



Department
for Transport



Restoring Your Railway: Ideas Fund Application Form



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Confidentiality and data protection

This application, and the processing of personal data that it entails, is necessary for the exercise of our functions as a government department. If your answers contain any information that allows you to be identified, DfT will, under data protection law, be the Controller for this information.

As part of this application process we are asking for your name and email address. This is in case we need to ask you follow-up questions about your application. You do not have to give us this personal information. If you do provide it, we will use it only for the purpose of asking follow-up questions.

DfT's privacy policy has more information about your rights in relation to your personal data, how to complain and how to contact the Data Protection Officer. You can view it at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/personal-information-charter>.

To receive this information by telephone or post, contact us on 0300 330 3000 or write to Data Protection Officer, Department for Transport, Ashdown House, Sedlescombe Road North, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 7GA.

Your information will be kept securely by the Restoring Your Railway team and destroyed within 12 months after the deadline has expired.

1. Explanatory notes

The Ideas Fund (IF) is part of the Restoring your Railway (RYR) Programme. The Department for Transport (DfT) will fund 75% of costs, up to £50,000, of successful bids to help fund transport and economic studies and create a business case. Bids to expand access to the rail network can include the reopening of closed lines as well as the restoration of passenger services on routes which are currently freight-only.

This application form includes questions designed to help you provide the relevant information so we can assess your bid, but it is not exhaustive. Please make sure you include detailed information about the socio-economic benefits of the bid, the services that would be provided, and details of any known anticipated infrastructure and operating costs.



We ask that you do not use other formats. We recommend the response be between 15 - 20 pages in total. All key information should be included through responding to the questions below, however supporting evidence can be referenced and submitted as supplementary documentation.

If you are submitting more than one bid, please indicate the priority order for your proposals.

If you have any queries, please contact the Restoring Your Railway team at restoringyourrailway@dft.gov.uk.

2. Key details

Please provide the following information:

Lead promoter (name, organisation and email address)	 Stroud District Council 
Sponsoring MP(s) (name, constituency and email address)	Siobhan Baillie MP Stroud Constituency Member of Parliament siobhan.baillie.mp@parliament.uk
*Impacted line/ Location	Sharpness Branch Line (with connection to Bristol – Birmingham mainline)
Amount of track reopened to passenger rail services, if applicable (to the nearest mile)	4 miles (6.25km)
Number of new stations proposed, if applicable (include site postcodes where possible)	Potentially 3 – one for scheduled passenger services serving Sharpness Vale, and two servicing heritage and tourism services at the old Sharpness Station and at Berkeley

*to be used in the publication of Ideas Fund bid detail on gov.uk

3. Bid summary

Provide a description of the proposed project; defining the intervention, service levels and/or infrastructure requirements. Where details (such as service frequencies) form part of the feasibility work required, please identify this in your response.

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The proposal is to reinstate passenger services on the existing Sharpness Branchline. The line is currently operational, but only used by freight services associated with the former nuclear power station at Berkeley.

The scheme would deliver two distinct passenger services:

- Timetabled scheduled services between a new station at Sharpness Vale and Gloucester to serve around 5,000 new homes included in the draft Stroud District Council (SDC) Local Plan;
- Tourist and heritage services, to allow the Vale of Berkeley Railway (VoBR) to establish itself as a tourist and educational attraction.

Intervention will comprise upgrading the track on the branch line and re-providing stations, along with improving signalling at the junction with the mainline, and potentially at Gloucester to accommodate a second hourly service.

An Outline Business Case (OBC) was submitted to the earlier rounds of the Restoring your Railway bids, and has been appended to this application for ease of reference.

Service Levels:

There are four key steps to the proposals:

- establish a station at Sharpness Vale, and introduce the capability initially for a once per hour scheduled service to Cam & Dursley and Gloucester (weekdays and Saturdays);
- establish heritage services between the VoBR site near Sharpness Docks and a halt at Berkeley;
- develop the heritage offer, with replacement of the station at Sharpness (as it used to be, close to the docks) and with further services to a new halt closer to the mainline;
- expand the scheduled service to a twice per hour service to Gloucester (weekdays, Saturdays and with some service on Sundays).

The scheduled services allow changes at Cam & Dursley and Gloucester to allow travel further afield.

The VoBR heritage rail services will operate mainly during weekends and school holidays and can be interwoven with the scheduled services on the branch line.

A detailed Timetable Study for the proposed scheduled services has been completed and signed off by Network Rail, and demonstrates that the services can be accommodated.

The current consortium of stakeholders (with VoBR's expertise embedded) is able to operate train services from a very early stage – even at low speeds on the current line. Therefore, there is potential for both services to become operational at the

earliest stage with a minimal initial investment to re-establish a platform at Sharpness. This would be a pilot service, and would be the initial stepping stone to branchline improvements.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

The scheme will require:

- construction of station facilities: at Sharpness Vale for scheduled services, and reinstating buildings for the heritage services at Sharpness and Berkeley;
- 4 miles of track improvements to allow higher speed passenger train running and a passing loop;
- signal improvements between the mainline and the branch;
- potential future signalling improvements on the approach to Gloucester station;
- re-construction of the platform at the former Berkeley station to create a “halt”.

The Sharpness Vale development will ultimately need a new accessible station. It is envisaged this would be roughly midway between the sites of the original Berkeley and Sharpness stations, sitting at the heart of the new development.

(500 words)

Is the project already within the remit of Network Rail’s management and control process for enhancements? If so, what stage is the project at? Has there been any other previous assessments of this proposal? What was the outcome? What has changed since previous reviews?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The proposal is not part of Network Rail’s programme at present and we are not aware of any work being undertaken by them with respect to the proposal.

However, they have been involved in the development and commissioning of the timetable study that has recently been completed. They helped to develop the specification for this work, approving it before the work was undertaken, and they have reviewed the final report and formally approved its conclusions in respect of the potential operation of the Sharpness scheme.

(85 words)

4. Financial overview of the proposal

Please provide details of the potential third party contribution for the work you are seeking to fund through the Ideas Fund. This should include the amount, the terms and percentage of the total costs. Please include any other relevant financial considerations, for example information on potential third party funding for the delivery of the project as a whole.

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The proposal at Sharpness has been under development for more than a year now.

Sharpness Development LLP have contributed with development of the strategic approach, commissioning and providing the timetable study and undertaking the Outline Business Case that sets the context for the next stages of more detailed work. They have agreed to underwrite the development of the Strategic Business Case going forward.

VoBR have developed their proposals, taking a lease on land at the northern end of the line and achieving consent to undertake works to the railway there and at Berkeley. As a charitable trust, they are not a commercial organisation, but have the ability to call on both monetary support (through donations and event income) and “benefits in kind” through their volunteer network – many of whom are former or current railway industry professionals, and who can bring their expertise to bear.

This application is for funding of up to the maximum £50,000 from the Restoring your Railway fund to allow the scheme to now develop a fully compliant (“Green Book”) Strategic Business Case, exploring detailed costs and governance structures. A formal Steering Group will guide the project, involving the current stakeholders and others, to bring together the expertise to procure, deliver and operate the branchline services. This Steering Group will explore and seek to secure funding from the widest range of sources to ensure the delivery of the project to meet its objectives.

The OBC identifies sources of funding as follows:

- LEP – supports growth at Sharpness and sustainable infrastructure investment
- LOCAL AUTHORITIES – contributing to the delivery of sustainable growth
- NETWORK RAIL –the asset owners, would see a betterment through the scheme.
- TRAIN OPERATORS – expected to invest in their franchise areas
- CIL – apportionment of contributions towards sustainable transport infrastructure
- S106 / DEVELOPER – contributions from developers benefitting from the scheme.
- VOBR – contributions of equipment, resources and labour
- DfT – through initiatives such as Restoring your Railway

The details of the next stages of work are set out in the response to the next question, but it is expected that this would be funded by RYR and developer funds on a 75% / 25% split basis.

If our bid was successful, Stroud District Council would then tender the next stages of research and business case development work up to a maximum of £75,000 of expenditure, contributing their own management time and resources to the project in addition. The outturn costs of the work would be funded as follows:

Costs Summary

	RYR Funds	Sharpness Vale Developer contribution
Project costs up to £66,667	75% (up to £50,000)	25% (up to £16,667)
Project costs from £66,668 to £75,000	0%	100% (up to £8,332)
TOTALS:	Up to £50,000	Up to £25,000
Potential maximum proportion of funds:	66%	33%

For clarity – details of the expected sources of funding for the capital costs of the Sharpness branch line proposals are set out in the Outline Business Case appended to the submission, and previously submitted to the RYR bid process.

(492 words)

What will the funding will pay for? For example, to support further research to investigate potential benefits for local tourism or carry out a feasibility study on infrastructure changes to help support a subsequent SOBC.

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The funding will be used to develop the supporting information and project work undertaken to date into a fully compliant Strategic Business Case for the project, that meets the requirements of the HM Treasury “Green Book”, and hence allows detailed appraisal and evaluation of the project. It will also allow routes for funding to be explored and better defined in terms of how they would contribute to the overall delivery of the scheme. It is expected that some sources would be contingent on leveraging other monies, and so this would be defined, and set out in the SBC ready to progress towards securing funds and implementing the scheme.

The outline business case (OBC) undertaken to date provides details of the forecast usage of the line, and outlines the various elements of infrastructure work that would need to be undertaken. It highlights the benefits and opportunities that the scheme could provide, and also quantifies these benefits where appropriate.

However, the OBC is not currently compliant as further work is needed in respect of some of the five cases, notably:

- Capital and operational costs need to be determined for the scheme, in liaison with Network Rail, train operators and a suitable cost consultant;
- Governance issues need to be considered in terms of the role of the Council and other authorities and how the scheme will be managed and delivered. The consortium of parties promoting the project need to establish the right vehicle and management structure to carry the project through to fruition, and this needs to be set out in the Strategic Business Case;
- Further study needs to be undertaken into the position at Gloucester station to determine the most appropriate scope and costs of work that may be necessary to deliver the second train per hour. Liaison with Network Rail should be included to ascertain whether this work may be undertaken in any event, as part of wider improvements related to other planned service enhancements at the station.
- Based on this more detailed costing work, in particular, the SBC would identify funding apportionments and resource providers for the delivery of the scheme.

The output from the funding would be a Strategic Business Case that could be submitted to secure funding for the project, and a clear programme and delivery strategy that would be applied. It would also outline where particular responsibilities lay for delivery and make clear how the project was to be promoted and by whom.

It is intended that, should the funding be secured, a project Steering Group would be established, led by Stroud DC, and with invitations to the key stakeholders:

- Network Rail
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Vale of Berkeley Railway Trust
- Sharpness Development LLP - Sharpness Vale promoters
- Train operators – DRS (freight) and passenger operators (both existing and potential independent operators)
- Gfirst LEP
- Nuclear South-West (as lead of the “Fusion” bid for the south-west)

(475 words)

Are there any financial dependencies or risks in delivery of the work proposed to be funded through the Ideas Fund?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

There are no known direct risks or interdependencies related to the study work itself and the development of a Strategic Business Case for the project.

There is a synergy with the Stroud DC Local Plan process, as this provides the basis for the Sharpness Vale strategic growth point allocation. The current draft Local Plan is progressing towards an Examination in Public towards the end of 2021 or early 2022. Without the successful adoption of the Local Plan the demand for passenger service on the Sharpness branch line would fall away, as the growth point would provide the majority of potential passengers for the service.

There is also an overlap with the proposed bid by Western Gateway/Nuclear South-west for the “STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) Fusion Power Generation Project” which is currently being prepared to go to Government for consideration. This project is seeking a location for a long term nuclear research project, and a joint proposal is being put forward for it to be located at Oldbury and Berkeley former nuclear power station sites. The Berkeley site is very close to Sharpness, and so the upgrading of the branch line would provide the opportunity for sustainable transport to the potential STEP site for both employees and materials.

The STEP bid requires information on the way that sustainable transport would be provided to the potential site, and so the upgrading of the Sharpness branch line, especially to accommodate passenger services, would be a significant aspect of this bid.

Communities have until March 2021 to submit their STEP nominations, with the successful site chosen by the end of 2022.

(269 words)

5. Strategic overview of the proposal

Rationale for Intervention

Provide a high-level explanation of what your project aims to achieve, including a summary of the problems/opportunities the project looks to address, providing supporting evidence where appropriate. This should include consideration of how the project aligns with local and national policy. What is the transport problem? Have you considered other transport modes to deliver the outcomes and if so, why is rail the appropriate solution?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The Sharpness area has seen a decline in its economic fortunes in recent years. The closure of the nuclear power station and shift of the docks to the movement of mainly bulk goods has seen the economic significance of the area reduce. There are new occupiers at the power station site – Gloucestershire Constabulary and the SGS Berkeley Green UTC, but the regeneration of the site has been stifled by the lack of sustainable access.

Stroud DC's draft Local Plan (2019) has identified Sharpness as meeting the need for strategic growth for the district by accommodating planned and necessary housing growth. This is a change of strategy from the previous successive urban extensions, as the scale of growth required necessitates a radical and progressive approach to delivering communities.

Therefore, a large-scale growth point – with a mixed-use masterplan and a consequent high local living potential offers a sustainable approach to planning for Stroud. Additionally, Sharpness can achieve wider regeneration objectives, building on its sustainable connections through the use of the existing, operational, railway asset.

Re-establishing passenger services on this branchline would turn an underutilised, but perfectly serviceable asset into the key to sustainable growth for Stroud.

Work to date shows that there is no barrier to commencing services with little work, as a catalyst to further develop and expand services over time. An initial service to Gloucester could be operated with minimal investment (establishing a platform at Sharpness).

This "pilot" service would be relatively slow, but would be a proof of concept, and could be delivered cost effectively at an early stage of housing development.

The strategic growth proposal dovetails with VoBR's aspirations to reinstate passenger services on the line for tourism and heritage purposes. In the short term, this could help lead growth in the local rural economy by attracting new tourists to the area and by encouraging existing tourists to remain for longer.

The OBC establishes that there are significant financial benefits to be gained from the project:

- residential development land value uplift: £199.9m
- non-residential development land value uplift: £121.0m
- tourism benefits estimated to be £39.3m
- recreational benefits estimated to be around £2.2m

The scheme will also generate other less economically tangible effects:

- enhanced recreational accessibility
- increased sustainable transport infrastructure in the area, creating future growth potential
- enhanced access for freight traffic to the rail network – especially for bulk goods from the docks
- facilitate the Fusion project, should that bid progress
- opportunities for future enhancements – Severn river crossings and the reintroduction of the south-facing chord towards Bristol.

The successful reopening of the branchline to passenger services would also significantly benefit other regeneration proposals in the area:

- providing a sustainable form of transport for workers and students at the former Berkeley power station.
- supporting the Western Gateway/Nuclear South West bid for Berkeley-Oldbury to be the location for a world first fusion power plant and associated technology park. A direct passenger rail link close to the site would be a significant benefit to the project.

(493 words)

What impact might the project have on levelling up outcomes?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

Stroud does not generally feature as a location that suffers from deprivation, but, like many authorities there are pockets where social issues are evident. The Sharpness Vale site sits within the “Berkeley 1” LSOA area, and this has the highest levels of deprivation for two areas:

- Indoors Sub-domain – which measures the quality of housing
- Children and Young People Sub-domain – which measures the attainment of qualifications and associated opportunity for young people.

In addition, the Berkeley 1 LSOA ranks poorly for a number of other criteria:

- Income
- Educational attainment and adult skills
- Employment
- Barriers to housing
- Living environment
- Income deprivation amongst older people

Many of these factors can be improved by better accessibility to facilities, and the development of a growth point, with new, high quality housing accessible to all (remembering that the promoters of Sharpness Vale includes a Registered Landlord) will improve the quality of housing generally across the LSOA.

The economic benefits outlined above will be catalysts in attracting inward investment and job opportunities. Investment in commercial activity would be enhanced by a strong sustainable transport provision, with opportunities for new hi-tech jobs and educational facilities, as well as tax benefits with the movement and provision of labour to more productive jobs.

The project will also mean that low carbon, low energy housing is available in the South-west more quickly, and with a greater range of types and locations than would otherwise be the case. This will provide the benefit that more people are likely to be able to find a home that is suited to their needs and lifestyle, but in a way that responds to the “climate emergency”.

In addition, sustainability benefits will accrue, as Sharpness will be transformed into a highly sustainable location, for people to be able to live and work with a much-reduced reliance on the private car.

The proposals at Sharpness Vale could also act as a catalyst for the wider consideration of infrastructure and growth by Stroud District Council and neighbouring local authorities, such as Forest of Dean District Council. The proposals at Sharpness could, for example, help to facilitate pioneering proposals for a new Severn River Crossing by re-establishing the former crossing or provide a new crossing for sustainable travel modes.

There is interest in providing a link with Metro West and to extend the proposed east-west rail corridor into Wales. Although not part of the Sharpness proposals, the scheme is cognisant of this aspiration, and will assist in the delivery of the bridge in the future.

The potential for Stroud and Forest of Dean to collaborate on a new settlement, with housing and employment delivery advantages to both could be explored.

Overall, the proposals will assist in increasing tourism, leisure and education opportunities, provide a sustainable travel choice for the growing business sector and UTC at Berkeley and access to Bristol and the rest of Gloucestershire, with consequent economic benefits and job creation for Sharpness and the wider area.

(489 words)

What would be the impact if this project was not taken forward?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The opportunities for sustainable growth at Sharpness would be stifled, and although development might still progress it would most likely be at a slower pace and would need to explore road-based options to achieve sustainable movement.

There may be a need for increased highway infrastructure, which would necessarily require construction over an existing green field corridor – effectively simply exchanging one existing infrastructure corridor for a wholly new one, with all of the cost and environmental impacts that would entail. The illogical approach of ignoring an existing sustainable transport corridor in favour of building a less desirable highway corridor could be avoided if the branch line was upgraded.

Ultimately, when the current freight operations associated with the power station decommissioning decline there would be a risk that this branch line would close altogether, as it would not be maintained by Network Rail as an unused asset. This would mean that an asset that was established at significant cost originally, and which has substantial potential in respect of both regeneration in Stroud and creating the opportunity for future connection across the River Severn and to Bristol – connecting the more prosperous Bristol sub-region with the more economically challenged areas on the western side of the river, would be lost to the region and

national economy completely. This would be especially unfortunate in the context of the opportunity to provide for both passenger and freight traffic in the area in the future.

This would further disadvantage Sharpness and remove, or seriously jeopardise, the “stepping stone” opportunities to establish wider connections – across the river and with a southern facing chord towards Bristol and beyond in the future. It would also make the sustainable access to the Fusion site more difficult to deliver, and sustainable travel to the Gloucestershire Science & Technology Park on the old power station site would also be lost.

The heritage railway opportunities would be much more difficult to deliver, and would be less likely to be accessed in a sustainable way if there was no rail link to Gloucester and destinations further afield. The heritage railway service also has the opportunity to provide access between other recreational and tourism activities in the area, and so this would be lost, or at best, delayed, if the project did not progress.

Overall, the opportunity to grasp an almost unique opportunity to develop an integrated and coordinated approach to transformational growth in the area – tackling deprivation aspects, re-using existing infrastructure and bringing economic activity to a location where it has declined would all be lost.

(421 words)

Project Dependencies & Risks

Confirm project constraints and/or dependencies. These could include planning restrictions, stakeholder support, construction and capacity constraints.

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

At this stage only a preliminary list of project related dependencies and constraints has been developed. These will be expanded and managed alongside the design and development of the project. It is expected that the development of the formal Strategic Business Case would bring clarity to some of these issues, and may identify others that need to be managed.

- **Sources of Funding:** As a charity, VoBR may have access to grant funds or fundraising programmes related to their charitable objectives, and aspirations into the tourism and heritage sectors. Similarly, if and as the Local Plan is adopted, there may be routes to funding related to housing delivery and growth that could be applied for. The educational and housing improvement opportunities may open the way for “levelling up” funding.
- **Local Plan Delivery** – Proposals for Sharpness Vale depend upon the allocation being confirmed in the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (to be approved April 2021) and the Local Plan being adopted during 2022. Once confirmed, Stroud DC will work with all the stakeholders to bring forward housing and employment growth on the site as quickly as practicable – and this will influence the delivery of the branch line scheme. It is conceivable that housing delivery trajectories from the Local Plan may be exceeded – increasing demand for services at a faster rate
- **Planning Risks:** The station buildings will require planning consent at the appropriate time, and so this may impact timescales. It should be noted that Stroud District Council granted a “Certificate of Lawfulness” in December 2019

which allows the VoBR, as a Railway Undertaking, to develop parts of the branch line.

- **Railway operations:** GWR franchise and timetabling issues may create, or remove, opportunities for synergies, with branchline trains forming part of a longer overall journey. Overlap with the South-west Metro proposals may have implications for branch line operations, and the wider aspirations for the development of rail services in the area.
- **Gloucester:** The pressure for improvements to operation and services at Gloucester may pre-empt the Sharpness service and deliver the capability for a second hourly service
- **Patronage:** The need for the service to become self-supporting at a particular point in the development trajectory, to align with other services in the area, may dictate the way train services are developed and expanded over time.

Constraints to delivery of the improvement works may exist in respect of the timescales and the particular programme that the branch line has compared to other activities and projects in the area. These core constraints relate to the operation of the railway:

- DRS nuclear flask service requirements, and whether these vary over time
- Interaction between VoBR and development service requirements, recognising that both aspirations may change
- Mainline signalling and Gloucester signalling work and requirements, which will need to be programmed into other work in the area
- Timetabling constraints, which may be different in a few years time when the services come to be introduced
- Deliverability and phasing of implementation
- Impacts on patronage of public transport following the COVID19 Pandemic

(498 words)

What are the key risks and issues faced by the proposed project and how can these be mitigated?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

As part of the development of the Strategic Business Case a Risk Register would be compiled that would identify, quantify and evaluate the potential impact of project risks. At this stage, a series of risks have been identified in broad topic areas, with proposals to mitigate them.

Planning:

- The Local Plan process needs to be completed to confirm the Sharpness Vale growth point. This risk is mitigated by the connection provided by the Council, who are leading on the promotion of the branch line renaissance, and who are responsible for the Local Plan
- The Sharpness Vale development will need to gain planning consent. Mitigated by close liaison between the promoter and the Council to ensure that the Local Plan policies are robust and appropriate to deliver a timely planning permission.

Branchline work:

- The delivery of the Sharpness Vale growth point would be impacted if the passenger services could not be delivered due to delays on undertaking work on

the railway. Mitigated because development will take place prior to the rail service being operational in any event, and so alternative “demand responsive” public transport services will be available in the interim to allow people to travel, as well as the potential for slow services initially.

- The delivery of heritage services may be jeopardised, or, at best, delayed for some time whilst VoBR raises all necessary funds and resources. The voluntary nature of the VoBR’s operations means that they could be impacted by variability in their income. Mitigated by careful management of the charity operations and Steering Group liaison with them – but also by the reality that the heritage operation is not time critical to the overall project, and can be established at any point in the project cycle.

Operational Changes:

- The use of the line by nuclear freight traffic changes – greater intensity may impact on passenger services and a cessation of use may risk the line deteriorating. Mitigated through the steering group, to ensure that any operational changes were flagged early so that operations could be adapted.
- Changes to mainline traffic could impact on the deliverability of the scheme over time. This will be affected by the passage of time and changes to the wider network. Mitigation will be through a “watching brief” to monitor and report on planned or actual changes to mainline train services.
- Cost increases and uncertainty. Mitigated through the Strategic Business Case by the adoption of sensible and proven Contingency and Optimism Bias parameters in respect to each aspect of the proposed scheme.

(416 words)

Stakeholder Management

Please Identify the key stakeholders for your bid, their interest in the bid and how you plan to work with them. What train operator(s) might be involved in delivering the proposed services? Have you engaged with them at this stage? Do you have their support?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The following key stakeholders have been involved in the development of the proposals to date:

Stroud District Council: promoting the scheme as a foundation of sustainable growth, through the planning for the Sharpness Vale development and enhancement of the local tourism and heritage economy. **ROLE:** SDC will lead the study work for the SBC and coordinate delivery through the Steering Group.

Siobhan Baillie MP: Member of Parliament for Stroud, and including the Sharpness area. Has sponsored the proposals from their inception and is enthusiastic about the opportunity to deliver a scheme that will quicken the delivery of zero carbon transport in the District by 2030. **ROLE:** Continues to offer support and coordinate liaison with DfT.

The VoBR Charitable Trust is a registered charity established ‘to advance the education of the public in the history and heritage of the Sharpness Railway Branch Line’ as a Heritage Railway. VoBR will bring significant benefit by increasing tourist footfall and extending the season, as well as providing education, employment and leisure opportunities. It has a partnership with the Canal and River Trust and works

with local community organisations including the UTC, a local prison and community payback organisations to provide work experience opportunities. **ROLE:** VoBR will provide local community links and resources, education opportunities and will be involved in implementation work for their parts of the scheme and the operation of trains.

The Sharpness Development LLP: formed by GreenSquare Group and Lioncourt Strategic Land. GreenSquare Group is a major provider of housing, regeneration, care and support and commercial services across Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. Lioncourt Strategic Land Limited is a Worcestershire based company involved in housebuilding and land trading. **ROLE:** Will promote and deliver the growth point development, support sustainable transport initiatives throughout and make the station site available.

Network Rail who own and manage the national railway assets, including the branch line at Sharpness. **ROLE:** provision of costs and infrastructure advice, sign off on technical work.

Gloucestershire County Council the transport authority for Stroud, and whose Local Transport Plan places a firm emphasis on the development of sustainable transport modes for the county. **ROLE:** provide oversight on the Countywide strategy as transport authority.

The following stakeholders will need to be involved in the project as it progresses:

Train Operators both prospective passenger service operators and DRS, who operate the existing freight services on the line. They have not been engaged to date, primarily because the pandemic made this difficult.

Parish Councils comprising those in the local area: Berkley Town Council, Hinton, Slimbridge and Hamfallow Parish Councils. Initial engagement with regard to the growth point, including the railway proposals, has been undertaken.

Public Consultation involving both the local community, but also some of the organisations in the area – the UTC, Constabulary, Technology Park, schools and community groups and employers. There would also be a need to liaise with businesses in the area – at the docks, and others to establish if they could make use of the line in future.

(495 words)

What other support is there for the bid and how do you plan to maintain this? Are local communities supportive of the bid and can you provide any evidence of this support?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The consortium of parties who are promoting the Sharpness branch line project already encompasses a large group of public, private and charity sector organisations and individuals. It reflects wide political support, encompassing aspiration from the MP and across the Stroud DC Councillors, on a cross-party basis, as they have included it as a plank in their draft Local Plan.

VoBR has a good deal of support from the public locally for its operations and development of trains services on the line. This is evidenced by their membership,

which numbers more than 400 currently, predominately made up of local people. Hence, the heritage services have clear local support.

Public support for the scheduled services is harder to gauge, as very few of the local population can remember when passenger services last ran on the line (in the late Sixties), and so they have not relied on it for their travel needs. In addition, the Local Plan context means that the proposed passenger service is inextricably linked to the growth point – without the development there would not be sufficient patronage to support the scheduled service on the branch.

It is intended that the development of the Strategic Business Case would allow a greater level of engagement with stakeholders – including the public, regarding the specific proposals related to the railway. This will allow the presentation of information about the benefits that would be available to the existing residents in Sharpness, Berkeley, Newtown and the surrounding area as a result of the railway returning to their doorsteps.

(253 words)

What opposition is there to the bid (if any)? How do you plan to overcome this?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

As mentioned above, the community concerns about the Local Plan process and the growth point mean that it is difficult to ascertain local public support for the railway in isolation – although it should be noted that there is no prospect of the railway improvements coming forward without the growth point. It is hoped that the ability to demonstrate the benefits of the growth point throughout the Local Plan process would help to reinforce the opportunities that would be created for local people to rely on the train in the future.

Once the Local Plan was adopted a clearer communication strategy could be developed around the railway improvements in the context of the growth point – featuring the improvements in accessibility, educational opportunity and housing quality that would follow from the project, addressing the key deprivation aspects of the Sharpness area.

The County Council, whilst not opposing the proposal, has raised concerns regarding the interaction of the growth point and the railway development. Their concern is that the scheduled passenger trains may never arrive at Sharpness, or that, if they do, they would be too late in the development programme to achieve transformational change. They have also suggested that the trains may need to be subsidised for some years at the outset, as development is established.

These concerns are valid, and need to be addressed both as part of the railway proposals and alongside the development proposals. The developer would be expected to support the sustainable transport aspects of the development, and to ensure that reliance on the private car did not become the default position for people moving into Sharpness. In addition, there will be the ability to operate slow trains through the pilot process early in the development process.

The growth point proposals feature other sustainable transport measures – such as “demand responsive” coach services and “Mobility-as-a-Service” facilities that will allow for sustainable travel from the outset, allowing the train service to follow

reflecting the longer lead time that is likely to relate to heavy rail services. The flexibility of the over-arching strategy will create time to establish and build up the train services alongside development.

The developer will also prepare viability assessments of the growth point, to show how it will be supported in the early years, and the Strategic Business Case will show how the heritage railway, scheduled services, and development programmes inter-relate.

(393 words)

6. Socio-economic benefits of the project

In presenting the socio-economic benefits of the project please provide information on the population, employment and gross weekly earnings statistics for the local authority district(s) impacted by the project and the geographic area of the project's origin and destination to help make the case for your bid, where available.

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

Stroud District has a population of around 116,000 people, although only a small proportion of them currently live in the Sharpness area. Berkeley, the nearest small town has a population of around 4,200, and Sharpness and Newtown themselves (in the Berkeley 1 LSOA) are significantly smaller.

Although the district has a high proportion of higher earners, the average salary is only £9.42 per hour – a little over the minimum wage. However, the cost of living in Stroud is around double the national average. The most popular occupations are Dental Nurse, Medical Secretary, and Care Worker which pay between £7.79 and £15.14 per hour typically.

The cost of living and average earnings figures mean that, for people doing those jobs, local access to jobs and cost-effective transport is important.

Sharpness and Berkeley are located within an hour's drive of 1.83m people who are residents in the area (VoBR Business Plan, 2014). This is expected to increase to 2.2m by 2031 (Experian, 2012).

The tourist market is expected to increase from 10m to 11.3m by 2031 (VoBR Business Plan, 2014) and the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale Tourism Network (of which VoBR are a member) has been set up to develop this unfulfilled potential to attract both local residents and tourists to the area. VoBR's market research also shows that there is an opening for a new heritage railway in the area (there is no competitor within 25 miles) and has support from local stakeholders.

The project dovetails with the current proposals of the Canal and River Trust for a leisure driven regeneration of Sharpness Docks which would act as a destination for visitors on the heritage railway. At Sharpness, the railway links with the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, providing leisure boating and walking and cycling links to the wider area including Stroud and Gloucester.

In respect of the proposals for Sharpness Vale, the services are anticipated to be used by both existing residents or Sharpness and Berkeley areas as well as the new residents (c.5,000 homes) of Sharpness Vale for commuting and leisure purposes, employees accessing existing and new employment opportunities at Sharpness Docks and within the growth area (10 hectares of employment land is proposed to be allocated in the Draft Plan as part of the Sharpness Vale proposals).

At present, there are c.4,500 existing residents in the area and it is anticipated that c.13,000 – 15,000 new residents and incoming employees will form part of the growth area, additional tourism and economic activity.

(413 words)

Transport benefits

Please provide an overview of the transport benefits that the project could deliver, with consideration of expected levels of demand (including assessments of population catchment areas), journey time savings and new journey opportunities created by the project. Please also outline how your project will integrate with other modes of transport such as cycle routes, local bus services and adequate station car parking facilities.

(Note: at this stage the expected transport benefits may only be qualitative, and if development of this is part of the feasibility/ideas work needed, please state this).

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

Preliminary work has been done to consider the proportions of trips from the existing community and the new development at Sharpness Vale that might be expected to make use of the scheduled services – which will make up the bulk of the patronage on the line. This catchment is outlined in the question above.

The forecasts for peak period rail trips have been taken from forecasts of person trips from the development and existing community. The proportions that would head towards destinations that would be served by the railway have been used to provide a forecast of potential train users.

It would be expected that a proportion of existing residents would also take advantage of the service and start to use the train.

Some people working in the area may choose to use the train to get to work, as might people visiting the area and those studying at the UTC – but these have not been included in this initial assessment. Hence, the forecasts used to date are considered robust, with scope for greater use of the scheduled services than has been allowed for in the assessment.

The total demand has been calculated:

	Morning Peak (8am to 9am)			Evening Peak (5pm to 6pm)		
	Arr.	Dep.	Tot.	Arr.	Dep.	Tot.
Gloucester	46	147	194	129	67	196
Cheltenham	3	8	11	8	4	12
Tewkesbury	2	5	7	6	3	8
Bristol	17	57	74	54	27	80
South Gloucestershire	26	82	108	76	40	116
Total	94	300	393	273	140	413

If the peak period demand equated to 15 – 20% of the daily demand, then the daily demand would be of the order of 4,000 passengers on a typical weekday - 22,500 passengers per week, and potentially around 1,000,000 journeys from the Sharpness station each year.

This compares favourably with the Stourbridge Town service, which operates on a shorter branchline. It requires all passengers to change trains to complete a meaningful journey. Stourbridge Town was used for 591,502 journeys in 2018/19, and, even with Covid effects at the end of the year, saw 559,422 journeys in 2019/20.

The Sharpness branch services will be longer in duration and length, but will reach a meaningful potential destination – Gloucester, with a direct service. Journeys to Bristol would require a change at Cam & Dursley – but based on Stourbridge Town, it is reasonable to suggest that passengers use this service. The timetable study shows that the connection from the Sharpness service to a southbound mainline service in the morning peak period would only require a convenient five-minute interchange.

As the proposed Sharpness station will be newly built, at the heart of a new development, it will be the focal point for walking, cycling and local bus routes to come together. The masterplan for the development shows the station at the heart of the scheme, within five minutes walk of the majority of homes (90%), and ten minutes travel of the entire growth point.

(489 words)

Wider benefits

Please provide an overview of the wider economic benefits that the project could deliver, with consideration of additional job opportunities, improving access to key services and facilitating new development. Please also outline the anticipated environmental impact and/or benefits of the project. For example, does the project serve an area covered by an Air Quality Management Area.

(Note: at this stage the expected wider economic benefits may only be qualitative, and if development of these forms part of the feasibility/ideas work needed please state this).

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The project will be able to deliver a range of wider community benefits:

Delivery of homes through the Sharpness Vale Growth Point: 5,000 new home completions, many of which will be affordable homes, and all of which will meet the housing need of Stroud District.

Delivery of sustainable homes: All of the homes within ten minutes travel to the station, whether on foot or by cycle, personal mobility mode or local bus.

Delivery of employment opportunity: 10 hectares of commercial and employment space, close to the heart of the development, rail connectable and within walking distance of the proposed station at Sharpness Vale.

Increases in Tourism spend: VoBR heritage services will be a tourism attraction, and extend visitors stays in the Sharpness area.

Delivery of sustainable employment space: The employment space is located adjacent to the railway, meaning that this facility could be rail connected.

Facilitate more sustainable transport for freight: The route will be more accessible and attractive for freight train operators and commercial firms to make use

of railfreight. This is important for bulk goods activities taking place at the docks, the nearby warehousing, DRS operations and Fusion.

Facilitate more sustainable transport for existing communities: The new station at Sharpness will be located close to existing communities at Newtown and Berkeley, providing opportunities for sustainable travel that don't currently exist.

Facilitate more sustainable transport for education facilities: schools will be able to make use of the new passenger services to allow pupils to travel more sustainably.

Delivery of environmental benefits: Use of the railway infrastructure will remove private car and goods vehicle movements from the local road network, and the strategic network further afield, creating environmental benefits.

Assistance in the regeneration of previously developed land: 19ha of brownfield employment land that has historically failed to be developed because of the poor infrastructure at Sharpness and the lack of workforce in the immediate vicinity.

There are a series of other potential benefits, not directly related to the delivery of the passenger services and improved rail infrastructure:

- **Quality of Homes and Neighbourhoods:** The delivery of high-quality housing at Sharpness Vale will meet Local Plan objectives for improvements in quality of life standards.
- **Affordable Homes** – a policy-compliant proportion of the homes delivered
- **Private Sector Investment:** investment will be levered into development for the benefit of Stroud District
- **Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation Areas:** new or improved parks and open, publicly accessible spaces and recreation areas will be opened as a result of the Growth Point – all made sustainably accessible by the delivery of the railway link.
- **Future growth and development:** The re-opening of the railway to passenger services will act as a first step to further potential sustainable transport investments – the replacement of the “Southern Chord” to provide rail connections to the south, and the potential to re-provide a railway bridge and river crossing over the Severn to connect to Lydney and beyond once again.

(484 words)

7. Project deliverability

What will be the impact of the project on the existing railway infrastructure and operations? Please set out the impact both during the construction phase and 'business as usual' once the work is completed.

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The existing Sharpness branch line is currently used by Direct Rail Services (DRS) who use two paths a week to transport nuclear waste from a siding at the site of the former Berkeley station, roughly halfway along the branch line. DRS advise that their existing contracts mean that use of the line will continue for the foreseeable future. Given the times at which the DRS trains run, the Sharpness branch line could be easily reopened for passenger services.

It is possible that passenger services would need to be re-timed at off-peak times on the weekday when the DRS services were operational.

Given VoBR heritage rail services will operate mainly during weekends and school holidays, they will have no interaction with the DRS services. It will be entirely feasible to interweave the envisaged heritage services with the scheduled services during the half-hourly operational periods.

Discussions with Network Rail and the timetable study have confirmed that there would be no capacity issues on the branch line itself.

Network Rail has indicated that train paths and capacity on the mainline either side of Berkeley Road (where the branch joins the mainline) are more constrained. There are two express trains each hour, operated by Cross-Country, that use this line. These do not stop on the section between Gloucester and Bristol Parkway. There are also stopping trains that operate along the line and the timetable allows for the Cross-Country express to just catch up with the stopping services (southbound at Bristol Parkway and northbound just before the stopping service diverges towards Gloucester).

The timetable study undertaken has demonstrated that it is feasible to feed the Sharpness services into the timetable on the mainline around the Cross-Country Express and stopping service. This train path would not prejudice the use of the line by other suggested proposals, as it is likely that these would need to use the whole section of the line rather than being able to work around the Express services over a short section.

It is known that there are constraints at Gloucester station, as there are a number of services that use the station to turn and reverse back to the mainline. This takes more time for a stop than might otherwise be the case, and so the consideration of any service will need to ensure that it can be accommodated on the network. It is understood that altering the signalling overlap on the approach to the station would release this issue, and create capacity for the second Sharpness train (the first can be accommodated without change).

During construction, there would be a need for works on the branchline to work around the DRS operations – but as these are once a week, this is not considered to be a constraint. Signal works at the mainline junction, and in the future at Gloucester if necessary would be likely to need track possessions to achieve – but this could be planned to coincide with other planned work to minimise disruption.

(494 words)

Please provide an estimate of the proposed capital costs to deliver and operate this project?

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

So far, potential costs have been derived on the basis of available information from case studies of similar schemes, and prior experience of rail schemes. High-level allowances, that are considered to be conservative, have been made for some aspects of the costs where limited information has been available to date.

The intention of the Strategic Business Case that is the subject of this bid is to better establish the costs of the scheme.

Allowances have been made for both the **capital costs** and potential **operational subsidy** that may be required to allow the service to become established alongside the development at Sharpness Vale as it builds out. Further work will need to be done to understand the trajectory of housing delivery alongside the railway, but for the purposes of this initial appraisal, it is assumed that the railway would be delivered towards the beginning of the development process, and that subsidies to operational costs could be required, on a gradually declining basis, for fifteen years after opening.

The following allowances have been made for the indicative stages of the delivery of the project as they are understood at present:

Phase	Cost allowance
First phase - establishing the Heritage railway	██████████
Second phase - developing the tourism offer - Berkeley Station Halt	██████████
Mainline junction works (turnouts and signalling improvements to allow faster train running speeds to and from the branch line)	██████████
Branch line signalling improvements, to remove the need for token operation and allow more than one train on the branch at a time	██████████
Track bed work – allowed on the basis of 5,500m of branch line and two passing loops each of 800m, costed at £1,500 per linear metre of track	██████████
Station costs at Sharpness – new DDA compliant station, potentially with two platforms	██████████
Operational Costs (Service Subsidy) – Year 4 @ £1m, declining pro rata to £206,000 in Year 19	██████████
Contingency allowance for works to Gloucester Station approaches	██████████
Total COST	██████████










(326 words)

Please provide an outline programme for the delivery of the SOBC, including estimated timescale from start to delivery. If the development of an outline programme is an aspect of the proposed feasibility work, please state this.

Please write your answer here [max 500 words]

The programme for the delivery of the Strategic Business Case is planned to dovetail with the Local Plan process. It will be important to have the outcomes of the Business Case to use as evidence in the Local Plan EiP, as this will be helpful in demonstrating the sustainable credentials of the Council's proposed growth strategy.

It is intended that the work to support the SBC would be undertaken as follows:

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	2021								
Steering Group Meetings									
Draft SBC tender specification									
RYR Funds awarded									
Tender process									
Tender evaluation and award									
- Business Case consultant									
- Cost Consultant									
Inception meetings									
Data gathering									
Liaison with stakeholders									
BC development									
Draft Cost Plan									
Draft SBC for review by SG									
Wider consultation on proposals									
Finalise SBC									
SBC presented to Council									
Stakeholder liaison / presentations									
SBC submitted as LP evidence									
SG meets to determine next steps									

PROJECT PROGRAMME

The capital project delivery is currently planned to link to Local Plan waypoints, but would be developed in two stages to deliver the first train to Gloucester as soon as possible, with the second train being able to be added by the time the next Local Plan (which would allocate the further 2,600 homes at Sharpness) was approved around 2035.

The indicative programme that is being followed at the moment is shown below:

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039
	Local Plan waypoint					Local Plan waypoint					Local Plan waypoint				
Mainline junction works, branchline track and signalling		Design		Build											
Construct station at Sharpness Vale															
Scheduled service - 1 tph to Gloucester					1 tph operation										
Gloucester station improvements								Design	Build						
Scheduled service enhanced - 2 tph											2 tph operation				

The current programme is developed on the basis of the currently planned Local Plan trajectory, which sees a lower level of delivery in the first years of the plan at Sharpness. It is entirely possible (though dependent on the market demand at the time) that more homes could be delivered more quickly. In this case, the delivery of one train per hour (which is possible at Gloucester without amendment) could be delivered sooner than 2025, as shown on the programme currently. This will be an issue that the SBC needs to consider as part of its risk register – whether the rail scheme could be accelerated, and if so at what cost and implications.

(259 words)

8. Maps of your proposed project

Please use this section to provide any maps relevant to your project.

Maps of the route of the branchline are appended to this submission.

9. Additional information request

Are you happy for DfT and its advisers to use the attached contact details to request further information regarding the application if necessary?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No
Do you consent to your contact details being added to a communications distribution list that would mean you are kept up to date on new developments related to this subject area?	<input type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No
Do you consent to the outline details of this proposal being published as part of communicating about the Restoring Your Railway Fund to stakeholders and the wider public?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No
Do you consent to the details of this proposal being shared internally and with approved third parties to facilitate the review and assessment of the proposal?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No

10. Checklist

Please ensure that all submissions to the Ideas Fund contain;

- ✓ A completed Ideas Fund application form
- ✓ A completed 'Additional information request' (Section 9)
- ✓ An email or letter from the MP(s) confirming bid sponsorship