

## **Annual General Meeting**

The 2018 AGM of Railfuture Wessex Branch will be held at the Above Bar Church Centre, 69 Above Bar Street, Southampton SO14 7FE, on Saturday 3rd March starting at 1:00pm (arrival and tea/coffee from 12:30pm).

Please note change of date (the meetings room was unfortunately not available on our previously-announced date of 10th March).

To reach the venue, walk up the hill from Southampton Central station towards the city centre, passing the City Hall on your left. Turn right into Above Bar Street and the church centre (which has the appearance of an ordinary shop front) is about 200 yards down on your right.

Our guest speaker will be Phil Dominey from South Western Railway who will tell us about the Company's plans for the new franchise. We will also have the usual review of rail developments around our region and we welcome suggestions for campaigning in the year ahead.

Branch members are eligible to stand for election to any of the committee posts. If you wish to stand, it would be helpful if you could let our Chairman or Secretary know prior to the AGM – contact details below.

### *Chairman's Message*

It's been an interesting year for the railway and quite a busy one for the Wessex Branch committee. From the start of their new franchise on South Western, First/MTR have had to deal with major upgrade work at Waterloo last summer, track renewals in the Southampton area over Christmas, industrial action, problems with rolling stock (particularly the Class 159 diesel units) and a number of infrastructure issues. We may not have been able to do much about the disruptions caused by these events, but we have been actively engaged with the SWR over their draft timetable for Dec 2018 – our committee member, David Brace, worked hard to pull together Railfuture's combined response to the consultation by the due date of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017, so thank you David!

That's not the only consultation we've had to deal with. We've just sent in our comments on SWR's Island Line strategy document and some of our members have submitted individual comments on the Dept. for Transport's Community Rail strategy.



Attention now turns to the Great Western franchise consultation, and we will be submitting our views on the three services that cross into our area: Bristol-Weymouth, Cardiff-Portsmouth/Brighton and Reading-Basingstoke. Meanwhile, the Branch is part way through a complete revision of its Development Plan (or "Wish List" if you prefer) and we will be asking Wessex members for their views once the document takes shape.

👉 **Possible site for Welborne station** *photo: David Brace*

The focus of our campaigning for the coming year has to be a new station for Welborne, serving the proposed 6,000-home housing development to the north of Fareham. We think vague promises of a study simply aren't good enough.

With the proposed redevelopment of Fawley power station site for housing, there's renewed interest in reinstating a passenger service over the Waterside line, and passenger trains for the Ludgershall branch near Andover are also back on the agenda. So there's much to be done! - do please consider if you can spare the time to serve on our committee if only part time to help with one of our campaigns. Meanwhile, if you can persuade a friend or family member to join Railfuture, that would be greatly appreciated.

### Island Line Consultation

*A few extracts from our 6-page response to SWR's recent consultation on the future of the Island Line ...*

"We favour maintenance of infrastructure to national railway standards, acknowledging where necessary the use of lightweight rolling stock, reduced loading gauge and the isolation of Island Line from the mainland rail network. **1938 stock** photo: John Holland ☞



"Eventual elimination of the third rail could be considered when the equipment comes to the end of its useful life. Converting the existing route to tramway operation would be very expensive and would require extensive track work, power supply and signalling, whereas retaining 'heavy rail' requires only incremental work. We consider the guided busway option to be a non-starter because of the narrow, largely single-track route and formation problems. Also guided busways have a poor reputation.

"Revenue protection is currently poor; it should be easier to buy tickets. An increased train frequency would have the potential of attracting more passengers, as would improved promotion of Ryde St John's park and ride. Island Line would benefit from improved marketing at London Waterloo and major stations on SWR. There should be special promotions and the local residents' discount card should have better publicity."

### News in Brief

Hampshire County Council is taking a fresh look at the case for reintroducing passenger trains on the **Waterside Line** from Totton to Hythe, and possibly on to Fawley, where there are plans to bulldoze the disused power station and replace it with a large housing development.

Our freight representative, Robin Attwood, reports that the **Waterside line** continues to be used for freight traffic to Marchwood MoD depot and there have been further freight workings on the **Hamworthy branch** west of Poole. Robin has been working with Railfuture's national Freight Group with a view to supporting Network Rail's plans for additional, full-length freight sidings at **Redbridge** - a decision is awaited from Southampton City Council.

The County Council has secured £6.9m of Government funding for a southward extension of the **Eclipse busway** (which starts near Fareham station) beyond Bridgemary as far as Rowner Road. In the longer term, Railfuture advocates conversion of the busway to a tramway, which could eventually form part of a Solent-wide metro scheme using high-capacity tram or tram/train vehicles. Laying tracks in the road surface would not preclude existing bus services from using the priority route.

In a press release, Network Rail say they successfully completed £8 million of track renewal work in the **Southampton area** on schedule over the Christmas period, adding: "the replacing of worn out infrastructure will mean more reliable journeys for passengers in and out of Southampton, as well as reducing track noise for residents living close to the railway near Northam Junction." In fact, further possessions were needed over weekends in January to complete the work.

Dorset's **Waste and Minerals Plan** makes little mention of rail beyond the safeguarding of railheads such as Wool siding (which remains idle despite costly remodelling work). We'll be arguing for trans-shipment by rail to be a precondition of any further permits for aggregate quarrying, and advocating the transport of Purbeck stone via the Swanage branch.

With encouragement from South Western Railway, **Purbeck Community Rail Partnership** is looking to widen its remit to cover the four main line stations in Purbeck District, namely: Moreton, Wool, Wareham and Holton Heath. The principal aim of the Partnership remains to support the re-instatement of passenger services over the Swanage branch to Wareham, and 2018 should see the appointment of the CRP's first paid officer.

Although encouraged by higher-than-predicted patronage on their Wareham service over a 60-day trial period in the summer of 2017, **Swanage Railway** has just issued a statement regretting that the next stage of the trial (a 90-day service) has had to be postponed until 2019. This, they tell us, is due to the "challenging restoration and upgrade of the 1960s heritage diesel units". Their single-car Class 121 "bubble car" and the 3-car Class 117 unit are being overhauled by Arlington Fleet Group Ltd at Eastleigh.

### Station Footfall

Our illustrious committee member, David Brace, has just completed his annual analysis of station usage data for the 105 stations in our branch area based on figures published by the Office of Rail and Road. He's found that figures for 2016/17 show an average decrease of 1.55% on those for the previous year, our first decline since 2009/10. In contrast, the national average has increased by 0.8%. David points out that figures for individual stations have to be treated with caution, but the aggregated totals across the network do provide a reasonably accurate picture of travel trends. Certainly the industrial action across the Southern network has taken its toll.

All the top ten busiest stations in our area in 2016/17 remain the same as 2015/16, and all but one of them appear in the top 300 busiest stations in the UK. If the three Portsmouth stations (Harbour, Ports & S'sea and Fratton) were combined, the city would rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Wessex area.

The ten least-used stations in our area have shown some minor shuffling in position but still remain bottom of the table; Millbrook has moved out and Warblington has moved in. We're not sure why a drop of 22.3% in passenger numbers is recorded for Holton Heath.

Top 10 stations in Wessex area			
Rank	Station	Total pass	Total int'ch
79	Southampton Central	6.4m	1.07m
84	Basingstoke	5.7m	0.93m
96	Winchester	5.1m	0.09m
182	Farnborough (Main)	3.0m	0.01m
208	Bournemouth	2.8m	0.07m
261	Havant	2.2m	0.30m
280	Salisbury	2.1m	0.24m
284	Portsmouth Harbour	2.1m	0.15m
290	Portsmouth & Southsea	2.0m	0.02m
305	Fleet	1.9m	0.01m

Bottom 10 stations in Wessex area		
Rank	Station	Total pass
2446	Thornford	2544
2443	Chetnole	2598
2351	Yetminster	7190
2326	Beaulieu Road	8858
2284	Smallbrook Jn	12768
2203	Maiden Newton	20714
2163	Dean	25220
2156	Warblington	25932
2147	Holton Heath	26960
2129	Dunbridge	29778

Notes: Rank = Ranking in list of 2560 UK stations. Total pass = total number of passenger entries and exits.  
Total int'ch = total number of passengers interchanging between train services.

### Addressing Poor Performance

South Western Railway (SWR) and Network Rail (NR) bosses were brought in front of the national passenger watchdog, Transport Focus, in January, following poor performance and disruption across the network. TF called the meeting to allow both organisations a chance to account for the problems and explain their plans going forward. The watchdog urged any passengers who had been subjected to delays to claim compensation in order to “send a clear message” to the industry that it needs to improve.

Meanwhile, targeted business cases are being drawn up for eight of the busiest sections on Britain’s rail network as part of the Digital Railway programme. Through a mix of conventional and digital technologies, the DR team hope to find cost-effectively solutions to capacity and performance challenges on the railway. One of the eight routes chosen in this programme is the South West Main Line between Waterloo and Southampton. Once plans are finalised, they will be taken through the appropriate governance channels with the Dept. for Transport and HM Treasury.

### New Life for Old Carriages

Kiepe Electric UK has embarked on the £45m refurbishment of 18 x **Class 442 units** (formerly the Wessex Electrics) at their Eastleigh works. Work includes replacement of the DC traction equipment with modern AC motors and a complete refresh of the interiors. The upgraded units are destined for use on fast Waterloo-Portsmouth services from December 2018.

Meanwhile, Siemens has embarked on a £50m mid-life refurbishment of the **Class 444 and 450 fleets**, promising a “step change for customers”. The refreshed units will be rolled out into service through 2018.

By far, the oldest trains in the national rail fleet are those on the Isle of Wight (the ex-London Transport tube stock dating from 1938, pictured on Page 2). Our region also sees trains from the second oldest fleet on a daily basis: the 19 x **Class 313 units** operated by Southern on their Coastway services dating from 1976. It looks like the 313s will be around for some time yet, as they are receiving C6 overhauls together with door modifications, LED lighting and some accessibility modifications. Perhaps the latter are for those needing to alight quickly to access the station toilet facilities as the 313s have no loos - but that does not stop them from being used on the 80 minute journey between Portsmouth and Brighton!

*If you would like further details of any of the above items, please contact the Secretary.*

### Dates for your diary

**3 March 2018:** Wessex Branch AGM in Southampton. **12 May 2018:** Railfuture national AGM in Edinburgh. **23 June 2018:** Railfuture Summer Conference in Carlisle. **10 Nov 2018:** Railfuture Autumn Conference in Reading. **20 May & 9 Dec 2018:** National Rail timetable change dates.

### Branch contacts

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