

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Thursday 2nd November 2006

at 10.00am

in Training Room 3, Municipal Buildings, Church Square, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors R W Cook, S Cook, Gibbon, Laffey, London, A Marshall, J Marshall, Richardson, Wallace, D Waller and Wright.

Resident Representatives:

James Atkinson, Mary Power and Iris Ryder

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29th SEPTEMBER 2006
(To follow)**
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No items.
- 5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

No items.

6. **CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY
FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

No items

7. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Scrutiny Investigation into Railway Approaches:-

7.1 Railway Approaches– Evidence from the Economic Forum – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

7.2 Railway Approaches– Evidence from 'Coastliners' – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

7.3 Railway Approaches– Submission of Written Evidence from the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

7.4 Railway Approaches– Feedback from the Site Visit – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

8. **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

FOR INFORMATION

Date of Next Meeting – Thursday 7th December 2006 commencing at 10.00am in Training Room 3, Municipal Buildings, Church Square.

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM REPORT

2 November 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: RAILWAY APPROACHES – EVIDENCE FROM THE
ECONOMIC FORUM

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members that the Chair of the Economic Forum will be in attendance at this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into Railway Approaches.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of the ongoing investigation into Hartlepool's Railway Approaches the Chair of the Economic Forum has been invited to provide evidence to the Forum.
- 2.2 The Economic Forum is a Theme Partnership of Hartlepool Partnership (The town's Local Strategic Partnership). The stated aim for the Economic Forum, within the Community Strategy is to:

Develop a more enterprising and, vigorous and diverse local economy that will attract investment, be globally competitive and create more employment opportunities for local people.

- 2.3 Consequently, the Chair of the Economic Forum has been invited to this meeting to feed the perspective of the business sector into the Forum's ongoing investigations into the issue of Railway Approaches.
- 2.4 During this evidence gathering session with the Chair of the Economic Forum, it is suggested that responses are sought to the following questions:-
1. What do you consider to be the impact of the railway approaches into Hartlepool on the town's image, particularly in terms of the ongoing regeneration of the town?
 2. How do the Railway Approaches into Hartlepool compare, in your experience, with neighbouring local economies?

3. What improvements would you suggest are made to the Railway Approaches to improve the economic prospects of the town?

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members note the content of the report, and consider the views of the Economic Forum, particularly in relation to paragraph 2.4

CONTACT OFFICER

Jonathan Wistow – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in preparation of this report:-

- (a) Scrutiny Investigation into Hartlepool's 'Railway Approaches' – Scoping Report (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 13.07.06

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM REPORT

2 November 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: RAILWAY APPROACHES – EVIDENCE FROM
'COASTLINERS'

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members that a representative from 'Coastliners' (a regional rail users group) will be in attendance at this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into Railway Approaches.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of the ongoing investigation into Hartlepool's Railway Approaches a representative from Coastliners been invited to provide evidence to the Forum.
- 2.2 Coastliners are a rail users group, representing passengers between Sunderland and Middlesbrough who use the Durham Coast line. Further information about what Coastliners do and where they see potential to make connections to this Scrutiny Investigation are attached at **Appendix A**.
- 2.3 During this evidence gathering session with the representative from Coastliners, it is suggested that responses are sought to the following questions:-
1. What do you consider to be the impact of the railway approaches into Hartlepool on the town's image, particularly in terms of the ongoing regeneration of the town?
 2. What are your views on the condition and appearance of Hartlepool and Seaton Carew Stations?
 3. Where do you consider improvements may be made to the physical infrastructure of the town's Railway Approaches?

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members note the contents of this report, in particular paragraph 2.3, and use it as a basis for discussion.

CONTACT OFFICER

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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COASTLINERS - *a voice for rail users*

Sunderland – Seaham – Hartlepool – Seaton Carew – Billingham – Stockton – Thornaby – Middlesbrough

Who are we

“Coastliners” is the name of the Rail Users Group representing passengers who use the railway between Sunderland & Middlesbrough – the Durham Coast Line. It is an informal group with links to Transport 2000, but is recognised by the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) (eg Northern Rail & Grand Central,) and Passenger Focus, the national body representing rail passenger interests.

It currently consists of a relatively small number of active members and meets around six times per year – usually in Hartlepool, as the mid [point on the line.

What do we do

Coastliners has primarily been a campaigning group. Its main objective has been, and remains, to ensure a satisfactory service along the Durham Coast, with adequate and convenient links to the rest of the rail network.

We have campaigned for the following:

a) On a local line level:

- To restore the half hourly service between Hartlepool & Newcastle
- **To provide an early morning commuter train from Hartlepool to Newcastle
- **To adjust the timetable to make better connections at Thornaby
- To improve the format of the Durham Coast passenger timetable leaflet
- For later evening trains (the last train from Newcastle is now 30 minutes later, but we would like to see trains until 10 or 1030pm)

b) On a national level to benefit the Region by improved travel opportunities to & from the Durham Coast & the rest of Britain

- Restoration of through services between the Durham Coast & York (since the split between Northern Rail and Trans Pennine Express)
- **Support for Grand Central trains between Sunderland and Kings Cross

- Input to the Cross Country Franchise negotiations to get :
 - a) some Cross Country trains diverted from Northallerton via the Coast Line
 - b) Trains from the North East to the South Coast and South West maintained as through trains and not curtailed at Birmingham or Reading as proposed by the Department for Transport (DfT.)

We have had some successes (**) but we continue to campaign on the other fronts. This is primarily through correspondence and meetings with the TOCs, the DfT, the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) and Passenger Focus.

Improving the Passengers Lot

Other areas in which we have interests include:

- a) Improvement in publicly displayed information at all stations
- b) Improvement in passenger facilities
- c) Improved rolling stock, ie:
 - New or refurbished trains
 - Condition of trains

Where do we fit with the present Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) Initiative

Apart from the obvious need for a coat (or several coats) of paint at Hartlepool, we have been very interested in a variety of improvements not only at Hartlepool Station, but also at Seaton Carew & Billingham. Though we cannot offer masses of manpower, we can offer a variety of suggestions, and have already done so in many cases – not always with any success,

Many of our ideas need co-operation from Northern Rail and/or Network Rail, and may only be achieved with support from initiatives such as that currently being taken by HBC.

Uppermost of these is to investigate further the formation of Station Adoption Groups. Under existing schemes, Northern Rail will often supply materials if groups supply manpower. It was in fact a Coastliners suggestion that a large Tall Ships mural be painted on the facing wall at Hartlepool Station – an initiative now taken up by the Mayor, the College of Art and Network Rail.

In conclusion we would like to work with and support the present HBC initiative.

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM REPORT

2 November 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: RAILWAY APPROACHES – SUBMISSION OF
WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM THE COMMUNITY
AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR (CVS)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Members with written evidence from the Community and Voluntary Sector in relation to the potential for their involvement in the Railway Approaches investigation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of the ongoing investigation into Hartlepool's Railway Approaches it was suggested at the last meeting of the Forum that the CVS were invited to participate in the inquiry.
- 2.2 The designated representative from the CVS will be unable attend this meeting due to a prior commitment. Consequently, a written submission from the CVS is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 2.3 The written submission from the CVS includes a number of ways that have been identified by the Community and Voluntary Sector for potentially impacting on the work to improve Hartlepool Railway Station, in particular.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members note the content of the report, and **Appendix A**, and consider how the CVS can be involved in developing improvements to Hartlepool's Railway Approaches.

CONTACT OFFICER

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Hartlepool Railway Approaches – Potential of Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) Involvement

In relation to 'The condition of Hartlepool Station given its role as part of the new Transport Interchange.'

There are a number of ways the Voluntary and Community Sector could potentially impact on the work for the improvement of the Hartlepool Railway Station.

a) Working with established Groups:

- Civic Society
- Greatham in Bloom
- Hartlepool Local History Group
- Railway Users Group
- Possibly members of the 50+ Forum

('Soundings' have been made with the above groups and they have expressed an interest)

It may be possible to explore with these groups the idea/s of forming a consortium group/committee to work up an action plan/funding strategy working in partnership with statutory organisations such as those below:

- Environmental Partnership – Built and Natural Environment Sub-group
- HBC
- Network Rail
- Grand Central

HVDA Project Development Worker could provide assistance in 'working up' this project.

b) Establishing a new Friends of Group:

This will be just as time consuming as working with the established groups but again is possible with the assistance of the HVDA project development worker.

c) Establishing a Heritage group;

As above but perhaps involving Museum services Heritage development worker.

Possibilities could also be explored around the engagement of a 'labour force' either through the HBC ILM Initiative or through working with OFCA through the VIP project or Kirklevington project.

REGENERATION AND PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM REPORT

2 November 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: RAILWAY APPROACHES – FEEDBACK FROM THE
SITE VISIT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the opportunity to share their views on the site visit, which took place on 16 October 2006.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 On 16 October Members of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum undertook a site visit as part of the 'Railway Approaches' Scrutiny inquiry. This visit included a journey north to Seaham on the 12:02 from Hartlepool, returning on the 12:58, and arriving in Middlesbrough at 13:47. Members of the Forum returned on the 14:32, arriving back in Hartlepool at 15:02.
- 2.2 The purpose of this visit was to gain a better understanding of the railway approaches into Hartlepool from both the north and the south. Furthermore, the site visit provides Members with the opportunity to compare the approaches into Hartlepool with those of neighbouring towns.
- 2.3 There is a brief summary of Member's comments during the site visit attached at **Appendix A**. Furthermore, at today's meeting there will be a video presentation of footage taken during the site visit for Members to consider.
- 2.4 Subsequently, Members may wish to consider the following questions when discussing their findings from the site visit
- (a) What are the key 'problem areas' Members identified during the visit?
 - (b) What impression did Members gain of the railway stations at Hartlepool and Seaton Carew?
 - (c) How did the railway approaches into Hartlepool compare with the approaches into the other towns passed through during the visit?

- (d) What impression did the railway approaches create on the overall image of the town?

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members note the contents of the report, in particular paragraph 2.4, and use this as a basis for further discussion.

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Appendix A – Notes from Member Discussions during Railway Approaches Site Visit 16/10/06

Comments from discussions on Seaham Station

1. Having explored the northern approach into the town Members commented that the Steetley/Britmag site was the big issue on this approach. It was acknowledged by some Members that some improvements had been made here. The site is heavily polluted and there are problems with erosion from the sea. It would take millions of pounds to clear the site. A planning application is in process and it was argued that allowing market forces to clear the site was (through housing development) key to moving forward with this issue.
2. Members commented that Seaham Station compared very favourably to Seaton Station and they would like to see something similar at Seaton. In particular, the transparent shelters were popular with Members.
3. Members thought planting could be used to shield the view over the allotments.
4. The signage at Hartlepool Station was deemed to be poor. A sign on the main building (as opposed to either end of the platform) indicating that you had arrived in Hartlepool would be useful.

Comments from group discussions on Middlesbrough Station

- **Group 1 – Problem areas identified on the site visit.**

Key 'problem areas':

1. Former RHM site in Greatham – questions about pollution here.
2. Allotments generally and fly-tipping in adjacent areas.
3. It was felt that Network Rail's housekeeping can be poor in terms of contractors leaving scrap metals by the trackside and surrounding areas.
4. Fly-tipping around Lancaster Rd. area.
5. Allotment sites are a blight. Numerous plots are overgrown and/or have items dumped in them. The cabins in the allotments make them look like shanty towns.
6. Mansforth Terrace new builds – roads partly complete, weeds etc. poorly maintained areas. Also derelict walls near here.
7. Steetley, Niromax, and Newcombe recycling are key problem areas.

8. Hartlepool Station platform requires weeding and the brickwork is 'shabby', the structure is generally poor. It could do with a repaint and hiring out spaces for advertising hoardings. The signage is also poor.

- **Group 2 – Impressions of Hartlepool and Seaton railway stations.**

Hartlepool Station:

1. Poor signage to, and in, the station.
2. The infrastructure is disgusting e.g. the roof etc.
3. The toilets have poor facilities.
4. Investment is urgently needed.
5. There is a lack of seating and there are no floral displays.

Seaton:

1. The station looks old.
2. The station needs investment to bring it up to the standard of Seaham.

- **Group 3 – Comparisons with other towns on the visit.**

1. Strong feeling that the railway station/s need improving.
2. Stockton was cited as a good example of an attractively designed station.
3. Landscaping on Hartlepool station would be beneficial e.g. raised flower beds on the unused platform.
4. Over the course of the visit it was evident that the planting around the railway had matured and generally worked well.
5. Need to work with the community around planting schemes the Newcombe and Stranton SWS sites were cited as places where this could take place.
6. Comparing Hartlepool with the other towns that were passed through on the visit created a generally favourable impression.

- **Group 4 – impressions from the railway approaches on the overall image of the town**

1. It was commented that the houses/buildings facing the railway could be improved. However, it was also recognised that they tend to be the backs of buildings and (naturally) more attention is spent on the appearance at the front of these.
2. It was acknowledged by Members that railways tend to pass through industrial parts of towns. Consequently, they do not always go past the most attractive parts of towns.

3. It was felt that hedging could be used to cover unattractive places like the recycling / scrapyards in the south of the town.
4. Members felt that the northern approach to the town was generally pleasant and a good approach into town. With the exception of the Britmag site.
5. The area between Hartlepool and Seaton station was deemed to be particularly nasty. However, there was some optimism that this area would improve between now and 2010 through the conditional use of planning permission, which would require landscaping improvements.
6. The west side of the southern railway approach, in particular, could be easily 'shielded' through landscaping/planting.
7. It was also commented that a combination of the features of Stockton and Middlesbrough stations would provide a good model for Hartlepool station.
8. It was also felt that it would be possible, and beneficial, to create a community feeling on Seaton station, and, therefore, it would police itself around vandalism etc. in the future.