That Cabinet agrees to contribute £10,000 towards the cost of the Strategic Outline Business Case and a Secondary Phase Feasibility Study.</i></p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Responding to the challenges presented by the climate change and ecological emergencies</li> <li>● Presenting a Local Plan which is green to the core</li> </ul>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>Consultation between Cotswold District Council officers, Senior Management and the Cabinet Members for Planning Policy, Climate Change and Energy and Development Management</p>

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. The Kemble to Cirencester line was closed between 1964 and 1965. The Cirencester Community Railway Group has been set up with the aim to reconnecting Cirencester with the national rail network.
- 1.2. The group has uploaded a video promoting the project on youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A302xdBZMFo>
- 1.3. The Council continues to demonstrate its support for the project and has provided financial (£13,000) and political support which has assisted the group to achieve a share of government funding from the Department for Transport's Reopening of Railways Fund. This funding supported the delivery of the group's Primary Phase Feasibility Study, which is now complete. This study provides a significant source of evidence in which to deliver the SOBC. The Primary Phase Feasibility Study will be followed by a Secondary Phase Feasibility Study.
- 1.4. A significant proportion of the Department for Transport's 'Restoring your Railway' funding and CDC funding will be used to commission the Secondary Phase Feasibility Study, which is estimated to cost £130,000 and will take approximately nine months to deliver.
- 1.5. The Council's Forward Planning Manager and Sustainable Transport Lead Officer are active members of the Cirencester Community Railway Group and its newly formed Board; providing the group with access to officer resource, knowledge and experience. This is a mutually beneficial partnership as it ensures key Council projects such as the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan, the Cotswold Sustainable Transport Strategy and the revised Cotswold District Local Plan are well integrated with the group's proposal.

## **2. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 2.1. The Government explains that the SOBC is the first of three stages in business case development. The SOBC will be expected to answer the following questions:
  - What is the transport issue under consideration and case for intervention?
  - What is the scope of this intervention and/or constraints on the approach?
  - Why is rail the preferred mode?
  - What are the options?
  - How does each option perform in delivering benefits?
  - Other strategic considerations – regional/local socio-economic evidence/data, levelling up, re-balancing etc.
- 2.2. Assuming the group's SOBC is successful, the group will be expected to prepare an Outline Business case (OBC). This will contain more detail and information on the project and it is envisaged that the Secondary Phase Feasibility Study will play a significant role when drafting the OBS.

## **3. KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

- Transportation represents well over a third of all emissions in the District. Providing alternative methods of transport, together with other solutions and wider societal / behavioural changes are required to radically reduce carbon emission by 2050;

- Opportunities that help to reduce pollution in the district and particularly within urban areas should be explored;
- The Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (Para 4.5.8 p.168) recognises the importance of Kemble as a key commuter hub with nearly 400,000 passengers in 2018/19 and thus demonstrating that good public transport links between Cirencester and Kemble are important;
- Great Western Railway doubled the size of the car park at Kemble a few years ago, however capacity is expected to be reached by the mid 2020s;
- The Rail Investment Strategy for Gloucestershire (RISG) identifies that rurally located stations are not geared up to accommodate today's rural customers and that poor accessibility is likely a key factor in customers choosing not to take the train.
- Network Rail has carried out a study looking at the Bristol to Birmingham rail corridor and it has produced indicative train service specifications based on detailed analysis. It has identified that there is potential for two services an hour on the south Cotswold line (one direct to London and one to Swindon allowing connections to London). Growth identified in the southern part of the district as well as Stroud, Cheltenham and Gloucester will further add to the economic case for an increase in services. An increase in services would enhance the business case for improving links between Cirencester and Kemble including light rail/bus etc.;
- There would be accessibility benefits for students who study at the Royal Agricultural University and Cirencester College and the reinstated line could help to remove some car journeys from the local road network;
- The potential for additional tourism in the Cotswolds – especially in the southern part of the district; promotes modal shift; and opportunities to link in with non-train rail customer journeys, both commuter and visitor.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. The cost of the preparation of the business case has largely been accounted for through the preparation of the Primary Phase Feasibility Study. The Group has been successful in obtaining Government funding of up to £50,000 but to access this amount the group needs to secure approximately £17,500 from other sources. It is proposed that the Council contributes £10,000 so that the Group can use this commitment to seek partnership funding from other local authorities who share responsibilities for local transport in Cirencester such as Gloucestershire County Council and Cirencester Town Council.
- 4.2. The Cotswold District Council contribution will be funded from the Council Priorities Fund.
- 4.3. Furthermore, the council will investigate opportunities to access additional sources of funding. For example, the Gloucestershire Strategic Economic Development fund is designed to support local infrastructure projects in the county. Other opportunities include submitting

a bids to other government funds; the latest example being the Levelling Up Fund<sup>1</sup>, although this would need to be considered alongside other projects and opportunities in the District.

4.4. This Council has so far contributed £13,000 towards the project. Additional funding of £10,000 means this Council will have contributed £23,000 towards the cost of this project.

4.5. The business case and its supporting studies will help to establish the viability and deliverability of the project.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. There are no legal implications at this stage.

## **6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

6.1. There are no risks at this stage.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

7.1. Operating passenger rail services over this reinstated line would enable people who cannot afford or choose not to own a car to have better and more affordable accessibility to settlements that surround Cotswold District. It would also provide a cycle link in to the countryside which would help to support health and wellbeing initiatives.

## **8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. There is potential to reduce the number of private car journeys by providing an alternative.

## **9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

9.1. To not provide financial support but the risk would be that the community rail group may not meet the basic requirement of securing an element of match funding to prepare a Strategic Outline Business Case.

9.2. To offer a different level of financial support for the preparation of the SOBC. For example, to fully match fund the project so that the community group can be guaranteed to access the full £50,000 of government funding.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1. None.

END

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-prospectus>