

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper C

Date **24th June 2026**

Title of report: **Westbury Platform next steps**

Purpose of report: **To report on progress with Westbury Platform 0 and the next steps.**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to approve:

- I. The findings of the Westbury Platform 0 and timetabling capacity work.
- II. Allocating up to £30,000 from the 2026/27 Western Gateway budget to complete the economic case for Westbury Platform 0.

1. Background

- 1.1 Network Rail were commissioned by the Western Gateway and Wiltshire Council to undertake a feasibility study for reinstating Platform 0 at Westbury station (shown in Figure One), improving regional rail capacity and connectivity. This is part of a wider Wiltshire Rail Investment Programme supporting future projects including the Heart of Wessex Line hourly services, a new Devizes Gateway station, Melksham line upgrades with hourly TransWilts services, a new hourly Paddington to Westbury service with Pewsey stops and proposals emerging from the Connected Cities Bath to Wiltshire Metro.
- 1.2 A re-instated platform at Westbury gives additional capacity there for these extra trains along with associated track and signalling changes. Enhancements on the single line through Melksham gives capacity for more passenger and freight trains.



Figure One: Westbury Platform 0 – out of use since 1984

- 1.3 The study includes the engineering feasibility of reinstating the platform and timetable planning for the Melksham single line upgrade. The project budget of £100,000 was funded through a 70% contribution from the Western Gateway and 30% from Wiltshire Council.

2. Main findings of the work

Westbury Platform 0

- 2.1 The engineering feasibility work found re-instating platform 0 at Westbury is feasible. The platform will need to be resurfaced entirely, widened and levelled to reduce trip hazards with tactile paving installed. Additional seating and shelters are recommended to accommodate increased passenger demand. The installation of two Next Train Indicators and public address coverage on Platform 0 is required as will be updated wayfinding signage throughout the station.
- 2.2 Re-instating the track and signalling are more extensive (see Figure Two in Appendix One).
- 2.3 Topographical surveys will need to be updated/completed for the current layout, including adequate levels on platform 0 as well as an assessment for the subway which runs underneath the platform.
- 2.4 Cost estimates for are shown in Table One. As will be seen the cost of returning the platform to use is modest at £0.5m. Restoring the track (permanent way) with supporting signalling and telecoms are the major costs.

Table One: Westbury Platform 0 Cost Advice, March 2026

Composition	Low estimate	High estimate
Signalling and telecoms	£20m	£29.5m
Permanent Way	£7.6m	£7.8m
Building and civils	£0.5m	£0.54m
Other	£0.1m	£0.12m
Total	£28.4m	£37.9m

Timetabling Analysis

2.5 The timetabling analysis work looked at four phases of service enhancements for both passenger and freight trains:

- Phase 1: Paddington to Westbury one train per hour (tph) extension with stops at Pewsey, Swindon to Salisbury uplift to one tph, Bristol to Oxford (including Corsham) one tph.
- Phase 2: Gloucester to Weymouth one tph, Reading to Merehead/Whatley Quarry two freight tph
- Phase 3: Paddington to Exeter (semi fast) one tph, Westbury to Bristol 0.5 freight tph, Westbury to Swindon 0.5 freight tph.
- Phase 4: Westbury to Salisbury 0.5 freight tph, Salisbury to Yeovil Junction 0.5 freight tph.

2.6 The main conclusion from this work is train services can generally be accommodated in the timetable subject to the provision of Platform 0 at Westbury and a new passing loop and intermediate signals on the Melksham single line. The study also showed that capacity enhancements (re-signalling and freight loops) will be necessary to the west of Castle Cary and on the Berks Hants Line (Reading to Taunton via Westbury) to permit additional freight and passenger services and a loop on the single line to Yeovil (previously identified in the Western Gateway funded Heart of Wessex Line Strategic Outline Business Case) to allow hourly Heart of Wessex services. The study's recommendations are in Table Two below.

Table Two: Study recommendations

Recommendations relevant to Western Gateway	Comments
Progress delivery of Platform 0 at Westbury	Platform 0 at Westbury is critical to providing sufficient capacity and resilience.
Continue development work on the Melksham corridor to support future services.	Continue development work on Melksham corridor to support future services.
Enhancements of the single line through Melksham	A passing loop near Thingley Junction would provide capacity for more passenger and freight trains.

	New signals at Melksham will allow one train to follow another along the line.
Extend double-track sections between Castle Cary – Yeovil Pen Mill	To deliver an hourly Heart of Wessex Line service as per the recommendations of the Heart of Wessex Line Strategic Outline Business Case (funded by the Western Gateway).
Rebalance calls at Frome and ensure pathing consistency	Essential for long term passenger services uplift.
Other study infrastructure recommendations	Comments
Deliver new passing loop between Taunton and Castle Cary	A strategically located passing loop would allow fast passenger services to overtake heavy freight, protecting both the 1 tph Taunton extensions and future West of England Line uplifts.
Reduce Absolute Block (AB) section headway (Cogload Junction– East Somerset Junction)	Shorter block sections or new signalling would significantly improve operational flexibility and enhance timetable reliability.
Reduce Absolute Block headways on the Warminster line to unlock additional Yeovil–Salisbury capacity	

Recommendation

I. Approve the findings of the Westbury Platform 0 and timetabling capacity work.

3. Next Steps

3.1 Network Rail have outlined a series of next steps for moving the project forward:

- Completing an economic appraisal for the proposed new services and infrastructure (subject to £30,000 funding).
- Carry out performance modelling of the Westbury area to quantify the benefits derived from the introduction of Platform 0.
- Develop the Strategic Outline Business Case using the work above
- Carry out early design and development work on the Melksham single line loop and signalling (subject to funding).

3.2 Given Westbury Platform is a priority scheme in the current Strategic Investment Plan and the refreshed one (see Item 6 Paper B) it is proposed to continue to support development work. To this end it is proposed to allocate up to £30,000 from the Western Gateway's early business case development budget for 2026/27 to complete the economic case to support the development of the Strategic Outline Business Case. Wiltshire Council have been approached to contribute funding. This is under consideration by the Council recognising this will drive the work forward.

Recommendation

To allocate up to £30,000 from the 2026/27 Western Gateway budget to complete the economic case for Westbury Platform 0.

4. Consultation, communication and engagement

- 4.1 The Westbury work has been shared through the Wiltshire Strategic Rail Steering Group with local authority representatives.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups. Bringing Platform 0 at Westbury will enable more frequent services to be run providing new opportunities to travel and greater accessibility to key destinations and services.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Western Gateway STB remains an informal non-statutory partnership.

7. Financial considerations

- 7.1 The Board is asked to approve allocating up to £30,000 towards producing the economic case for Platform 0. The Western Gateway Work Plan for 2026/27 agreed at the Board on 25 February 2026 to allocated £341,000 for early business case development.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

- 9.1 The Board is asked to approve the recommendations set out at the beginning of this report.

Contact Officers

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Appendix One

Figure 2: Proposed layout for Westbury Platform 0

