

Okehampton Town Council
Full Council Meeting 31st January 2022
Meeting Report

Date:	24 th January 2022
Name:	Emma James

OkeRail Presentation – To consider the presentation and report from OkeRail and resolve any action required

The following report has been received from a member of OkeRail:

Maximising the Benefit from Restored Train Services.

The Context

Key aspects of successful town regeneration schemes elsewhere centre on a focus on Heritage, and that people know about it. From this can flow improved town/ community identity, interest from further afield, and a resultant increased footfall and renewed business confidence in the town.

It would therefore seem essential that this should form the basis of a Plan for Okehampton, to coincide with the start of hourly train services on 22nd May this year.

Okehampton has an interesting heritage, but it is not well known away from its immediate area. Without trying to make the town what it is not, or never can be, we can ensure that its attractive features, and attractions, are known to people living away from the town.

The Opportunity

The real value of the railway to the town will come from making Okehampton a journey destination, as well as a journey origin, by promoting all the town has to offer, including:

- Okehampton Castle (a short walk from the railway, currently unmarked);
- The Town Trail (hidden in an external website with poor functionality);
- The Museum of Dartmoor Life;
- The Victorian Arcade (one of the few in the South West) - surely with the independent shops close-by in St James Street there is an opportunity to promote better (e.g. 'The Arcade Quarter');
- Simmons Park and leisure centre;
- The Granite Way cycle/ walking path to Lydford;
- A varied number of different pleasant walks between the station and town (virtually unmarked as the 'Public Footpath' signs don't indicate these as a good way to town) including via Tramlines path;
- The proximity of the Moor from the station (Okehampton being the Gateway to the Northern Moor) – promoting 'The Train to the Moor' is an important step beyond the name 'The Dartmoor Line';
- The current independent shops, cafes and pubs that are a key part of what the town can offer visitors.

In addition, by the hourly train service launch, the station building should have a café, enhanced railway heritage museum, and Dartmoor National Park information centre. And in the future Dartmoor Railway Association has aspirations for restoring their heritage train service to Meldon.

Much of the above are barely known by people who might consider travelling by train from Exeter and beyond.

The Plan

The exact nature of any promotion plan is best shaped by the Okehampton community. But as a start surely, in addition to other possible ideas, at the very least we should consider:

- all the above needing to be promoted in one place, e.g. both on the Dartmoor Line website, and in a comprehensive leaflet;
- on leaving the station, information (a prominent map etc., and on-line) of different walks into town, plus conspicuous (perhaps traditional) finger posts pointing to the five or six different walking routes into town, and along those routes (funding can be secured towards this);
- whether more of the town's industrial archaeology can be promoted.

The reopening of the railway is the best opportunity the town has to improve the local economy. It is absolutely key to recognise that this can be best realised by having plans implemented by the time of the launch of hourly services in May.

It is understood that the Town Council recognises the importance of the train service and its forthcoming hourly service, and that work is progressing on some aspects mentioned here. But there is a need to have an overview, to pull it all together within an all-encompassing plan, ensuring it is done to time.

Timing is of the Essence

In May there will be a surge in promotion, and therefore a surge in interest from people living outside the town who may consider travelling by train. The extent to which that surge will continue after Spring 2022 depends very much on how much interest can be generated at that time.

This will be the best time to ensure that what Okehampton has to offer is known to people living outside the town, including from the wider Exeter area and beyond. This is the time to make the best pitch that the town can possibly make to attract visitors.

OkeRail is happy to help by working with Okehampton Town Council to achieve the above aspirations by May 22nd this year, as well as on any related launch events. Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP) has also generously offered to help provide funding to this end. However a local overview is key, and the Town Council is the organisation best placed to take the lead on this much needed initiative.

Recommendation

We therefore urge Okehampton Town Council, as the democratic representatives of the town and its community - and as the local organisation best placed to do this - to own, produce, and lead the implementation of a plan to best promote the town, working with partners, and to bring it to fruition by 22/5/22.

NHS Ambulance Waiting Times – To note responses from concerns raised by the Council and consider any further action required



Our ref: WW327.jc

8 December 2021

The Rt Honourable Mel Stride MP
 Sent via email: mel.stride.mp@parliament.uk

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 Exeter
 Devon
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 Fax: 01392 261510
 Website: www.swast.nhs.uk

Dear Mr Stride

Re: Okehampton ambulance provision

I write following receipt of your email dated 8 September 2021 enquiring about the ambulance provision in Okehampton together with the concerns in relation to response times to domestic incidents.

Firstly in regard to the provision of ambulance cover for Okehampton, I can confirm that we do have a twenty four hour double crewed ambulance (DCA) split by two twelve hour shifts which is planned to start and finish in the town. There will however be occasions where short notice resourcing challenges through sickness or COVID isolations which will require a dynamic re-modelling in order to optimise shift fill and clinical skill mix. I would like to offer you reassurance that every effort is made to maintain resource levels for Okehampton on any given day, therefore upon review, I have observed that from 5 April 2021 to 12 September 2021 just 4.34% of shift hours were uncovered at Okehampton which should be viewed in conjunction with the on-going impact of COVID-19.

(8625 Hours planned for Okehampton during the 23 week reference period for core rota fill; 374 hours lost through unforeseen absences).

As you may be aware, ambulance services throughout the country have seen a significant increase in year on year activity and this is reflected across our region too. As is highlighted in your email, we face a particular challenge with being such a rural ambulance service with an ever increasing population and demand alongside the fact that Commissioner funding is unable to fully offset this increase in demand in such a tight financial climate. With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to review the postcode area which relates to Okehampton (EX20) in order to highlight our responses in comparison to Devon as a whole:

Ambulance Incident Requiring a Response at Scene in the Devon CCG Area

	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21
EX20 Post Code Area	247	196	264	285	296	285	303	262
Devon CCG Total	16,148	14,432	16,735	16,915	18,434	18,235	17,715	16,645

May I also take this opportunity to highlight that in recent years the Trust has seen a stepped change in the profile of demand by hour of the day and day of the week. To ensure operational

resources are profiled to best match the predicted activity the Trust commissioned a comprehensive independent review which led to a new operational resourcing model being implemented which is under regular review. This included an increase in the number of double crewed conveying ambulance hours and a reduction in single crewed car hours in order to better support the need to transport patients to a variety of clinical care settings. This will be predominately DCA resourcing directly employed by the Trust with a compliment of NHS accredited private resources dispatched directly by our Clinical Hubs (control rooms) in order to top-up ambulance cover at times of high demand.

Changes in the Department of Health Ambulance Service Response Standards (targets) became effective as from November 2017 under the Ambulance Response Programme (ARP) changes in England. Therefore, to ensure that we are able to prioritise those most at need and so that we can send the most appropriate response, each call is triaged within our Clinical Hub and placed within 1 of 4 categories (as per the ARP changes) each with their own set of targets reflecting the seriousness of the concern.

With this in mind the Trust has a very successful Community First Responder Scheme (CFRS) who not only provide a faster response to those who are most in need some of our groups but certain CFRS groups also respond with specialised lifting equipment to patients who have simply fallen and are unable to get back on their feet. These volunteers will respond from their homes or places of work (in a similar way to your retained fire service) to attend the most unwell patients giving vital emergency aid and life support, including defibrillation if needed, until our clinicians arrive.

We have a Community First Responder group in Okehampton however it has dropped to only one person. Whilst the volunteer does provide about 25hrs a week, these hours are spread over the week and are adhoc as is the nature of volunteering.

The recruitment plan for 2022 does include the development of the Okehampton CFR group and our ambition is that we have a 24hour volunteer team in the area. This will rely on the goodwill of the constituents to get involved which I would appreciate your support with.

The town also has an extensive network of defibrillators which are available to the community 24hrs a day. These 13 devices help a patient in cardiac arrest and are completely self-explanatory although annual familiarisation helps to give user confidence. The Trust supports 8 of these defibrillators in partnership with a local community group project.

It would be our wish to place a fully qualified crew in all of our towns but the reality is that this is not achievable given the demands on finite public finances and so schemes such as the one outlined above are being promoted throughout the country. The quality of service that we provide to our patients is important and a key focus of all our plans.

Yours sincerely



Will Warrender CBE
Chief Executive



**Department
of Health &
Social Care**

*From Edward Argar MP
Minister of State for Health*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

Your Ref: MS63099

PO-1360045

The Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
By email to: mel.stride.mp@parliament.uk

9. xii. 2021

Dear *Mel,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 September to Sajid Javid on behalf of Okehampton Town Council about ambulance services in the area. I apologise for the delay in replying, which has been caused by an unprecedented volume of correspondence throughout the pandemic.

I read the correspondence with care and appreciate the Council's concerns. We are clear that patients should expect and receive the highest standard of service and care from the NHS, and that people should be treated with compassion, dignity and respect by skilled staff who have time to care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the most challenging time in the NHS's proud 73-year history, including for ambulance and A&E services. However, thanks to the hard work and tireless efforts of NHS staff throughout the pandemic, between April and October, over 14.6 million people have been treated in A&E units, whilst ambulance trusts responded to 747,500 incidents in October – 6,000 more than in the same month two years ago, prior to the onset of the pandemic.

Ambulance and A&E services have been placed under enormous pressure in recent months due to high levels of demand. The Government is committed to supporting the NHS to manage these pressures and is dedicated to ensuring that people receive the treatment that they need. A number of measures are in place to reduce pressure on ambulance trusts and A&E departments, reduce waiting times and improve patient flow.

Alongside the largest ever seasonal flu vaccination campaign and COVID booster vaccines for priority groups, the NHS is delivering on its 10-point plan to manage emergency care demand and capacity. This includes giving ambulance trusts an extra £55million to boost staff numbers ahead of winter, helping them to recruit more 999 call handlers and clinicians to work in control rooms and bolster frontline staffing capacity.

This builds on work in advance of last winter, where £450million to upgrade A&E facilities was awarded to over 120 separate trusts, to boost capacity through expanding waiting areas, increasing the number of treatment cubicles, reducing overcrowding and supporting social distancing throughout the pandemic. The additional capacity helps to speed up the

patient handover process from ambulance staff to A&E staff, ensuring more ambulances are available to respond to incidents in the community.

In December 2019, the NHS introduced its NHS 111 First initiative, which further builds the role of NHS 111 as the 'front door' to the emergency care system, with an increased ability to book a timed slot for callers at their local A&E or make an urgent appointment at an alternative health service if more appropriate. It is supported by £24million to increase call handling capacity and ensure that there are more clinicians available to give expert guidance over the phone. The initiative aims to better manage demand and patient flow through A&E, freeing up clinicians to quickly receive ambulance patients and get vehicles back out on the road to quickly respond to incoming calls.

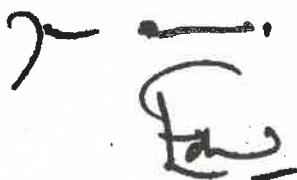
The NHS' operational priorities for 2021/22 are set out in NHS England and NHS Improvement's (NHSE&I's) planning guidance published on 25 March. It includes guidance to transform community and urgent and emergency care to prevent inappropriate attendance at emergency departments, improve timely admission to hospital for emergency patients and reduce length of stay.

The *NHS Long Term Plan* continues to support the reform of urgent and emergency care services to ensure patients get the care they need quickly, relieve pressure on A&E departments, and manage spikes in demand during winter. This includes:

- increasing the provision of same-day emergency care so that patients are seen quickly and do not unnecessarily spend a night in hospital;
- making improvements to the use of GPs in A&E departments, allowing less acutely ill patients to be 'streamed' away from A&E;
- enhancing NHS 111 so that people calling the service can receive a clinical assessment and be offered immediate advice or referred to the right clinician for a face-to-face consultation; and
- continuing to increase the number of urgent treatment centres to provide patients with an alternative to A&E services.

The way that ambulance services organise and manage the deployment of their resources against incoming 999 calls is an operational issue that should be decided by individual ambulance trusts. Each ambulance service should plan to provide appropriate resources to meet local demand. I note that you have raised the Council's concerns with South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and I hope you receive a satisfactory response, if you have not already done so.

I hope this reply is helpful.



EDWARD ARGAR MP

Rural Housing Crisis – To consider a proposal by Cllr Goffey to write to Mel Stride MP in support of a speech by Tim Farron MP

A precis of the speech made by Tim Farron MP, as follows, has been provided by Cllr Goffey:

Tim Farron MP (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD) Cumbria

From Hansard <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2022-01-06/debates/2A69AEC3-B4FA-4C11-A4D1-76E2756D9257/SecondHomesAndHolidayLetsRuralCommunities>

Debate on 2nd Homes, holiday lets and AirBnb problems for rural communities.
I propose seven steps to save rural communities.

First, the Government could make second homes and holiday lets new and separate categories of planning use. This would mean that councils and national parks would have the power to put a limit on the number of such properties in each town and village, protecting the majority of houses for permanent occupation.

Secondly, they could provide targeted, ringfenced finance so that planning departments have the resources to police this new rule effectively.

Thirdly, the Government could follow the lead of the Welsh Government and give councils the power to increase council tax by up to 100% on second homes in the worst-affected communities. That would serve to protect those communities and generate significant revenue that could then be ploughed back into their threatened schools and into new affordable housing for local families. A quick assessment shows that, in Coniston alone, that would raise £750,000 a year, which would make a colossal difference to that community.

Fourthly, the Government could force all holiday let owners to pay council tax, as they can avoid paying anything at all if they are deemed a small business.

Fifthly, the Government could give councils and national parks the power to ensure that, at least in some cases, 100% of new builds are genuinely affordable, and provide funding to pump prime those developments, possibly in part via the proceeds of a second homes council tax supplement. We have a deeply broken housing market. Of course, developers can sell any property that they build in our rural communities for a handsome price, but that is surely not the most important thing. Is it not time to stop building simply to meet demand, and instead **build to meet need?**

Sixthly, the Government could simply keep their manifesto promise and ban section 21 evictions.

Seventhly, the Government can ensure that platforms such as Airbnb are not allowed to cut corners and undermine the traditional holiday let industry. Their properties should have to meet the same standards as any other rental. Failure to do that is unsafe, unfair and creates a fast track for the Lakeland clearances to continue and escalate.

I want to be constructive, and I hope that I have been. I called for this debate because I love my communities and I am despairing at what is happening to them. I am determined that Ministers should understand the depth and scale of this catastrophe, and that they should take radical action right now. I support free markets, but unregulated markets that are obviously broken are not free at all. That is when they need the visible hand of Government to referee and intervene.

To those of us who live in Cumbria and other beautiful parts of our country, it is obvious what is happening, and it is heartbreaking. Likewise, it is obvious to us what needs to be done, and it frustrates us, to the point of fury, that the Government have so far failed to even acknowledge the problem, much less to do anything about it. Today is their chance to put that right. Rural Britain is watching.

Fore Street Resurfacing Work – To note the work scheduled to be undertaken and to consider submission of any comments

Information has been received that Fore Street surfacing work is due to take place in April/May 2022.

- a) The Council is requested to consider agreement of the removal of the small granite sets from the disabled/loading bays as they have caused problems with the road surface breaking up next to them.



The bricks in the crossing near the Plume of Feathers sunk badly last year and were removed for safety reasons. The bricks in the crossing by the White Hart are now starting to sink and will need attention in due course. I

- b) Does the Council have any objection to the bricks being removed from the 2 crossings and their replacement with bitmac?
- c) The Council may also want to consider submission of any comments it wishes to make about the proposed resurfacing work and road closure.

Market Street Public Toilet Lease –

In December Full Council requested details of the potential outgoing and changes to the lease before coming to a resolution to accept the lease as it was or to appoint a Solicitor to review the documentation.

To note the response received from WDBC in relation to the transfer of all outgoing to the Council

WDBC have advised that the potential outgoing remain as existing and include utility bills. The query has prompted WDBC to review the utility costs for the facility and an invoice has been received, although that for the cleaning contract is awaited.

If the lease is renewed for a period of 6 years WDBC will transfer the utility contracts to OTC for direct payment.

To consider and resolve if to appoint a Solicitor to review the lease, or to accept the lease and that the document be executed by use of the Council Seal

The draft lease is the same as the existing lease and the Committee is requested to resolve if to appoint a Solicitor to review the lease, or to accept the lease and that the document be executed by use of the Council Seal.

Policies and Documents –

To resolve to approve the Terms of Reference for the Memorandum of Understanding Task & Finish Group

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

The core constitution of the Group shall consist of the Councillor's nominated by the Council and the Town Clerk or Assistant Clerk.

The Chairman of the Group shall be chosen from the Members serving on the Group which will meet during normal working hours.

Purpose

The purpose of the Group is to explore internally the feasibility of a creating a Memorandum of Understanding between OTC and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council (OHPC). A Memorandum of Understanding is not legally binding and may need to be reviewed annually.

Should this be found to be feasible, to prepare a draft document for the consideration of the Council, and to obtain quotes for legal assistance if required.

Aims

1. To promote collaborative working and investigate how the two Councils could work better together
2. To ascertain the potential for a funding commitment by OHPC to assist OTC with the cost of running facilities used frequently by the residents of both areas. This would assist with the budget setting process, for example helping to ensure that funding through the precept isn't requested then found not to be required because of a later agreement to assist by OHPC.

Reporting

This is a non-decision making group who shall report and make recommendations to full Council as and when necessary.

COVID19 Signage – To consider correspondence received from a member of the public

The following correspondence has been received through WDBC from a member of the public and the Council is requested to consider a response and any action to be taken:

The fear boards in and around Okehampton still say 'keep your distance'. 'Social distancing' went a long time ago. As you know, the Government are now beginning to see some sense and ignoring the worst-case scenario modelling from the communist's 'Sage' by dropping all plan B Covid restrictions on 26/1/2022. Can you please kindly ask the Clerk at Okehampton Town Hall to take down the awful, ugly, now irrelevant and quite frankly now false 'fear boards' from in and around Okehampton. I think the Council in Okehampton have done more than enough over the past two years to scare the living daylight out of the poor elderly people who live here.

Public Space Protection Orders for Dog Control – To consider a response to correspondence received in relation to the draft Order in relation to Simmons Park as agreed by the Parks Committee

Asset Register – To resolve to approve the additions and disposals as listed on the report

Item	Date	Addition £	Disposal £	Comment
Okehampton Train Painting	October 2021	£1.00	-	Donated by Mr J Dean in celebration of the 150 th Anniversary of the opening of the passenger rail service
CCTV Equipment Cabinet	September 21	£795.31	-	Supplied by Full Stop
Christmas Lights	November 2021	£23,716.52	-	Supplied by Festive Lighting
Bins x 2	November 2021	£1,728.86	-	Supplied by Glasdon UK Ltd
Benches x 3	November 2021	£1,368.00	-	Supplied by Devon Contract Waste
Noticeboard	March 2021	£553.00	-	Cemetery
Land at Pig Bridge	2001	£150.00	-	Land Registry DN460293
Jubilee Bridge	January 2022	-	£36,302.00	Transferred at no cost to Simmons Park Charity
Naturalistic Bridges x 2	January 2022	-	£0.00	Transferred at no cost to Simmons Park Charity

The transfers to the Simmons Park Charity were previously agreed by the Council as part of the negotiations. Simmons Park land also forms part of the Charity assets, but this does not appear on the Council's asset register.

Civic Dinner – To resolve the allocation of free tickets for the event scheduled to take place on 4th March 2022

The Council normally provides some tickets free of charge and the Council is requested to resolve to confirm the arrangement for the event.

There are currently four Mace Bearers, three of whom have undertaken Mace Bearing duties within this Mayoral year. In 2020, the two long-standing Mace Bearers, one of whom has since retired from duty, received full complimentary tickets and the others were offered tickets at the discounted rate of 50%.

In addition, the Town Councillors, Mayor's Chaplain and Town Clerk who will be on duty normally receive full complimentary tickets.

It is recommended that complimentary tickets are allocated as follows:

Town Councillors	14	
Mace Bearers	3	(full complimentary ticket)
Mace Bearers	1	(discounted rate of 50%)
Town Clerk	1	