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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

March 1st brought the good news of railway electrification for the Great Western main line to Bristol and Cardiff. However, there was of course disappointment in Wales that the overhead wires will not go through to Swansea. Instead a new set of bi-mode electric/diesel trains will be used.

Regrettably on our own Great Western main line we only have the Reading station improvement, but at least this should improve overall timetable reliability. Perhaps we will get better rolling stock for our local services, displaced from the Bristol and Reading areas. This does feel like shopping at a charity shop, but anything would be better than current trains as pictured on the front cover at Exeter St. David's Station.

Looking on the positive side, my guess is that electrification will be extended quite quickly to Swansea and bi-mode trains will become available for other routes. Bi-mode trains from London Paddington to Penzance would mean there was no temptation to end through services into Cornwall if the wires only reach Plymouth. It also means that trains could operate over the Dawlish line under diesel power, at least when there was a risk of waves breaking over an overhead power supply.

So if the trains can operate with gaps perhaps we should aim for incremental extensions? Number one might be to extend the electrification, already authorised to Newbury, as far as Westbury. This would also benefit Bristol as a diversionary route. There is also scope to increase line speeds to 125mph on some sections. to 125mph. However for stage 2 perhaps we should suggest Newton Abbot to Plymouth? An electric train should achieve higher speeds on the steep gradients and so reduce journey times a little.

Finally may I thank Philip Shelton for his assistance in producing this newsletter, the first for quite some time.

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall www.railfuture-sw.co.uk

Chairman: Gerard Duddridge **Secretary:** Peter Mulley

Newsletter Editors: Gerard Duddridge and Philip Shelton

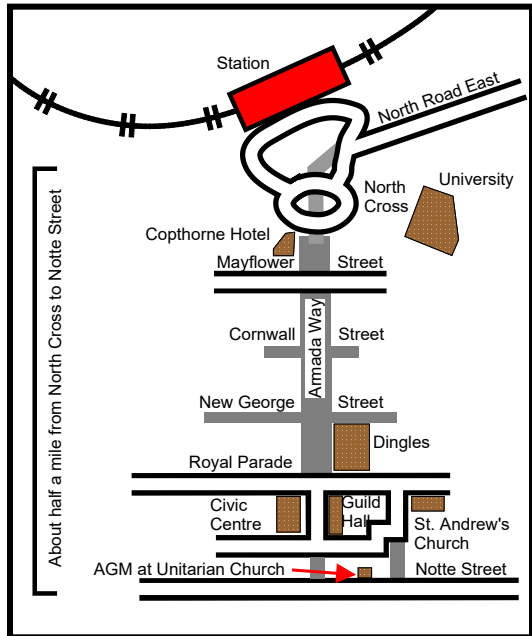
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Notice of Branch Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be on Saturday 19th March 2011 at the Unitarian Church, Notte Street, Plymouth, PL1 2AQ.

The venue is situated in the centre of Plymouth near the Guildhall and Civic Centre.

To get there from the railway station, walk towards the North Cross roundabout and through the pedestrian subways to Armada Way. Then straight down past Dingles on your left, and after crossing Royal Parade you will have the Civic Centre on your right. Cross the next road which is Princess Street, and turn left into Notte Street to find the Unitarian church.



Bus routes 16 (four an hour taking 7 minutes) and 47 (two an hour taking 4 minutes) leave from the stop in Saltash Road just outside the station area. Alight at Royal Parade and then walk through to Notte Street.

Provisional Agenda

- 13:30 Talk to be arranged
- 14:00 Open Forum
- 14:45 Tea/coffee
- 15:15 The AGM
- 15:45 Any Other Business
- 16:15 End of meeting

Other Meetings

Railfuture Severnside Annual
General Meeting 2011
Provisionally: Saturday 9th April in
Bristol

Joint Severnside meeting with
Railfuture Wessex. At 14:00 on
Saturday 28th May at the Great
Western Inn, Camborne Grove, near
Yeovil Pen Mill station.

Newton Abbot Regeneration, Core Strategy Consultation

We wish to draw attention to paragraph 86 of the House of Commons – South West Regional Committee – Transport in the South West – First Report 2009-10 – Volume 1, and chaired by Alison Seabeck MP, regarding rail at Dawlish which states that: “Network Rail has told us that the range of solutions they have in place at Dawlish, which includes a special weather station at nearby Teignmouth, will be effective for the next twenty years”.

Also the next Paragraph 87 states that “Network Rail does not yet know which solution it will need to implement at Dawlish in twenty years' time, even though planning and funding cycles are such that a decision on any major work – for instance, the construction of an inland route – will need to be taken in the next two or three years”.

It should be borne in mind that even if an inland route were to be proposed it would not imply the abandonment of the Dawlish route, only that fast trains to Torbay, Plymouth and Cornwall would have a quicker and more reliable route between Newton Abbot and Exeter, while the Dawlish route would still be maintained as best as possible for local services.

Since Network Rail seems disinclined to recognise the possibility for needing an inland route, it would appear to be prudent to consider where it might be routed and to safeguard such a route. One possibility could be an inland route from Starcross to Teignmouth, which is the reason for our objection to the siting of the supermarket at Shutterton Bridge. An alternative could be to utilise the first few miles of the Heathfield line out from Newton Abbot up the Teign Valley towards Exeter. Ideally this would depend on there being enough room to convert it to a double track 100 mph main line. It is this second option which has prompted our representation to safeguard the route.

Peter Mulley (Branch Secretary)

30th August 2010

Exeter to Plymouth Railway in Parliament

The following is a summary of the proceedings in Westminster Hall on 10 November 2010 on the topic of the railway between Exeter and Plymouth, with particular reference to the 'Dawlish-Teignmouth sea wall'.

Points made by Anne Marie Morris, the MP for Newton Abbot: Two million people had used the line during the previous 12 months and Network Rail's estimate is that there will be 19% growth over this year and next. It has been identified as one of the fastest growing lines.

During the last Parliament there was a House of Commons inquiry into an alternative inland route. The inquiry findings were made public in February last year; its view was that, at a cost of £100 million, it simply was not viable. There is now a new Administration, and Ms Morris sought an assurance that the Government sees the coastal line as a priority. The line follows 13 miles of tidal water, four of which are aligned with or cross open sea. The Met Office prediction is that sea levels will rise by 0.32 metres over the next 100 years. That may seem a lot, and it is necessary to plan now because of the consequences.

Ms. Morris was looking for three things: a statement on the Government's behalf that it is their priority to keep the line running; confirmation that there is no plan to resurrect a debate about the alternative inland route at a cost of £100 million; and for the Minister and the Government to direct Network Rail and the Environment Agency to work together to find a way forward, putting this route and its long-term viability and infrastructure at the heart of the plan going forward. Ms Morris sought confirmation that this is a priority line that will receive direction from the Government and, where relevant, funding. (Note: the 'alternative route' being referred to here is a new line between Exeter and Newton Abbot somewhere in the vicinity of the Teign Valley, not the old Southern route via Okehampton and Tavistock.)

Reply by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Norman Baker:

Network Rail is responsible for the operation, maintenance and renewal of the rail network and it takes very seriously the long-term resilience of the network in the face of climate change. It falls to Network Rail to continue to monitor the likelihood of risks to the safety and operational integrity of the railway in the Dawlish area and to propose further appropriate measures of protection from flooding and coastal erosion. Network Rail is fully aware of the importance of the section of coastal main line between Teignmouth and Dawlish Warren. Network Rail does not believe that the railway sea defences in the Dawlish area are likely to fail in the foreseeable future, thanks to the works carried out and ongoing maintenance and monitoring.

Network Rail has been taking action for some time. It is working with the Met Office by using its data to help to stress test thousands of miles of rail tracks, embankments and bridges to determine whether they can stand up to the patterns of extreme weather predicted over the coming decades.. The railway lines adjoining the Teign and Exe estuaries and the south Devon coast were used as case studies, and the conclusions suggested, not surprisingly, that the frequency of disruptions along the main line was likely to increase over the next 70 years as sea levels rise.

The Department for Transport is funding a major research project with Network Rail to understand the impact of climate change on the railway. The project has already identified wave over-topping and flooding at defended coastal and estuarine railways at Dawlish as a priority. The next phase of the project will provide the quantified evidence needed to decide where and when investment may be needed to maintain the resilience of the railway to increasingly extreme weather.

Mr. Baker then turned to the question of whether the Government intends to resurrect the debate about an alternative route. A number of suggestions have been made about building alternative routes away from the coast or re-opening former railway lines such as the Exeter-Okehampton-Tavistock-Plymouth line. He pointed out that any solution cannot ignore the needs of south Devon and Torbay, so reopening that line alone would not meet one of the key objectives. That is not to say, however, that if the line were to open, it would not be welcome. It would be welcome but, in the Government's view, it would not be a substitute for the main line along the coast.

Bus Services Cuts and Changes

In a press release on 25th February Devon County Council announced that the following services will be retained:

- The 18:15 journey from Exeter on the 359 Moretonhampstead to Exeter service (last bus),
- The 18:59 from Barnstaple (last bus) and the 06:50 and 18:38 from Lynton on the 310 Lynton to Barnstaple service;

The 06:09 from Hatherleigh and the 06:46 from Lydford on the 118 Hatherleigh/Lydford/Tavistock.

Service 111 covering Dartmouth, Totnes and Paignton becomes a commercial service and so no longer needs subsidy.

At the cabinet committee on Wednesday 9th February 2011 Councillor Hughes said, 'In the context of a 27% cut in county council funding over the next 4 years, it was inevitable that support for public transport would have to reduce.'

The adopted policy is to reduce the number of journeys on the less well-used services rather than withdraw routes. This has been described as service thinning. Places which have had a bus in the past year will continue to do so.

Railfuture's concern relates to bus/rail links. If we lose even quite early evening services it becomes impossible to make return commuter journeys by train and bus. We do not want the last bus to have gone by 17:30, which is also too early for tourists needing an onward bus connection.

The Great Western Yelverton and Tavistock Branch

Railfuture has never proposed reopening the former Great Western Plymouth, Yelverton Tavistock branch and instead favours the Southern route. This is because the Southern route only needs 6 miles of restored line from Bere Alston. compared to over 12 miles of track via Yelverton. Gradients and curvature are less favourable via Yelverton. More importantly the demolished Walkam (Grenofen) Viaduct represents an apparently insurmountable gap. This was 367 yards long and 132 feet high.

However, this is no barrier to the relentless conversion of our closed railway network to cycleways. With the help of £600,000 of European funding, a staggering £2.1 million is being spent by Devon County Council to restore a bridge to the site. It is to be called the Gem Bridge and piling works is supposed to start at Grenofen on Monday 14th March.

The new bridge will be shorter and at a lower height than the old railway bridge, based on the given 200 meter length and 24 metre height. The Council's press release (24/08/2010) describes it as a vital bridge on the National Cycle Network forming the Drake's Trail. It is also supposed to establish better cycling tourism links between the south west of England, across the Channel into France.

Railfuture is just disappointed that there is still no funding for rail reopenings in Devon. Meanwhile Devon is cutting its £7.76million public transport budget by £1.35 million.

With the former Great Western Tavistock line converted to a cycleway it is fortunate that we have the potential of the Southern route. However, even here there have been plans for cycleways that would compromise double track operation north of Bere Alston.

Gradients are steep on the Great Western route. They are between 1 in 58 and 1 in 60 for almost the entire route and the line reaches 500 feet (150m) at Yelverton.

On the Southern route gradients are less steep at 1 in 73 to 1 in 75 and the highest point between Plymouth and Tavistock is about 100 feet lower at the Raven's Rock summit north of Bere Alston.

Curves on the Great Western Route are around 400m (20 chains) radius, which means line speeds of no more than 55mph (or 60mph if steeply canted).

Four hundred meters radius is equivalent to the tightest curve on the Southern route at Bere Alston, a point where many trains are likely to slow and call.

Speed through Bere Alston for non stop trains is unlikely to exceed 50mph, as curved platforms limit track cant. However, 70mph would be possible between the old Tamerton Foliot station and Bere Alston, then 65mph to Tavistock.

Moretonhampstead to Bovey Tracey - Another cycle trail

Work was reported to have started in December 2010 to convert about half a mile of the former railway at Moretonhampstead to the Wray Valley Trail so providing a link to Steward Wood. A new bridge will be constructed across the A382.

Background to the First Exeter Metro Discussion Meeting

This was held on Saturday 13th November 2010, at the Great Western Hotel in Exeter.

Origin of the Metro Proposal

The Metro proposal was first published in March 2000 in a report under our Railway Development Society name entitled: "*SOUTH WEST RAIL STRATEGY: A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT.*"

At the Devon Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 Panel Hearing at Barnstaple on 12th November 2004 Railfuture put forward as the **Number one priority for inclusion in the Devon Local Transport plan** 'Implementation of the Exeter Metro style service with a zonal fares structure and travel cards.'

Under the same heading **SWPTUF** (South West Public transport Users Forum) now TravelWatch South West said 'A Devon public transport network that connects rural and urban residents to local and regional centres and services'

Since then the Devon Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 has made a reference to the Metro idea, "Local train services are becoming increasingly important and make a significant contribution to the congestion strategy. The 'Devon Metro' initiative to link the Exmouth, Paignton and Barnstaple services into Exeter with a clock-face timetable has improved cross-Exeter services, increasing employment opportunities and significantly enhanced accessibility to the Sowton Industrial Estate."

Updating Our Rail Strategy

Much has changed since the first Metro idea, such as the hourly services on the Waterloo and North Devon routes. However, there is still no local service on the Taunton line and we cannot assume that

Devon County Council's version of the metro will deliver all the rail improvements needed. Reassessment and republishing our proposal is now complicated by the appearance of rail user groups who have not involved us in any aspects of their work. The November meeting was convened by us to initiate discussion and work towards a common consensus between the different organisations. This follows from our 12th April 2008 AGM talk where our invited speaker, Chris Irwin, Chairman of TravelWatch, spoke on the theme of one message, but many voices.

Disappointingly our invitation provoked an unpleasant response from one organisation, *"Your proposals have been drawn up without any discussion with this organisation.....I find the 2009 paper on your website completely at odds with the aspirations of.....rail passengers on this line. It bears no relation to discussions we have had with the rail industry and local authorities, or the consensus for the future that we have developed with them."*

However, there were no other groups when the Metro idea was drawn up in the late 90s. The published March 2000 Rail Strategy was sent to the British Library, two other deposit libraries, the Newton Abbot railway library, Devon County Council and the rail industry. It has been available for a long time.

The Metro map appeared in a presentation at the "2008 National Rail Users' Conference" held in Salisbury on 5th July 2008. The lines shown for reopening on the Railfuture Metro map were first put forward at the Reopenings Conference held at the George Hotel in Nottingham 1992.

Some things may not be immediately achievable, but it's the role of Railfuture to lead thinking and invoke discussion and research. Many of our suggested schemes are now a reality, although mostly in Scotland and Wales. So should we continue to involve others outside of Railfuture?

Report Based on the Exeter Metro Discussion Meeting

The November meeting consisted of a presentation by your Chairman to outline the past Metro proposals, and the factors we need to take into account in any changes and updates to the campaign.

Salisbury Line

The Exeter to Waterloo line is a key component of the Metro proposal. The completion of the Axminster loop has effectively fixed the train times for the foreseeable future and a detailed study (unpublished Railfuture report) of the train paths into Waterloo show that there is very little scope to alter these.

The first Metro proposal set out service frequencies on a half hourly basis and assumed passing at Honiton and also on a westward extension of the Chard Junction loop. Passing at Axminster is too close to Honiton and so gives 20/25 to 35/40 minute spacing in this area.

This could be solved by extending double track west of Honiton and displacing the passing point westward. However, this would not increase line capacity and as the uneven pattern establishes a 20 minute spacing it may well be better to simply campaign for a 3 trains per hour capacity. This has more to do with improving long distance links, creating diversionary capacity and spare paths to accommodate late running trains. More about this appears in Railwatch.

Closer to Exeter some of our members are concerned at the current reduction of services at Feniton and Whimple. Little can be done until a new loop is built in the Whimple-Cranbrook area, because the distance between the Axminster loop and the double track at Pinhoe is just a bit too long. A Devon County Council representative has said that they wish the additional Axminster to Exeter to service to call at all stations west of Honiton, but would there then be too many stops?

We do not have a policy for Pinhoe, Whimple and Feniton other than saying the current 2 hourly service is not enough. So the following points were raised in the presentation:

- Adding Feniton and Whimple to the proposed Exeter to Axminster (Yeovil) service would add about 5½ minutes to journey times. So should they be left out of the additional service?

- Do these places need extra services and how do we balance the needs of local versus long distance passengers (assuming extension to Yeovil Junction and beyond)?
- We could investigate increasing Feniton and Whimple services by removing the Pinhoe stops from the current Exeter to Waterloo service. Then use the Exeter to Axminster (Yeovil) service to stop at Pinhoe.

One final point, changing stopping points west of Honiton can be used to change the time paths through Exeter. What is best may well depend on how Honiton line trains link onward from Exeter St. David's and also how movements across Exmouth Junction work out with the Exmouth line. The section of line through St. James Park could become much busier than the quiet scene shown below.



St. James Park. © Owen Dunn

Trains at Exmouth Junction

For this potentially congested junction we probably need the single track layout restored to double track. Ideally the junction would be grade separated, but this would be physically difficult to achieve and

expensive. Railfuture has never put this forward as a policy. The following points were raised in the presentation:

- Two trains/hour from both Exmouth and Honiton gives a crossing movement every 10 minutes.
- With a doubled passenger frequency, stops at St. James Park and freight (Clyst Hayes intermodal), Exmouth Junction will become quite congested.
- If the Salisbury line was doubled throughout and used more extensively it could limit services on to the Exmouth line.
- So should paths be protected for 4 trains per hour on to the Exmouth line?
- In advance of such a frequent service should Metro trains terminating in Exeter, from places such as Paignton, continue on to the Exmouth line for reversal? If yes how far should they go?
- Network Rail has proposed a Paignton to Cranbrook service so there could be competition for trains between the two lines. Which is the priority?
- If it is the Exmouth line we need to look at the extra double track needed.

On the original Metro map we showed the proposed Taunton line service projected on to the Exmouth line as far as Topsham. This was essentially to provide a reversing point for these trains, establishing paths for a future 15 minute interval service on the Exmouth line and also helping to justify the term Metro.

However, if the timetable and infrastructure is designed for passing at Topsham, there is only enough time for trains going part way to reach Digby and Sowton. The unused 4 minute journey time between Digby and Sowton and Topsham and return then becomes an 8 minute turn round time. So in later maps the terminating point was taken back to Digby and Sowton.

Train Frequency on the Exmouth Line

Now Devon County Council is suggesting a 15 minute service throughout to Exmouth, so should the Metro map show this from now on?

Since producing the Metro proposal new stations have been proposed at Hill Barton and for a new housing development at Newcourt. In our Rail Strategy the Newcourt development was not under consideration. For Hill Barton we said, '... If in the future the Exmouth line is electrified a timing saving of 4 minutes may be made between Exeter and Exmouth. In this case a station at Hill Barton should be evaluated

However, the new stations are now more likely than electrification, so we need to look again at the timings and new track requirements and then check that everything can be run through to Exeter St, David's. This must include days when the Honiton line is being used for diversions. From users of the Exmouth line we need to know whether trains should serve all stations or be a combination of semi-fast and stopping as at present.

The meeting presentation requested opinion on service frequency for Exmouth line stations.

	Minimum Frequency	Maximum Frequency
St. James Park		
Polsloe Bridge		
Hill Barton		
Digby & Sowton		
Newcourt		
Topsham		
Exton		
Lympstone Commando		
Lympstone		
Exmouth		

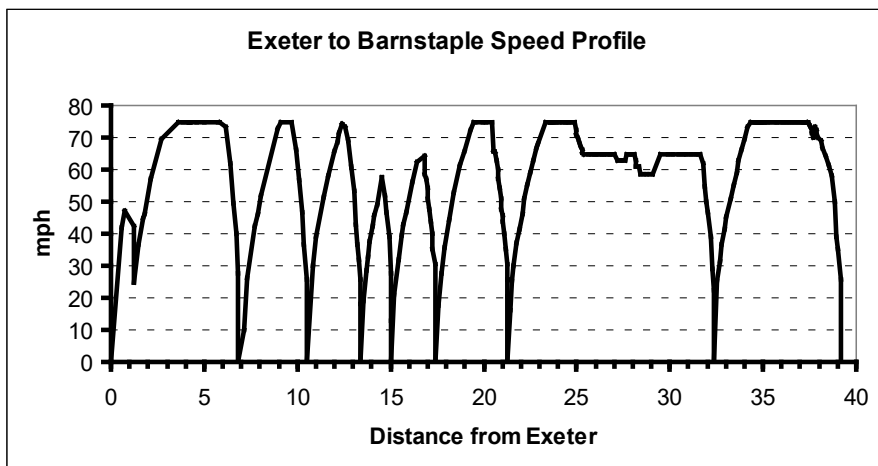
North Devon Line

An hourly service now operates for most of the day on the Barnstaple line, but we believe that this was originally to have been based on passing at Cowley Bridge Junction and Eggesford. Between these two points only two stations could have been served, so this may explain why so many Lapford stops disappeared from the timetable a few years ago.

The actual hourly service is using the Crediton and Eggesford passing loops, so there is no constraint on calling at Lapford. A 2 hourly service is suggested, as this would allow for a few minutes of

journey time improvement, if the double line at Crediton was extended a short distance towards Cowley Bridge Junction and Exeter.

Seven intermediate station stops between Exeter and Barnstaple would allow a 59 minute journey time. This would however require a 75mph line speed in places, including across the various level crossings. The speed profile shows computer modelled line speeds and stops at Crediton, Yeoford, Coplestone, Morchard Road, Lapford, Eggesford and Umberleigh.



We now need to consider whether we want more and faster trains with fewer stops in the future. How should they link across Exeter to other services? In the original Metro proposal we linked the Barnstaple and Waterloo lines to attract main line status and trains to match. Secondly this option avoided the connectional and pathing complexities inherent in linking 3 routes with one train, such as Barnstaple to Exmouth and then Paignton. However, the link with the Digby and Sowton industrial estate would have been lost.

Exeter to Taunton New Local Stations

If reopened Cullompton, Willand (Tiverton Junction) and Wellington stations would bring rail access to over 23,000 people. A new Stoke Canon station, perhaps to the north of the village, would be especially valuable when the main line floods at Stafford Bridge. It is only a 10 minute road journey away from Exeter St David's.

Bradninch is 1½ miles from the railway and it might be best to extend the existing half hourly bus service to the proposed Cullompton station. Burlescombe is too small to justify a station and Norton Fitzwarren might be best left for the West Somerset Railway to develop.

There was no time to discuss the links involving line reopenings.

Exeter to Torbay

We think there is a consensus that this should be half hourly throughout the day, but should the additional trains originate from the Waterloo line or Exmouth? Comments on service frequencies for existing and new stations would be welcome:-

	Minimum Frequency	Maximum Frequency
Exeter St. Thomas		
Marsh Barton (new)		
Exminster (reopened)		
Starcross		
Dawlish Warren		
Dawlish		
Teignmouth		
Bishopsteignton		

Time did not allow further discussion of the Torbay branch.

Conclusion

The next stage is to finalise our strategy for the Exeter to Waterloo line. Then identify the available paths for the Exmouth line over the critical section of route from Exmouth Junction to Exeter St. David's. This is largely a technical exercise, but it does need feedback from members and others. Thank you to those who have already responded.

We will then be ready to convene a second Exeter Metro discussion meeting in the autumn to discuss how we link the Waterloo and Exmouth line services with routes to North Devon, Taunton and Torbay. This will also need to take into account priorities for connections with London Paddington and CrossCountry services.