

JOHN HOLLAND

It is with deep sadness that we report the death of our Treasurer, John Holland on 24th Jan 2019. John had been undergoing hospital treatment for leukemia over a period of several months. It came as a great shock when we heard that he had been transferred to the Rowans Hospice for end-of-life care.



Photo: No6 Cinema

John Holland was a respected voice of common sense with a real passion for improving public transport and cycling provision through constructive comment. Joining the Railfuture Wessex committee in 2006, he immediately accepted the role of Honorary Branch Treasurer. He could be relied upon to produce budgets, keep our expenditure on track and produce timely, easy-to-audit annual accounts. Also, John helped committee colleagues get to grips with using the website and social media.

When John knew his vicious illness was terminal, he ensured arrangements were made to audit the Branch account and transfer the Treasurer role to others in a seamless fashion, which speaks volumes about his sense of duty and how he liked to do things quietly and well. From his hospital bed, he was delighted to be presented with a Civic Pride award for community service by the Leader of Portsmouth City Council, and was well enough at the time to make a short acceptance speech.

John was only 64 when he passed away. He will be sorely missed.

-CB

Chairman's Message from Bruce Duncan

The railway industry is taking another look at itself in the form of the Williams review, particularly focusing on the current franchising model - Railfuture submitted its initial response in January but there's still more work to do. Meanwhile Andrew Haines, the CEO of Network Rail, is taking us back to the old days by merging NR routes, so Wessex now joins with Sussex and Kent (incl HS1) to form "Southern". It will have a new MD with the Route Directors reporting to the MD. There are to be four other regions: Scotland, London North Western, Eastern, and Wales & Western.

The Rail Delivery Group have also completed their review of the current fares structure with some 55 million fares to consider – many of us submitted our individual comments for consideration. Their principle issues were to find: 1) value for money, 2) fair pricing, 3) simplicity, 4) flexibility and 5) assurance. The results will no doubt be fed into the Williams review as will Network Rail's objectives.

Hopefully South Western Railway will get their rolling stock issues sorted soon. On the 27th February 2019 there were no less than 67 short formations listed on their web site. On the WOE line (ie the West of England line ...although "woe" seems to sum it up!) this has been an issue from last September, with assurances given in December that all was well. But here we go again: more short formations.

By the time our next newsletter is out, maybe we will be able to speak positively about the May 2019 timetable roll out, report on successful rolling stock upgrades and give some hopeful news about the Isle of Wight. From what we've seen so far of SWR's proposed timetable change for May 2019, it's best described as "minor alterations to relieve overcrowding". Thus we can expect some additional trains at busy times as well as longer trains, especially once the newly-refurbished Class 442 units are back in service. There will also be some new journey opportunities on summer Sats/Suns. However, it seems we will have to wait until December 2019 for the promised major recast of the timetable.

Wessex Branch : Annual General Meeting

Our 2019 AGM will be held at the **Discovery Centre, Portsmouth** on **Saturday 6 April 2019**, starting at **2pm**. Doors open for registration and refreshments from 1:30pm. The Discovery Centre is located in St Edmund House at the car park entrance to St John's Catholic Cathedral (address: Bishop Crispian Way, Portsmouth, PO1 3QA). Please do come along and support the work of your local branch.

Our guest speaker is Railfuture's Policy Director, Ian Brown CBE FCILT. Ian has worked for over 40 years in a variety of roles in the railway industry. No doubt you will have read many of his interesting and often thought-provoking articles in successive editions of Railwatch.

As usual, we will be inviting nominations for members to serve on the Railfuture Wessex Branch committee. **Please don't be shy!** If you would like to be considered for a particular role or would simply like further details, do please get in touch with the Chair or Secretary – contact details are given at the end of this newsletter.

Directions to the venue: From Portsmouth & Southsea station exit, turn right towards the shopping centre, then left into Stanhope Road. Follow this road as it curves around to the right, then turn left at the roundabout into Bishop Crispian Way. The red-brick cathedral is on your right. Alternatively, you can walk from the station to the cathedral by going diagonally across Victoria Park.

Teas and coffees will be served at the venue. If you want a light lunch beforehand, we strongly recommend Canvas Coffee, the award-winning social enterprise café in Portsmouth & Southsea station building.

Customer and Communities Improvement Fund

SWR trialled their CCIF scheme on the Isle of Wight and one of several projects funded was the installation of a bus shelter outside Shanklin station, originally put forward by our committee member (and Ventnor resident) Stuart George. From 2020, the fund will extend to the whole of the SWR network with £10.5m made available for projects suggested by community groups. For details, contact Veronika Krcalova, the CCIF Manager at SWR, via: veronika.krcalova@swrailway.com.

Welborne and Allington

By now, you will be aware of our campaign for a new station adjoining the site for the new 6,000-home development at Welborne north of Fareham. Towards the end of 2018, the developers presented a revised planning application and, although there was now land reserved for a station (at the "Option 4" location we favoured) there was no commitment to actually build the facility. We argued that a basic 5-car station platform could be constructed on the single track line at reasonable cost, and that crucially it should be finished in time for use by the first residents of the community. Before the deadline of 28 Jan 2019, we sent in a further submission to Fareham Borough Council setting out these points and calling for the building of Welborne station to be a pre-condition for the granting planning permission.

Further along the line near Eastleigh, there's a local campaign to focus new housing on a former industrial site at Allington rather than on greenfield sites to the north of the borough so that, as at Welborne, the new residents could benefit from having a railway station on their doorstep. With the possibility of two new stations on the line, there's the obvious concern about the impact on the current train service. Some reinstatement of double track and junction improvements at each end of the line would be needed if there were to be a stopping service interleaved with the hourly "fast" trains - the much-discussed Solent Metro initiative would deliver such improvements. In the meantime, we agreed that the Allington proposal has equal merit to Welborne, and therefore that we could give it our qualified support.

West of England Line

SERUG, our affiliated rail user group on the Salisbury-Exeter line, is working with Network Rail and South Western Railway to initiate a *CMSP process for track redoubling through Whimple and in the Tisbury & Dinton area, coupled with the reinstatement of a second platform at Tisbury. Hopefully the new streamlined CMSP process will ensure that the scheme receives swift approval and funding can then be found to deliver the much needed improvements.

*CMSP is Network Rail's new *Continuous Modular Strategic Planning* approach which circumvents the initial stages of the arduous GRIP process (with which we're all familiar!) and is not tied to specific control periods. By the way, we're just entering control period CP6 which runs from 2019 to 2024.

Other campaign issues on the route include step-free access to the platform at Yeovil Junction, better access to platforms at Gillingham and more car parking. The additional "fast" train service that ran just before Christmas shows what can be achieved on the route when they pull out the stops: Waterloo-Sherborne in 1h 47m, a journey that normally takes 2h 12m!

Railfuture Wessex Branch members are welcome to attend the AGM of the Salisbury-Exeter Rail Users' Group on 26 Mar 2019. The event is to be held at the Raleigh Hall, Digby Road, Sherborne DT9 3PP. Entry from 16.30; start at 17.00 hrs. The guest speaker is Ian Warmesley of Modern Railways. Andrew Ardley of SWR will be in attendance to answer questions.

Entry: £10 (this includes SERUG membership for the year 2019-20).

Robin's Freight Roundup

On the **Waterside Line**, the tanks traffic has ceased but there are infrequent weekday Departmental workings to Fawley Esso and return to Totton Yard. There are two or three workings on Saturdays from Southampton to Marchwood Freightliner terminal, each train consisting of 400 tons of empty flats. There is, on average, one 800-tonne train between Bicester MoD and Marchwood MoD every ten days, out via Reading West & Basingstoke and return via Eastleigh, Salisbury, Swindon & Didcot (somewhat circuitous!). There's also an occasional working from/to Kineton MoD.

Southampton Eastern Docks sees daily car-train workings and empties from/to Morris Cowley and Jaguar Land Rover. There is regular mixed daily traffic at Berth 109 in **Southampton Western Docks**. Also **Southampton Container Terminal / Millbrook** continue to generate considerable daily traffic.

Micheldever Oil Sidings sees Civil Engineering trains starting and terminating there. At **Eastleigh**, there's considerable daily traffic to and from the East Yard and sometimes movements to and from Eastleigh Works and Traction Maintenance Depot. **Fratton Freight Siding** still has no traffic movements, and the **Hamworthy** branch is now out of use. Although the **Winfrith** nuclear site is rail connected, the next 2-year phase of reactor decommissioning will sadly see radioactive waste taken away by road haulage.

Robin Attwood has put forward the use of the Hamworthy and Marchwood branches and perhaps the

Fratton Freight siding for holding freight to relieve motorways (including the M3) in the event of HGV queues resulting from a messy Brexit. Meanwhile David Brace is investigating a report by the UK Major Ports Group that cites the line through Bramley as being a major freight bottleneck.

Unhelpful Announcements

A couple of members report that announcements of service disruption at terminal stations like Portsmouth Harbour are sometimes unhelpful, stating only that a particular departure has been “cancelled”. Often the cause is the late running of an incoming service leading to the train being turned around short of its final destination, eg at Fratton. In this example, inconvenienced passengers at both Portsmouth Harbour and Portsmouth & Southsea should be told to take the next train to Fratton so that they can join the affected service. **Please let us know if you experience problems of this kind on your travels so that we can provide evidence to the train operator.**

Other News

At **Dorchester West** station, a planning application has just been lodged for a simple pedestrian ramp leading from the north end of the northbound platform. It will provide a step-free route from the station towards the nearby Dorset County Hospital. The current route involves a flight of steps and a busy road crossing.

Committee member Alan Mayes wrote to South Western Railway seeking an explanation as to why the stairways of the new footbridge at **Fareham** station had been taped off to prevent access whereas the lifts remain in use. He was told that the Station Management team were looking into the matter ...but in the meantime the stairways have reopened. It's worrying that there appear to be structural issues with this relatively-new footbridge. Alan's photographic record shows considerable rusting.

Dates for your diary

The next meeting of **TravelWatch SouthWest** will be on **Weds 20th March 2019** in Taunton. Then on **Tues 26th March**, there's the **Salisbury-Exeter Rail Users' Group** AGM at Sherborne – see Page 3 for details. And of course there's our own **Wessex Branch** AGM at the Discovery Centre, Portsmouth on **Sat 6th April 2019** from 2pm – full details are given on Page 2.

The AGM of **Railfuture** will be held at the National Centre for Sport in Cardiff on **18th May 2019**. Railfuture's **Summer conference** will be held in Darlington on **22nd June 2019**, and the **Autumn conference** is a bit nearer home: in Bristol (nr Parkway station) on **21st Sept 2019**.

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If you received this newsletter by post and have since acquired an internet connection, please let us know your email address as this will help us to reduce the cost of sending out newsletters – *thanks*.

Branch contacts

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