

6th September 2022

Dear Sirs,

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Application by North Somerset District Council ("the Applicant") for an Order granting Development Consent to construct a new railway on the trackbed of the former branch line from Bristol to Portishead including associated works ("the Proposed Development").

The Department for Transport letter with the above Subject matter, dated 2nd September 2022, from Mr Kevin O'Hanlon, requests comments from Interested Parties. Please accept this letter as the formal response from the Portishead Railway Group, regarding the proposed re-opening of the Bristol Portishead railway line.

Portishead Railway Group has not previously entered a submission into the Planning Inspectorate process, preferring instead for due process to be followed by the parties involved. That approach has now changed because we sense that despite the recent and very reassuring news that an agreed funding strategy is at last in place, there will be a significant delay to the works commencing.

Portishead Railway Group (formed many years ago from two predecessor groups) has been lobbying for the re-opening of the former branch line from Bristol to Portishead for over 22 years. In that time, we have seen many 'false dawns' for what is universally accepted to be a no-brainer scheme.

Since the original railway was closed to passenger traffic in 1964, the towns and villages that were once served by it have seen unbridled housing development. The strategically important M5 was built in the 1970s. Thus, road traffic volumes have increased enormously over the last 58 years. However, it became obvious well over 20 years ago that reinstatement of passenger rail services was essential. Instead, the populations of Portishead, Pill, Easton-in-Gordano, Portbury, and Ham Green have suffered ever-increasing pollution and congestion, leading directly to ever more difficult road journeys, and interminable delays to the railway re-opening.

Although we are delighted that the involved parties have reached this important point in the saga of the re-opening, it seems unnecessary for the populations who will be served by the re-opened railway to have to wait until the end of 2026 for services to commence. Also, such a delay can only serve to further increase costs. Consequently, Portishead Railway Group requests the Department for Transport to work with the parties involved, to secure an earlier start on the works, perhaps based upon the provision of a draft of the Final Business Case, and the granting of the Development Consent Order.

Yours faithfully,



Alan Matthews
Chairman, Portishead Railway Group