

My name is Duncan Hounsell. I am speaking on behalf of Saltford Parish Council on the subject of the re-opening of Saltford Railway Station. I would like to highlight some of the information sent to you in the briefing paper. B&NES Council has been acting as “promoter” of a re-opened station at Saltford. A station at Saltford was included in the vision for the Metro West Rail project in 2011 and soon after B&NES Council commissioned a small desk-based study on Saltford Station from Halcrow which reported in March 2012. The encouraging data in that report prompted B&NES Council to commission a Higher Level Output Assessment from consultants CH2MHill which was received by B&NES Council in October 2014. This report concluded that, unless there were unforeseen problems, a station at the existing site at Saltford would have a benefit/cost ratio of 2 to 1 and that even before monetised environmental benefits are factored in. A benefit/cost ratio of 2:1 meets a necessary hurdle set by the Department for Transport for funding. A re-opened station at Saltford is projected to bring in annual net revenue of £770,000 and have car-parking space for up to 144 vehicles. Saltford Station project is now about at stage 2 of Network Rail’s 8 stage GRIP process for railway development. The first 4 stages are about planning, the final 4 about implementation. £250,000 was set aside in the B&NES Council budget for this year and next to take the project forward to GRIP stages 3 and possibly 4. As far as I am aware, this work has not yet been commissioned by the new B&NES Conservative administration. I understand that the present administration on B&NES Council is waiting to learn from GWR’s timetable work on behalf of the Local Transport Body that Saltford can fit into the half-hourly Metro West service timetable. However, it is the responsibility of B&NES Council to ask for Saltford Station to be included in these timetable studies in the first place. Saltford Parish Council asks that there is no unnecessary delay or insufficient pressure from B&NES Council on this timetable question and that consultants are commissioned to take the project forward to GRIP stages 3 and even 4. It is important that your panel is fully informed so that you can fulfil your scrutiny role on this project. This is not only about providing Saltford’s commuters a gateway to the half-hourly Metro West services, but also playing a part in reducing road traffic into Bath and contributing to the economic development of this area. Re-opening Saltford Station on the existing site is a straightforward project for which Network Rail is already providing “passive provision” in its electrification programme and does not require any new railway infrastructure. A Saltford Station “subject to the business case” is referred to in Network Rail’s “Western Route Study” for Control Period 6 (2019-2024) which sets out anticipated developments on the railway network in that period. Saltford Parish Council asks that your panel monitors the progress and tempo of this project by B&NES Cabinet. Once Saltford Station reaches GRIP stage 3, it may be able to access ad hoc capital funding released by the Department of Transport for new stations amongst other potential sources of funds. That would be an opportunity not to be missed. Finally, further project development at Saltford appears explicitly as a budget line in appendix 3 of the Draft Capital Programme under the section “Existing programme items” for 2016/17 which form part of your papers for this meeting. Your scrutiny role is very important. Thank you.