

Island Transport Infrastructure Task Group

1 Executive Summary

In November 2014, the Isle of Wight Council (The Council) endorsed the need for a consideration to be given to the infrastructure challenges faced by the Island. Following this, in September 2016, an independent Transport Infrastructure Task Force (TITF) was established and met for the first time. Since then the TITF has held a series of hearings with a wide range of agencies and interested parties; the TITF is extremely grateful to all who attended and gave evidence at the hearings. Throughout the hearings there was a strong sense from those that participated that there were clear challenges and opportunities for the Island. These are summarised as follows:

- Cross-Solent Links
- Island Gateways
- Congestion
- Sustainable transport
- Technology

The TITF consider that the following are the principal recommendations that were identified as infrastructure challenges to growth (they are set out in no particular order):

Cross-Solent links (including the potential for a fixed link)

Many of those attending the hearings raised the issue of cross-Solent transport as a potential barrier to growth, particularly the cost of travel. In the interests of the community as a material stakeholder in cross-Solent operations therefore, the TITF recommend to the Council that:

- It convenes and leads a cross-Solent operators' partnership board, to provide meaningful engagement with the cross-Solent operators. The objective of the board would be to work together for mutual benefit of the cross-Solent operators and the economic development of the Island. Amongst other matters the board should consider the impact of new investment on the flexibility of new services; the potential for provision of increased services in evenings and shoulders; and travel offers for those in education or training;
- The Council and partners lobby central government (e.g. NHS England) to get financial assistance for those who have to travel to visit family in hospital;
- An independent study should be undertaken to evaluate the cost benefit analysis and feasibility of a fixed link across the Solent (road or rail).

More detailed discussion and the full recommendations can be found in section 3.1 of this report.

Island Gateways

Island gateways create valuable first impressions of the Island for visitors, and many of those attending the hearings expressed concern about the quality of the current gateways. In addition, they provide for the opportunity to improve connectivity and integrated transport options for those travelling both within and to/from the Island. The TITF recommend to the Council that:

- The terminals at Ryde Esplanade, Cowes and East Cowes are improved.

Reducing congestion

Key issues emerging from the hearings are that whilst the contract with Island Roads is enabling the Island to upgrade the quality of its roads, congestion remains an issue, particularly on the Newport – Cowes and Newport – Ryde routes. Whilst the TITF has been made aware of plans to address some of the worst areas keeping traffic free flowing is critical to the growth of the local economy. There are concerns with the surface specification for rural road surfaces. Therefore, the TITF recommend to the Council that:

- The funding for Newport junction improvements is welcomed, but should include signalling improvements to ensure improved traffic flows.
- A longer-term strategy for congestion in and around Newport is needed.
- The Council and Island Roads should review the specification for surfacing on minor (rural) roads and in addition ensure that surfacing is taken to the edge of the road where appropriate.

More detailed discussion and the full recommendations can be found in section 3.3 of this report.

Sustainable transport

A number of parties attending hearings considered that there was a need for further investment in a multi modal approach to transport on the Island, including opportunities for walking and cycling, and access to means of travel other than the car. Attendees were concerned about the lack of maintenance on footpaths and bridleways.

It was reported that Southern Vectis generally provides a good service and the Council needs to ensure services are continued, and that opportunities to enhance community services are fully explored. Given the tourism nature of the Island opportunities for improved ticket initiatives for the occasional user would be beneficial.

First MTR have recently been announced as the new franchise holder for Island Line. The future sustainability of Island Line was a key element of the franchise award from the Department for Transport (DfT), due to the ongoing financial cost of the service and infrastructure improvements needed.

Considerable investment in sustainable transport related projects has been undertaken in recent years and in the interests of enabling the developing a multi modal approach to transport the TITF recommend to the Council that:

- In order to identify and develop options for reducing the cost of Island Line over the longer term the Council will need to work closely with First MTR, DfT Rail and Network Rail;
- To bring about the modernisation of the Island Line, including the introduction of a service operating to a 30-minute frequency and investment in the future sustainability of Island Line, the Council will need to fully engage with the new franchise owners;
- To inform investment in improvements to and new routes for sustainable transport, including ensuring routes are properly planned end to end the Council should develop a local cycling and walking investment strategy, to include the completion of the Newport – East Cowes route;
- Assess the feasibility of corridor improvements for bus services;
- Review the funding for maintenance of footpaths and bridleways.

Greater use of technology

The Island is home to a number of world class digital businesses and this puts the Island in a position to take full advantage of the expertise that is locally based to drive economic growth. The Island has the potential to offer more environmentally friendly transport services, including through the provision of electric car and bicycle charging points. Improvements to digital services will remove current barriers to the introduction of integrated information and smart ticketing. Therefore the TITF recommends that:

- Building on the Island's expertise in digital technology, the Council should work with the digital sector to explore how and where the delivery of improved digital services can be accelerated.
- To improve accessibility across transport modes, and provide the ability to introduce integrated travel information for bus, train and cross-Solent operators, the Council should work with mobile technology companies to improve network coverage across the Island. Additionally, the transport providers should ensure their services are Wi-Fi enabled for passengers.
- The Council work with transport operators to encourage them to introduce smart ticketing opportunities (for example, Solent Go, Smart ticketing cards) and in particular multi operator use smart payment opportunities.
- National Rail information at Waterloo should include information on the Island and gateways.
- The Council should investigate future investment opportunities for alternative transport modes e.g. hydrogen fuel and other low-carbon fuels; innovation in sustainable transport and/or autonomous vehicles.

Key Recommendations from the Island Transport Infrastructure Task Force Report

July 2017

| Ref | Recommendation |
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| 3.1 Cross Solent Transport | |
| 3.1.3 (1) | In recognition of the community as a key stakeholder in cross Solent transport it is recommended that the Council convenes and leads a cross-Solent operators' partnership board, to provide meaningful engagement with the cross-Solent operators. The objective of the board would be to work together for mutual benefit of the cross-Solent operators and the economic development of the Island. Amongst other matters the board should consider the impact of new investment on the flexibility of new services, the potential for provision of increased services in evenings and shoulders, and travel offers for those in education or training. |
| 3.1.3(2) | Membership should include the cross Solent-operators, the Council, Solent Transport and businesses the partnership board should seek to develop and deliver a ferries strategy that is for the benefit of the economic development of the Island. |
| 3.1.3(3) | The Council and partners should lobby central government (National Health) to get financial assistance for those who have to travel to visit family in hospital. |
| 3.1.3(4) | An independent study should be undertaken to evaluate the feasibility and cost benefit of a fixed link across the Solent (road or rail). |
| 3.2 Technology | |
| 3.2.2 (5) | Building on the Island's expertise in the digital sector, The Council should explore how and where the delivery of improved digital services can be accelerated. |
| 3.2.2 (6) | To improve accessibility across transport modes, and provide the ability to introduce integrated travel information for bus, train and cross-Solent operators, The Council should work with mobile technology companies to improve network coverage across the Island. Additionally, the transport providers should ensure their services are Wi-Fi enabled for passengers. |
| 3.2.2 (7) | The Council should work with transport operators to encourage the introduction of smart ticketing (for example, Solent Go) and in particular multi operator use smart payment opportunities. |
| 3.2.2 (8) | National Rail information at Waterloo should include information on the Island and gateways. |
| 3.2.2 (9) | The Council should investigate future investment opportunities for alternative transport modes (e.g. hydrogen fuel and other low-carbon fuels; innovation in sustainable transport and/or autonomous vehicles). The Council may wish to consider a potential joint venture with a car company to test electric vehicles. |
| 3.2.2 (10) | Technology can be used to support the implementation of The Councils parking strategy, both in terms of smart apps to pay for parking and opportunities to advertise parking space availability within towns. |
| 3.3 Highways & Interchanges | |
| 3.3.2(11) | The funding for Newport junction improvements is welcomed, but should include signalling improvements to ensure improved traffic flows. |
| 3.3.2 (12) | A longer-term strategy for congestion in and around Newport is needed. This could include investigation of the feasibility of a Medina Crossing. |
| 3.3.2(13) | That Council and Island Roads review the specification for surfacing on minor (rural) roads and in addition ensure that surfacing is taken to the edge of the road. |
| 3.3.2(14) | Transport interchanges at Ryde Esplanade, Cowes and East Cowes are improved. |

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| 3.4 Bus Services | |
| 3.4.2(15) | Southern Vectis provides a good service and the Council should ensure services are continued and that opportunities to enhance community services are fully explored. |
| 3.4.2(16) | Investigate opportunities for improved ticketing initiatives for the occasional bus users. |
| 3.4.2(17) | The Council with Southern Vectis and the Isle of Wight College should investigate what improvements can be made to student access to transport. This could be linked to projects being delivered through existing sustainable transport programmes. |
| 3.4.2(18) | Next stop announcements and Wi-Fi on buses (see section 3.2) should be rolled out across all scheduled services. |
| 3.4.2(19) | Assess the feasibility of corridor improvements for bus services, including investigating the introduction of bus lanes where achievable. |
| 3.4.2(20) | Whilst the investment strategy of Southern Vectis should be recognised and noted, it is a rate of investment that is unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term and needs to be monitored. |
| 3.5 Island Line | |
| 3.5.2 (21) | In order to identify and develop options for reducing the cost of Island Line over the longer term the Council should work closely with First MTR, DfT Rail and Network Rail. Collaboration will need to address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution of the economic uncertainty of the Island Line; • Provide for modernisation with new/up to date rolling stock; • The future of the pier; • Consider arrangements where the IOW steam railway could have access to Ryde St Johns Road; • Modernisation of all stations; • Provision of integrated travel information systems and smart ticketing options across different modes of travel; • How improvements at Ryde Interchange could provide for access for Hovertravel passengers from a new platform layout at the station. |
| 3.5.2(22) | To support the modernisation of the Island Line, including the introduction of a 30-minute service frequency and investment in the future sustainability of Island Line. |
| 3.5.3(23) | Ensure Island Line remains part of the franchised National Rail Network. |
| 3.6 Cycling & Walking | |
| 3.6.2(24) | To best inform investment in cycling and walking infrastructure, the Council should develop a Local Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy ¹¹ , to include the completion of the Newport – East Cowes route, linking to the new Isle of Wight College campus at Whippingham. |
| 3.6.2(25) | The Council should review the funding for maintenance of footpaths and bridleways. |
| 3.6.2(26) | The Council should consider working with partners to review and refresh the West Wight Cycle Route, recognising that it is a longer-term project with regard to delivery timescales. |
| 3.6.2(27) | The TITF recognises that the grants received for sustainable transport related work is important to the Island and recommends that The Council continues to build on its successful work in this area and continues to seek new and innovative projects which can promote sustainable transport on the Island and to bid for appropriate funding as it is announced . |