Item 2d. District Councillor Report - for Totnes Town Council 28/10/2026

Cllr Anna Presswell

GWR Local transport Forum Devon and Cornwall

This twice yearly forum provides a useful update on all aspects of South West regional trains and train lines. You may have seen in the press that on December 13th GWR becomes part of the re-nationalised railway network.

It was mentioned that from 2023-2026 there has been almost a doubling of Passenger assistance and Accessibility demand, from 186,000 to 385,000. This is not always booked in advance, and stretches staff capacity. I suggested it would be useful to publish this opportunity for train travellers, through the local councils as well as they list what actually is covered – it is a very inclusive list.

There are residents that think twice about train travel due to a number of personal issues. We need to encourage the use of trains, and especially being on a mainline I felt our council and well as others might promote this service – both encouraging people to travel but securing help they might need in advance. The broad range of assistance goes beyond that one might expect, and is worth promoting for our residents.

See below:

Sensory/Mobility impairment
Visual
Speech
Hard of Hearing/Deaf Accompanied by an assistance dog
Ramp required mobility or no ramp required for mobility issue
Wheelchair required at a station
Wheelchair to seat transfer

Other impairment
Dyslexia
Autism
Dementia
Accompanied by Assistance dog
Learning difficulties
Mental Health condition
Non verbal

Additional Assistance Types
Alighting or Boarding or transferring to trains
Use of ramp
Room for Assistance dog
Seat transferring/Use of Station buggy
Use of station wheelchair
Help pushing a wheelchair

Help with luggage

Also a link to their new Customer survey that's very quick but includes theme areas such as Net Zero Emissions from Railway carriages, weather resilience and climate change, passenger safety, biodiversity and Environmental management, Circular economy and social value, passenger experience at stations etc. Worth doing and not long.



Open evening with the Army Cadets

I was invited to attend an Open evening of the Army Cadets. The evening was well organised with various stands around the hall that were both fun and educational. The 'potential' new recruits were given a taste of how to march which caused the usual mayhem as beginners of two left feet and timing issues, but the guests found it all hugely enjoyable.

There are limited opportunities for teenagers in our area, as well as an increase in anti-social behaviour, and the Cadets cater for the ages of 12-18. Their instructors come from out of the area presently – Newton Abbot and Paignton and have limited knowledge of local outreach. I have asked the Totnes Pulse to consider an article, and have suggested ways to improve outreach of local events.

I've invited them to contact the Council when events are happening, and maybe give a presentation of what they can offer the towns youth. Examples are First Aid certificates, sports activities such as canoeing, sailing, skiing, fieldcraft. Other activities include music, navigation and expeditions, Duke of Edinburgh awards, plus the opportunity to take part in national and international camps,

They are given uniforms and equipment from the MOD but no direct funding for items such as chairs, tables, laptops, monitors, which they have to find/salvage themselves. I believe the Council do reach out with our annual availability of grants to apply for.

Caravans

The latest update on the Caravan at Brutus bridge is that the South Hams Localities office have served Requisitions for Information to the 3 adjoining landowners seeking information as to whether the land is under their control and/or ownership. A notice is also going to be placed on the caravan. Localities will then work with the legal team to assess the information and determine next steps in order to secure the removal of the caravan.