

**Minutes of Okehampton Town Annual Assembly
held at 7pm on Monday 8th April 2024 in the Ockment Centre, Okehampton**

The Assembly was chaired by Councillor Fisher, Town Mayor.

In Attendance: Town Council Members; Cllr's Bird, Colman, Cummings, Fisher, Ireland, Leech, Marsh, Richards, Rogers, Tolley, Weekes, Yelland
WDBC: Cllrs Dexter, Ewings, Vachon
WDBC: Director of Place & Enterprise
DNP: Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes Project Officer
Approx. 30 members of the public
Mrs E James, Town Clerk
Mrs C Ellis, Assistant Clerk

Action

Apologies for Absence – None

Welcome and Introduction – The Mayor, Cllr Fisher, welcomed those present.

Minutes of Previous Annual Town Assembly – Minutes of the Town Assembly held on 3rd April 2023 were agreed as correct on the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded by Cllr Tolley, and signed by Cllr Fisher.

Questions from the Public to the Town Council

Written Questions – None

Questions from the public – A question was raised in relation to the new West Devon Transport Hub - if coach parking would be available and transport services provided into the town centre.

Guest Speakers

New Railway Station and West Devon Transport Hub – The WDBC Director of Place & Enterprise gave a presentation on plans and progress for the second railway station which was combined with the provision of a West Devon Transport Hub. The presentation was on behalf of both WDBC and Network Rail. The current timescale was for the service to be up and running by February 2026.

Questions posed included:

Q Would the existing station close?

A There were no plans for it to close.

Q Will there be toilets at the new station?

A Enquiries to be made

Q There is limited room on trains for bicycles and spaces have to be booked in advance. More space is needed.

A Will take this back to GWR.

Q Are there any plans to improve traffic infrastructure on the road in and out of the station.

A Road works are not included within the project.

Q Design is missing inclusion of a second track on the line and no facility included for freight transport.

Existing station has been great success far exceeding expectation. What facilities will there be for busses and bus links?

A Facility is integrated with other services – improving walking and cycling routes into the town, driving, bus transport, EV charging etc. Government decided to upgrade and keep the Dawlish line so no hope in near future that the Okehampton route will get a second line. Frequency of trains will be doubled.

Q Will the service start earlier and finish later?

A Will find out.

Q Increased frequency will be difficult with existing track layout.

What consideration has been given to mitigating disruption to wildlife?

A Project includes protection and regeneration schemes.

Dartmoor’s Dynamic Landscapes Project - Dartmoor’s Dynamic Landscapes Project Officer from Dartmoor National Park Authority gave a presentation about the project. Following which questions included:

Q Liaison with the Military in relation to their use of Dartmoor for training purposes.

A Communication with them was regular and ongoing.

Q The art groups appointed to run the festivals were from London and Plymouth. Why not more local?

A Tendering process undertaken, appointed based on their ability to co-ordinate these types of events. Other groups and knowledge will be sourced locally.

Q The project will increase access to Dartmoor. How will the environment be protected?

A Projects include protection and regeneration schemes. Not all of the schemes will be focused on the moorland.

Q What is the timeline for the projects and grants?

A Most projects will run over 5 years

Okehampton Town Youth Council – The Town Clerk and Cllr Rogers briefly introduced the creation of a Town Youth Council which would be launched in May. Applications for Youth Councillors were being accepted.

Conclusion and Thanks – The Mayor, Cllr Fisher, thanked everybody for taking the time to attend and closed the meeting at approximately 8pm.

Signed as a true record of the Assembly.