

# **railfuture**

## **Sevenside Branch Newsletter No. 44 Autumn 2020**

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome and should be sent to the Branch Secretary, Nigel Bray.  
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More information about campaigns is available on the Railfuture national website.

### **Branch Meeting at Kemble, 26 September 2020**

The Branch AGM will be held on Saturday 26th September 2020 at 2 pm in the Function Room, **Tavern Inn, Kemble, Gloucestershire GL7 6AX**. The venue is very close to the station, which is on the railway line between Swindon and Stroud.

**UPDATE - CANCELLED - COVID-19 - See issue 45**



Before the formal business of the meeting, guest speaker Peter Langman will talk about the **Cirencester Community Rail Project**, which aims to reopen the Kemble- Cirencester line as light rail and for which a feasibility study is now funded. He will be accompanied by fellow promoters Richard & Jane Gunner and Andrew Lennard, who will be happy to answer any questions.

If coming by train, leave the station by the down side (Platform 2) entrance and the Tavern Inn is straight ahead. There is no direct route from the up side (Platform 1) entrance, so those arriving from the Stroud and Gloucester direction will need to cross the footbridge.



### **Other forthcoming meetings in 2020**

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November at 2 pm in Manvers Street Baptist Church, Bath, with an update from Saltford Parish Council on the campaign to reopen Saltford station.

## **Gloucestershire County Council replies to our LTP Consultation response**

In February 2020 the Branch responded to the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan Review Consultation. The full text of our response can be found on the Railfuture website. The full feedback of numerous responses can be found in the LTP Consultation Report available on [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ltp-review](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ltp-review)

On 7<sup>th</sup> August Sarah Williams replied on behalf of GCC's Transport Planning & Strategic Infrastructure. This was an officer level response, which means that the final revised LTP will be approved by Cabinet and County Councillors. The text of her reply did not separate the Council's views from our own. For the sake of clarity, GCC's views have been italicised in this Newsletter.

*“Railfuture is concerned with the heavy peak congestion on the A40 and the limited public transport access into Gloucester and Cheltenham and would make a case for an additional station between Lydney and Gloucester, which we discuss in our comments on the Rail Strategy. They agree that the value of rail for managing shorter distance trips should not be overlooked. Lydney-Gloucester is a good example, because Lydney station has experienced a remarkable growth in usage in recent years. GCC recognises that new stations on the rail network have an impact on the running of services in terms of performance, reliability and journey times. Capacity is restricted by factors such as signalling, line speed and junctions. And another key consideration is the mix of freight, local and inter-city services using a route. This is particularly relevant on the Gloucester to Bristol line. Given the limited line capacity any proposals for new stations will need to be considered alongside enabling the overall long-term strategic growth proposals to be met in a more sustainable manner. GCC would certainly welcome Lydney becoming part of the South Wales Metro network. A proposed new station in the district would be a longer-term ambition tied in with the longer-term development strategy of Forest of Dean District Council.*

Railfuture points out that the existing rail network in the county does not deliver efficient connectivity between the Stroud / Stonehouse urban area (Gloucestershire's third largest) and the Greater Bristol area, for lack of a suitable station. They reject the proposition in the 2015 Rail Study Report that Stroud area residents could drive to Cam & Dursley station. A new station north of Stonehouse, presumably Hunts Grove, would require road travel in the wrong direction for journeys between Stonehouse / Stroud and the Bristol direction. They are of the opinion that it would be an attractive proposition for workers at the industrial estates alongside the site of Bristol Road station. The additional time required to access Hunts Grove or Cam & Dursley instead of Stonehouse Bristol Road is likely to defeat the object of reducing car journeys on the A38. They raise the opportunity for a half-hourly MetroWest service between Gloucester and Bristol will be wasted without a station directly serving the Stroud / Stonehouse urban area, Stonehouse Business Park and the Cotswold Canals. *GCC continues to look at the most suitable location for a new station south of Gloucester in conjunction with a range of partners. Given the limited capacity between Gloucester and Bristol the location for a new station(s) will need to be able help meet the long-term strategic growth over the next thirty years. Third party proposals for an additional new station south of Gloucester will need to be accompanied by a robust business case.”*

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\$ No, our response said that reopening Stonehouse Bristol Road station would be attractive to these workers.

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“Railfuture asks that climate change and developing sustainable transport should promote future connections from the North Cotswold line to East West Rail as the route to the Oxford-Cambridge arc; and that the LTP Review should be more ambitious in addressing climate change. *GCC will reference east-west rail link in the Rail Policy Document.*”

Railfuture points out that the rail policy document states that service patterns are largely set in stone. The franchising system, with its prescriptive service requirements, tends to reinforce a policy of minimal change, yet service planning is a flexible art and needs to take account of the change (sic) travel patterns. They agree that Ashchurch for Tewkesbury needs an hourly service to support proposed new housing and trains in both directions suitable for normal office hours in Cheltenham and Gloucester. Reopening the Honeybourne- Stratford line should be progressed as a step towards longer-term restoration of Cheltenham- Stratford as a strategic route linking major centres of tourism. Railfuture are not convinced that new dynamic loops are needed to segregate faster and slower trains between Gloucester and Bristol, for which GCC has noted. *GCC agree with the opportunities for service planning pointed and LTP policy will reflect service improvements from Gloucester station, which are equally important.*

*GCC recognises in the LTP Freight policy document the sidings at Gloucester Yard and Lydney. And a number of freight facilities exist in neighbouring areas that generate rail freight movements in Gloucestershire, such as at Westerleigh petroleum terminal, Tytherington quarry and Long Marston. GCC recognises the updates Railfuture has raised regarding the Station Usage table to bring up to date.*

Railfuture comment on the proposed project for an ultra-light rail service between Kemble and Cirencester. *GCC has responded previously to this proposal to inform local interested parties that we are unable to contribute to a feasibility study. The proposal has been put through the first phase of the LTP scheme priority assessment process but, unfortunately, at present it does not score high enough to be considered for inclusion in the LTP. It was considered that the potential usage would not justify the expected very high cost of the scheme. However, GCC are highly supportive of sustainable transport links between Kemble station and Cirencester. The Kemble to Cirencester cycle link is an existing LTP scheme which we are fully supporting. We have secured significant contributions for bus services for developer contributions for the Chesterton development.”*

Secretary’s note: This final paragraph of the GCC reply is perhaps an improvement on the single unreasoned sentence, “the scheme would never be viable”, with which the 2015 Gloucestershire Rail Study Report dismissed the Cirencester Community Rail project. In 2011 Somerset County Council, replying to responses to its Future Transport Plan, likewise dismissed our suggestion for a train service between Yeovil Pen Mill and Junction stations with a one-liner, “there is a commercial bus service between the two stations.” In December 2015 South West Trains (now South Western Railway) introduced train services linking the Yeovil stations.

**Getting Passengers back on Rail**

Many thanks to Railfuture members who emailed or wrote to their MPs asking for the Government to stop discouraging people from travelling by train. This was overtaken by the Prime Minister's statement at a Coronavirus briefing in mid-July that anyone could now use public transport, which was welcomed by Railfuture.

Railfuture has called for a fares freeze. In a statement to media on 15<sup>th</sup> August (see <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Press+release+15th+August+2020>), Bruce Williamson said, "the last thing we need is yet another deterrent to travel by train. The world has changed and many people have discovered they don't need to travel every day any more, so a fares increase is going to result in lower ticket sales. It's very important that the Government sends a signal that they want people to use trains."

**Busways or BRT do not attract sufficient car drivers to reduce congestion even if they are quicker than the car.**

The above is the title of an article by Lewis Lesley, retired Professor of Transport and Civil Engineering, which has been circulated recently by Bath & Bristol Trams (<https://bathtrams.uk>). The main points are as follows:

Prof. Lesley spent 15 years in the academic world and local government trying to get people out of cars into buses. This including analysing the world's first busway in Runcorn New Town, which when it opened in 1970 was expected to carry 50% of the trips in the town. In 1982 he undertook a comprehensive study of the town and found that only 15% of internal journeys were being made by bus, comparable with towns of similar size which did not have busways. "The figure today is about 5% and parts of the busway have been abandoned for want of use."

He describes the provision of busways as a supply side approach, whereas most of what people consume is influenced by a demand side attitude, "what do people want and how can it be supplied at a price they are prepared to pay?" He says over half of journeys in Bath are of under three miles and less than 3 % are over 30 miles. "The consumer verdict on this is that only about 6 % of trips in Bath are by bus and 65% are by car."

Cars and buses contribute to air pollution. Even with zero emission engines, dust from tyres, tarmac and brakes means that PM10 particulates will exceed the permitted EU level. "Bath has a particularly severe toxic pollution problem from being sited in a deep valley, killing an estimated 100 people a year."

Prof. Lesley says there is considerable market research and behavioural studies showing that people will switch from car to rail (including trams) if there is a convenient service. The average patronage of UK tramways has at least 25 % of their passengers. In Croydon this modal shift to tram has reduced traffic levels in the Borough by a fifth.

He considers that Bath is too small to justify the cost of a metro system, especially when there are other demands on public spending but he quotes Pierre Laconte, Secretary General of the International Public Transport Association (UITP) as saying, "Trams

provide 90% of the benefits of a metro at 10% of the cost.”

“The Bath tram team”, says Prof. Lesley, “are trying to find a way to have a tram network that can be built with private funding, thereby easing the burden on the public purse.” He said the network would target high car flows, since there is insufficient bus travel to support a tramway. This would need cooperation from public bodies, especially for road layout modifications and traffic management to keep traffic moving on tram routes. In practice a tramway with a six-minute interval service provides the same capacity as cars on a six-lane road.

“In Bath’s favour there are now plenty of examples in Britain where trams, people and traffic harmoniously coexist safely, so that those experiences can be adapted to fit Bath’s special and World Heritage Designation conditions.”

### **Railfuture Webinar on Saturday 3 October 2020 11:00-12:30**

Railfuture had intended to hold its 2020 national conference in Leeds, but because of the COVID-19 restrictions, which has prevented large gatherings, it has been changed to be a Webinar. Rather than the original topic of upgrading and expanding Britain’s railway network, it will now look at **Attracting passengers back to rail**.

Britain's railway has enjoyed 25 years of continual growth since the mid-1990s. Even during the financial crisis rail patronage was barely affected, unlike previous recessions. COVID-19 poses the greatest threat to the railway since the Beeching era.

The future of the railway depends upon attracting a sufficient number of passengers to pay fares that cover a significant proportion of the costs of running the railway, and to justify the public subsidy for the remainder. The railway offers numerous benefits to the country, including economic and environmental, but the value of these depends on passenger numbers.

The Railfuture Webinar asks what needs to be done to attract passengers back to the railway. This will be a challenge, not just to convince the public that train travel is safe, but to ensure that railway represents value for money in the 'new normal' where people no longer commute five days a week.

There are five speakers, representing the Rail Delivery Group, Network Rail, Passenger Focus, RSSB and, to cover devolution, the West Midlands Rail Executive. The 90-minute event is free to join but you must register in advance. Please see <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/webinar>.

*Next Railfuture Severnside newsletter will be number 45 in spring 2021.*

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