



## PAPER D

Purpose: For Decision

# Committee report

Committee	<b>FULL COUNCIL</b>
Date	<b>16 MARCH 2016</b>
Title	<b>THE FUTURE OF ISLAND LINE – OPTIONS REPORT</b>
Report of	<b>THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT, TOURISM, RECREATION AND HERITAGE</b>

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Island Line plays an important social and transport role on the Island, by providing a timetabled, traffic free, reliable and punctual link between the cross Solent connections at Ryde Pier and Ryde Esplanade and the settlements of Ryde, Brading, Sandown, Lake and Shanklin.
2. The line is currently operated by Stagecoach /South West Trains (SWT) within the South Western Franchise, a network that serves an area extending from central and south west London to major towns and cities in Berkshire, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey and Wiltshire.
3. The government is currently running a competitive process to select a new operator for the South Western Franchise beyond 2017. The Department for Transport (DfT) has made it clear that it has no desire to close the line, but that a more cost effective solution needs to be found.
4. The council previously agreed a motion about Island Line at its meeting of 2 September 2015, following which the council undertook more detailed work to ascertain local views in order to help inform its view on the future of the line and provide a response to the DfT consultation.
5. A response to DfT was sent on 8 February 2016 which included Appendix A of this report.

### BACKGROUND

6. The Island Line is 8.5 miles (13.68km) long and links Ryde Pier Head to Shanklin. Although comparatively short is an important, reliable and timetabled link down the eastern side of the Island between the settlements of Ryde, Brading, Sandown Lake and Shanklin. Towns which together account for almost 50 per cent of the Islands resident population.

7. Used by more than one million passengers per annum the line offers a car free alternative to using local roads which at times can be congested especially at key junctions where the coastal road (A3055) meets the radial routes (A3056) and (A3020) which link the resort towns with Newport.
8. The line which generates revenues of £1million and costs £4million per annum to operate is currently included as part of the South Western Franchise operated by Stagecoach SWT Limited (part of Stagecoach Group).
9. Until comparatively recently, the government was in negotiations with the incumbent operator SWT to secure an extension of the franchise to 2019. However following the failure to agree a way forward it was decided instead that the franchise should cease as originally planned in 2017 and the next franchise let through a competitive process.
10. The government is currently drawing up detailed plans for the next franchise and expects that as part of that work bidders should plan to sustain Island Line for the short term, while suggesting ideas to turn it into a separate and self-sustaining business during the rest of the franchise period.
11. The government has published a consultation document “Stakeholder Consultation, South Western Rail Franchise, Moving Britain Ahead” and has engaged with a range of key stakeholders including local authorities, passengers and the public through a range of mechanisms including local meetings, one of which took place in Ryde and was attended by more than 100 people.
12. Since its meeting in September 2015 the council has undertaken accepted an approach from Mr Garnett, a recognised industry expert, who has worked with council officers to identify the options available to the DfT for the Island Line. He has met with a broad range of stakeholders including Keep Island Line in Franchise (KILF), the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, DfT (Rail) and the Island’s MP.
13. The review has included establishing information regarding the costs of running the line and the condition of the rolling stock and infrastructure including Ryde Pier and the tunnel. The full report is attached as Appendix A to this report.
14. Section 7 to 9 of Appendix A details the potential options for the future and how one alternative option to a like for like replacement of the infrastructure could be developed and the different franchising options that could be used.
15. It is clear (Section 9 of Appendix A) that the area of greatest disagreement amongst interested parties is whether Island Line should remain as part of the SWT franchise or be set up as a small separate franchise. The report includes options but proposes in paragraph 9.6 that the best way forward would be for the line to operate as a separate franchise with the same benefits – through ticketing, revenue allocation and all the benefits and protection currently afforded to the rest of the national railway system.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

16. Retaining and improving the line accords with the council's Corporate Plan in particular the desire to supporting growth in the economy, making the Island a better place and keeping it safe.
17. Retaining and improving the line is specifically identified in the current Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Island Transport Plan 2011-2038 and the issue has also been addressed in the Island Plan - Core Strategy adopted in March 2012, policy DM17 which supports the LTP and aims to increase travel choice and provide alternative means of travel to the car. More specific reference is made to retaining and improving the line in the emerging Area Action Plans for Ryde and The Bay.

## CONSULTATION

18. A considerable amount of consultation was undertaken as part of the work on this issue, including consultation with:
  - Local elected members.
  - Town and parish councils.
  - Keep Island Line in Franchise (KILF).
  - Isle of Wight MP – Andrew Turner.
  - Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce.
  - The IOW Quality Transport Partnership (QTP)
  - Isle of Wight Bus and Rail Users Group.
  - Isle of Wight Tramway.
  - Isle of Wight Steam Railway (IWSR).
  - Transport operators – including Hovertravel, Wightlink and Southern Vectis.
  - Community Rail Partnership (CRP)
  - Island Business representatives – including hoteliers and Federation of Small Businesses.
  - Trade unions – TUC, RMT.
  - Visit Isle of Wight.
19. Meetings also took place between Mr Garnett and representatives from DfT Rail, DfT Roads and Trams, the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR), UK Tram and Transport for London (TfL).
20. The DfT themselves have sought views to inform their competitive process and a meeting staged by them at Ryde was one 12 meetings undertaken across the area. The Ryde meeting was staged at Yelfs Hotel on 15 December 2015 and was attended by approximately 100 people.

## FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

21. The cost of running Island Line falls to the government through the franchise process. The council has made it clear that it does not have the expertise, funding or resources to support the operation of the line. The only financial

implications so far have been with regards to officer time spent supporting this work.

### CARBON EMISSIONS

22. The line offers a reliable and timetabled alternative to travel by road and as such makes a positive contribution to the council's aims which are to reduce the Island – wide carbon emissions.

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

23. There are no legal implications at this stage, however the government has suggested that there should be more local involvement in the running of the line in the future. It is currently not clear what this might entail, but for example if the council was to be involved as a local board member, then consideration will have to be taken at that stage with regards to any legal implications.

### EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

24. The council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
25. The council is not responsible for the operation of the line or the equality and diversity issues going forward. It is not thought that the implications of improving opportunities for rail travel will have detrimental implications in terms of equality and diversity, in fact if any changes are made and the 1938 rolling stock replaced it is highly likely that matters will be improved to the benefit of users. More modern rolling stock will come equipped with improved passenger information and safety systems which will be to the benefit to those with mobility, sight and hearing issues.

### OPTIONS

26. The Council's formal position in respect of the future of Island Line was agreed following a lengthy debate at its meeting of 2 September 2015 and is as set out below:-
27. THAT Council:
  - (i) Notes that the next South Western rail franchise period will commence in 2017, two years earlier than had been anticipated.
  - (ii) Further notes that the proposed "Island Infrastructure Taskforce" (as agreed by Full Council in November 2014) has not secured any funding from government, and therefore has not been established.

- (iii) In light of (i) and (ii) above, reaches a view that Island Line should remain as a fully integral part of the South Western rail franchise for the entire duration of its post-2017 period.
  - (iv) Make representations to the Department of Transport (DfT) stating this unequivocal view, and urges them to ensure that the franchise specification invites bidders to set out how they would invest in, maintain and improve the service throughout this time.
  - (v) Calls on the DfT to ensure that, as part of the forthcoming public consultation process about the new franchise, at least one formal consultation session is held on the Isle of Wight.
  - (vi) Agrees that a longer-term look at the Island's strategic transport needs - including that of subsequent operational arrangements for rail travel (for beyond the next franchise period) - are looked at when resources allow for, particularly if external funds can be secured to support this work.
28. Since that decision was made a number of these items have been resolved. The DfT staged a public consultation event on the Island (v above) as part of the franchise process. Discussions have taken place with the DfT regarding the establishment and funding for a task force. Extensive consultation has been undertaken regarding the future of the line and the report attached at Appendix A has been prepared.
29. Full Council are asked to consider this report and consider the following options.
30. Option 1: To note the report attached at Appendix A and ask the Department for Transport to take account of its content when it makes its decision about the future of Island Line
- Option 2: To support the report attached at Appendix A and ask the Department for Transport to take account of its content and the council's support when the DfT makes its decision about the future of Island Line
- Option 3: Not to endorse the report attached at Appendix A.
- Option 4: To confirm to the decision made at Full Council, 2 September 2015.
- Option 5: To agree an alternative approach.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

31. The local railway is operated by Stagecoach / SWT and with the exception of a small number of footbridges and road over rail bridges is the responsibility of the operator in terms of risk and risk management. It is not current clear what proposals are planned for the line and until that stage it is impossible to quantify what if any risks to the council may arise.

## RECOMMENDATION

32. For consideration.

## APPENDICES ATTACHED

33. [Appendix A](#) - Future of Island Line – Options Report prepared by Mr Christopher Garnett

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

34. DfT. South western Franchise: stakeholder consultation document [here](#)
35. Isle of Wight Local Transport Plan 2011-2038 [here](#)
36. Island Plan – Core Strategy march 2012 [here](#)

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