

# Waiting game on £4.6m station revamp plans

By Phil Hill

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**THE Transport Secretary has backed a £4.6million revamp of Taunton Station – although we'll have to wait and see whether the Government will put up the cash.**

Patrick McLoughlin was in Taunton last Thursday to see plans to switch the entrance from the north to the south of the station, with extra passenger facilities, a multi-storey car park, a junction off the Northern Inner Distributor Road currently under construction and a public transport interchange.

There would also be a boulevard leading to the town centre and commercial, residential and retail premises.

Taunton Deane and Somerset County Councils, along with Network Rail and First Great Western support the project and have applied for Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership funding.

Mr McLoughlin said: "It's the kind of scheme we're looking at, but there's a lot of competition (for Government funding) from across the whole country."

He added the Government



**REBECCA Pow welcomes Patrick McLoughlin to Taunton.**

acknowledges that "transport is the key to regeneration", led by a phenomenal growth in the railways, and an announcement on funding will be made shortly.

Prospective Conservative MP for Taunton Deane Rebecca Pow, who invited the Transport Secretary to Taunton, said: "Transport is a massive issue for his area."

"The station is brilliantly

located – this could turn into a wonderful central gateway to the South-West at a time when Network Rail says passenger traffic is going to increase by 40% in six years."

Cllr John Williams, leader of Taunton Deane Council, said the current entrance to Taunton Station is "a dreadful introduction" to the town and the scheme could unlock development worth over £90million.

He added: "It will particularly help the county cricket ground, which has applied for international status, which would see huge numbers of people coming here."

Mr Williams went on to stress the need for improvements to the traffic-clogged A358 and Junction 25 of the M5.

Dan Okey, First Great Western's regional development manager for the South-West, said: "I am delighted to show the Secretary of State first-hand the radical plans we have to redevelop the station for the benefit of all users."

"Committed to the communities we serve, we recognise the key role rail travel has in supporting the local and national economy."