

PENINSULA TRANSPORT BOARD

Item 6: Peninsula Railcard Update

12th February 2026

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Board before taking effect.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- a) The Board note the current status of the Peninsula Railcard proposals.

I. Background

Peninsula Transport have had a longstanding ambition to extend both the geography and the terms of use of the Devon & Cornwall Railcard (DCR). The DCR was the first railcard to go digital in 2023 and in the following year saw an increase in uptake of 32%. There are now more than 20,000 residents who use the card, making it the most popular railcard in the region. However, take-up is still quite low when set against a combined population eligible to use the card in Devon & Cornwall of 1.8m residents. Included within the Peninsula Transport Strategy, is the aim to make journeys by public transport easier and in doing so, make greater use of the existing capacity available. One of the key initiatives to achieve this for rail, was a set of revisions to the existing railcard to remove current restrictions and extend the area to cover the whole of the Peninsula Transport region.

Over the last 18 months, the STB and PRTF have been working with GWR, and the Department for Transport on an improved railcard offer with the following benefits to peninsula residents:

- A 50% discount for all rail travel between the 84 stations within the peninsula
- No restrictions on the time or day of travel
- Can be used on all rail services within the peninsula
- Available to all ages.

In January 2025, the Chair of the Peninsula Rail Task Force met with the Rail Minister to discuss the principles of a new Peninsula Railcard which would increase the use of the rail network for local rail journeys, harmonise fares and increase passenger revenues generated from the existing services. The Rail Minister was supportive of the approach and looked forward to seeing the proposals being developed by GWR for the DfT to consider in detail.

In March 2025, the Peninsula Transport Board approved proposals to develop the railcard. This would be brought forward for rollout in September 2025 to coincide with the start of the academic year and return to work following the summer holidays. In order to support the rollout and maximise take-up, the Board made specific budget provision for a targeted campaign aimed at academic institutions and major employers within the region.

In order to progress this, the DfT required detailed proposals to be put forward by the main rail operator, GWR. Whilst proposals were developed within GWR, no submission to the DfT was forthcoming and the opportunity to roll this out in September was lost.

Subsequent to this, the Secretary of State announced a freeze on all rail fares in November 2025. Due to the slow progress of the railcard proposal within GWR, the announcement removed the opportunity to adjust fares and therefore achieve a revenue neutral or positive proposal to submit to DfT Rail for review at this time. This is of course hugely disappointing for the STB.

There remains a need to increase patronage on services in the region and make rail travel more affordable for local residents and employees, particular on peak. Peninsula Transport is continuing to work with GWR to devise more localised fare incentives in the short term whilst exploring opportunities to bring forward the full railcard proposal as soon as conditions are favourable. This will include how greater use of the tap-in/tap-out system can incentivise rail use.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations associated with this paper.

Environmental Impact Considerations

There are no environmental considerations associated with this paper

Equality Considerations

There are no equality considerations associated with this paper.

Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations associated with this paper.

Risk Management Considerations

The Peninsula Transport Programme Management Group reviews risks and assigns the required mitigation actions across the Peninsula Transport workstreams on at least a monthly basis.

Public Health Impact

There are no public health impacts associated with this paper.

Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

This paper provides an update on the Peninsula Railcard proposals. Further updates will be provide to the Board in due course.