

railfuture

Sevenside Branch Newsletter No. 28 New Year 2016

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 Frome, 30 January 2016

The next Branch meeting is on Saturday 30 January 2016 at 2 pm in Meeting Room 3 at the Cheese & Grain community centre, Market Yard, Frome, BA11 1BE. The venue is about 20 minutes' walk from Frome station and also has a large car park. There is a café in the building and there are pubs nearby.

The meeting is a joint venture with North Somerset Railway, which is campaigning to reopen the Frome- Radstock line and is simultaneously holding an exhibition in the Cheese & Grain. The line (in use for freight at this point) can be seen crossing a plate girder bridge from behind the venue. The exhibition offers another chance to see a model of Mells Road station and a train driving simulator which were displayed at our Bristol Conference on 7 November. We have also invited Langport Transport Group and Frome Area Bus Users to update us on their progress.

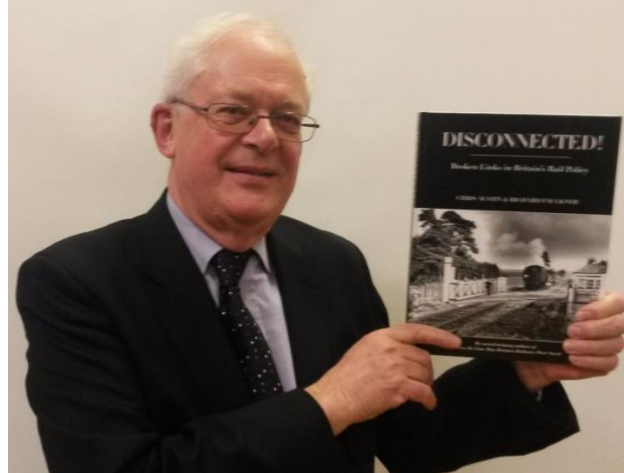
If coming by train, leave the station to the right, then go to the main road (Wallbridge) and turn left. At the traffic lights follow the main road to the right (Portway). Just after Portway Post Office, take the straight right on to Vicarage Street (not the sharp right turn). Continue along Vicarage Street as it turns right, then turn left into Church Street, keeping the Parish Church on your left and a fish & chip shop on your right. After about 50 metres, turn right, then immediately left into Cheap Street, which is a flagstone pedestrian street with a fast flowing water channel. At the end of Cheap Street, cross the Market Place to the George Hotel and turn right. Keep walking until you cross the river, then turn diagonally left into Bridge Street. A large car park comes into view. Cross the car park diagonally right and the Cheese & Grain is a large stone building with solar panels facing you.

Two other meetings of interest

On Thursday 28 January 2016, **Minehead Rail Link Group** is meeting at 7 for 7.30 pm at the Marston Lodge Hotel, St. Michael's Road, Minehead. Further details are available from Alex de Mendoza by email at contact@mineheadchamberofcommerce.co.uk or 'phoning him on 01643 702510.

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways AGM on Friday 29 January at 6 pm in the Halo Café, 141 Gloucester Road, Bishopston, Bristol 7, about 10 minutes' walk from Montpelier station.

The guest speaker is Chris Austin, Head of Railfuture Networks & Infrastructure Group, talking about Reopening Railways. He is co-author of *Holding the Line, How Britain's Railways were saved*, published in 2012. Its sequel, *Disconnected*, which examines the feasibility of reopening about 25 closed routes, was reviewed in the December 2015 issue of *Railwatch*.



A complaint about bus substitution

A Railfuture member from Northern Ireland has written to the Railfuture Severnside branch secretary to share his recent bad experience of bus substitution at Cam & Dursley. Robert Davison, who had been visiting his son at Wotton-under-Edge, wrote:

“I was pleased to see that Cam & Dursley had featured in the Severnside report (in *Railwatch*) and that there was a development plan for the station. However, my recent experience there was not positive.

I only use the station about three or four times a year when I'm visiting my son and his family. I'm based in Tamworth when I come over and this is very handy for the Cross Country service to Gloucester and the change of train for Cam & Dursley. As you will see from my complaint to GWR (*extracts reproduced below*- Ed.), there were what I would consider serious failings in their Customer Care during a “bustitution” on Sunday 13 December.

I'm bringing this to the attention of your Group as there is obviously a move to improve matters at Cam and on the line generally but GWR needs to get its act together when a situation such as I encountered arises at an unmanned station. Fortunately the weather was good or it would have been a disaster !”

Mr. Davison had arrived at Cam & Dursley station in good time to catch his train to Gloucester but, on noticing a coach pull into the station yard, went to the Information Point on the up platform to ask whether trains were being substituted by buses that day. Although he received a prompt response confirming this was the case, the coach pulled away while he was walking down the footbridge ramp. “This was the (first) day of the new Timetable and all the printed information on display at the station referred to the services up to Saturday 12 December. I looked around the station entrance but could see nothing to indicate that there were no trains running that day....What annoyed me was that there was no attempt by the coach driver to check if there was anyone waiting on the platform. In the few minutes I was there, I was in full view under the light of the Information Point and could easily have been

seen....A simple notice board blocking access to the footbridge would have given intending passengers an immediate indication that there was a bus substitution. Rocket science it isn't!"

John Groves, a local Railfuture member, commented: "He has a point. The Information Points often do not display train information but are very good when they do. Most of the blame belongs to the coach driver. I have complained to GWR on one occasion when the driver didn't know the way from Gloucester to Cam & Dursley station. I had to sit behind him giving directions ! The trouble is the coach companies are paid a contract fee and have no real incentive to give good service."

Nigel Bray forwarded Mr. Davison's email to Linda Swainger, GWR Station Manager, Bristol Parkway. She replied that it was disappointing that the bus driver made no attempt to alert Mr. Davison to the fact that a bus replacement was running that day. She promised to raise the matter with First Rail Support to make their drivers aware and to try to improve information at the front of the station so that passengers know where to wait for the replacement bus.

The issue of Managing Disruption is a question in the DfT's Consultation for the new South West Franchise (see page 4). Railfuture has addressed this issue in its response to the 2014 DfT GW Franchise Specification Consultation.

[Portishead Railway progress continues](#)

Contributed by Colin Howells, Vice-Chairman, Portishead Railway Group

Progress continues to be made towards reopening the Portishead line into Bristol and beyond by 2019. Consultation took place during July 2015 seeking the public's views on various aspects of MetroWest's proposed scheme. This round of consultation ended on 3 August with nearly 600 people visiting the exhibitions and more than 800 responding to the online consultation documents. In support of the consultation, Portishead Railway Group delivered 3,000 of their own leaflets around the area, held a "Display Day" in Sainsbury's, had articles published in the local press and promoted the consultation on their Facebook page.

The scheme has been determined to be a "Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project" and, as such, requires a Development Consent Order (DCO). As part of the process to acquire the DCO, the consultation was carried out with local residents, businesses and stakeholders within the vicinity of the scheme to seek their views.

A second round of consultation was due to take place later in 2015 to showcase any anticipated changes and to invite further comment. The scheme includes rebuilding the line between Portishead and Pill, highway alterations to Quays Avenue, installing double tracks through Pill and reopening the former Pill station and car park. There will also be improvements to the track between Pill and Temple Meads and to the signalling.

Over Portishead Railway Group's 15 year campaign, they have often seen progress, only for that progress to come to a stop with either a change of Government or a change in local financial priorities,

but now they believe there is a real commitment by all parties to see the project through to a conclusion with trains running in May 2019.

PRG recently attended a MetroWest stakeholders update meeting where Phase 1 appeared to be a “done deal”, so most of the discussion concerned Phase 2.

Locally the track has been cleared of vegetation twice during 2015 to allow survey work to continue. Drilling has taken place to check the track bed for contamination and to check ground stability. Local highways engineers have been surveying the local road layout in preparations for alterations to Quays Avenue.

PRG are well aware of all the milestones ahead and they will be monitoring the progress of these milestones to ensure that the timetable does not stall at any stage and to ensure that trains are running to and from Portishead in May 2019. For more information visit our website www.portisheadrailwaygroup.org or follow us on Facebook.

South West Franchise Consultation

Railfuture Wessex Branch is producing a unified Railfuture response to DfT’s Consultation on the new South West franchise, which will commence in 2017. Suggestions from Severnside Branch include the following points:

1. Bristol-Waterloo services should be retained and increased in frequency. They offer an alternative to GWR for travel to / from London and the South East.
2. The experimental services recently introduced by South West Trains linking the two railways at Yeovil should be written into the franchise. Better connections are needed at Yeovil Junction, as are morning and weekend trains over the line thence to Pen Mill.
3. Reinstatement of through trains west of Exeter could be achieved without reducing the hourly Waterloo- Exeter frequency, by attaching and detaching portions.
4. More car parking is needed at rural stations. Crewkerne, where the station car park is often full at 08.00, has seen an increase in recorded passenger journeys from 77,000 in 1997/98 to 131,000 in 2013/14. Its catchment area includes much of West Dorset and South Somerset, including Chard (estimated pop. 17,000). The site of Chard Junction station should be safeguarded for reopening in the longer term.
5. The demand for rail services will increase because many young people cannot afford cars or motor insurance but find trains convenient for using hand held devices.

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