

railfuture

Sevenside Branch Newsletter No. 47 Autumn 2021

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome and should be sent to the Branch Secretary, Nigel Bray.
Email: nigel.bray2@railfuture.org.uk (note the email address include '2')

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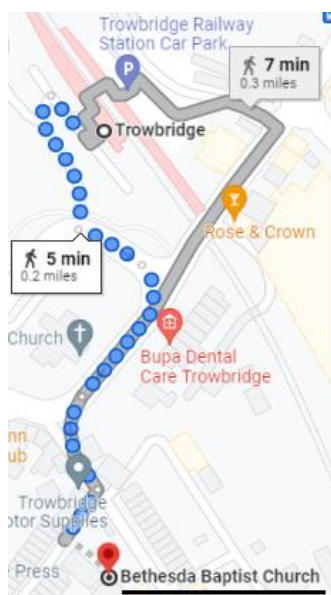
More information about campaigns is available on the Railfuture national website.

Branch meetings at Trowbridge, Kemble and Bath

We have three meetings in rapid succession, one because of the urgent situation concerning South Western Railway's Bristol-Waterloo service; and the other two which had been planned to take place in 2020 but were postponed because of the pandemic. Should the Covid situation worsen significantly, please check the branch page on the Railfuture website (www.railfuture.org.uk/Sevenside+Branch) or with the Secretary (mobile 07817 367065) to confirm whether the meetings are going ahead.

Meeting at Trowbridge, Wednesday 20th October 2021

This will take place at **Bethesda Church Hall**, Gloucester Road, Trowbridge BA14 0AA at 7pm (room will be open from 6.30pm). Its purpose is to campaign to retain the Bristol-Waterloo service, which SWR is proposing to withdraw in December. If the service is axed, not only will Bristol and Bath lose a useful alternative to GWR's Paddington route but Keynsham, Oldfield Park, Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge would lose all or nearly all of their direct trains to/from London. See: <https://bethesdabaptistchurch.co.uk/>



If coming by train, leave the station and cross Stallard Street to be on the same side as the Rose & Crown and some cafes. Walk away from the Rose & Crown so that a terrace of stone houses, including a BUPA dental practice, is on your left and Holy Trinity Church is on your right. At the roundabout, turn left so that Newtown Social Club is on your left. Just past Unique Dentures on your right, turn right into Gloucester Road. Bethesda Baptist Church (see photograph above) is then immediately on the left.

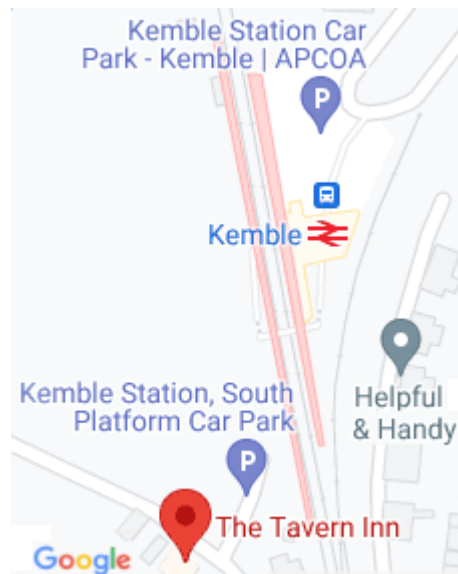
If you are coming by car, please note that space is not guaranteed.

Thanks are due to Graham Ellis for arranging this meeting in a short timescale. Five other campaigning groups will be represented (see flyer at the end of this newsletter). We hope that our Wessex Branch, which led the unified Railfuture response to SWR's recent timetable consultation, will also be represented. The response can be viewed on the Railfuture website.

Meeting at Kemble, Wednesday 27th October 2021

The venue is the **Tavern Inn** (GL7 6AX), opposite the down (Gloucester-bound) platform of Kemble station, at **3pm**. Our hosts are offering light refreshments (e.g. pizza) at no charge to attendees, although all drinks and any items from the normal menu are chargeable.

The promoters of Cirencester Community Railway will give a presentation on the plan to reopen the Kemble-Cirencester line as Very Light Rail. The project has successfully applied for further investigation of its Strategic Outline Business Case under the Government's Restoring Your Railway scheme. It is also supported by Cotswold District Council. Railfuture supported the plan in our response to Gloucestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan Review in 2020.



See <https://www.arkells.com/pub/the-tavern-inn-kemble.htm>

Meeting at Bath, Saturday 20th November 2021

The venue is the Pulteney Room, **Manvers Street Baptist Church, Bath** (BA1 1JW) a few minutes' walk from Bath Spa station, at **2pm**.

If coming by train, go straight out of the station's main exit through the taxi rank and cross the road to pass the Royal Hotel on your right.



See: <https://manversstreetbaptistchurch.com/>

Our guest speaker is **Chris Warren**, a Saltford Parish Councillor, whose Council is a prime mover of the campaign to reopen Saltford station, between Bath Spa and Keynsham. Reopening is also supported by Bath & North East Somerset Council and Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP for North East Somerset.

Report of Railfuture Severnside Branch meeting at Yatton, 18th September 2021

The Saturday afternoon meeting at the Strawberry Line Café on Yatton station was our first Branch meeting since the one we held at Stonehouse in November 2019, because of the pandemic lockdowns. The café is open seven days a week. A raffle raised £13 in aid of Branch funds and the prize donated by Branch Chair John Hassall was won by Arnold Berman.

Among topics discussed was the possibility of Branch Zoom meetings, which Wendy Thorne believes would produce higher attendances. Graham Ellis said Melksham Transport User Group could set up a Zoom meeting for Railfuture. He queried the lack of a Branch AGM since April 2009. Wendy replied that there was no legal requirement for any branch AGM to be held annually, only the (national) Railfuture Ltd AGM.

Graham also led a discussion on Wiltshire, where the biggest issue was the future of the Bristol-Waterloo service. He said DfT did not want competition between GWR and SWR on Bristol-London travel. He believed that clearing train paths between Bristol and Westbury was also intended to enable extension of MetroWest to Westbury. He awaited an answer to his Freedom of Information request on why the Bristol-Waterloo service was being withdrawn. GWR also planned to withdraw some trains from December, including the 11.11 Westbury-Southampton stopping train.

John Hassall referred to the lack of bus information at railway stations and vice-versa. David Smith said Cam & Dursley Transportation Group would raise this issue at an imminent meeting with Gloucestershire County Council's Integrated Transport Group.

Alan Hayday led a discussion entitled "Mind the gap" between the status quo and reopening railways. He believed the Government considered rail infrastructure to be too expensive. Railways were needed because of the poor ride quality of buses. "We need buses but rail is better for long distances." In rural areas, he favoured single track lines built to tramway standards, including lower platforms. Referring to the tragic 2016 derailment on the London Tramlink, (at Croydon), he said its trams did not have the "dead man's handle" which would have applied the brakes if a driver fell asleep or was incapacitated. In reply to Arnold Berman, he agreed that over-engineering of rail projects on Health & Safety grounds was making them unaffordable. Alan doubted whether electric cars would become universal.

John Hassall commented that Go-op Rail was hoping to use battery powered rolling stock for its proposed Swindon- Bishops Lydeard service, planned for 2022.

David Smith provided evidence of passenger numbers reviving at Cam & Dursley station. That morning he had counted 110 cars in its car park, compared with 30 a month earlier and only about 15 up to about 2021. Parking is free of charge at the station.

The meeting seems to have been considered worthwhile by the 11 members who attended but the noise from frequent passing trains made some of us wonder whether it might not be better to hold any future meeting at the café indoors.

New Chairpersons for Severnside Branch

Wendy Thorne (seen next to Railfuture President, Christian Wolmar, right) and **Bruce Williamson** will be temporarily co-chairing our Branch with immediate effect. They succeed John Hassall, who has held the Chair since 2012. John arranged a Railfuture stand at the West Somerset Railway Association Steam Fayre in 2018 and 2019; raffles at Branch meetings to raise funds for Railfuture and has put the case for better public transport on Somerset West & Taunton Council, to which he was elected in 2019. He also organised an enjoyable visit from Taunton station to the Seaton Tramway in 2013.



Wendy is a Railfuture Director and topped the poll for Director vacancies at our national AGM in Birmingham in July. She is Treasurer of Portishead Railway Group, which is affiliated to Railfuture, and runs her own accountancy business.

Bruce has been Railfuture's national media spokesman since 2008 and is involved with ten radio stations in the Bristol area. He produces press releases, has given numerous radio and television interviews (see photo below) got Railfuture on to the front pages of a number of newspapers and will shortly be giving a talk to Slough & Windsor Railway Society.

See: www.railfuture.org.uk/Railfuture+in+the+news



The next Railfuture Severnside Branch AGM is likely to be held in March or April 2022. The location has yet to be decided but John has suggested that Bridgwater Railway Club, close to the station and the location of at least one previous AGM, would be worth considering.

[SWR Bristol-Waterloo through services withdrawal - public meeting in Trowbridge](#)

See the next two pages for the flier, which has been produced by the organisers of this event.

Next Railfuture Severnside newsletter will be number 48 in spring 2022.

web: www.railfuture.org.uk
www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk www.railwatch.org.uk

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PUBLIC MEETING – WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2021 AT 19:00



Western Region

Great British Railways
DfT Action 2021

Withdrawal of through Railway Passenger Services

The Secretary of State for Transport has given his consent to his own department's proposals to discontinue through passenger train services from London to the following stations:

TROWBRIDGE BRADFORD-ON-AVON
OLDFIELD PARK KEYNSHAM

These services will be withdrawn from 12 December 2021

The terms of the Minister's decisions and can be read at

<http://www.passenger.chat/25503>



Want to help us challenge this? Public meeting:

Trowbridge, 20th October 2021 at 19:00

Bethesda Baptist Church, BA14 0AA

Missed the meeting? Still use the URL!



railfuture



West Wiltshire Rail Users Group



Please join us in Trowbridge!

"The Waterloos" – the background

* **South Western Railway have been running up to five trains a day on their Bristol - Bath - Salisbury - London (Waterloo) route. They provide** a much loved and well used service from Bristol Temple Meads and Bath Spa to SouthLondon - Clapham Junction (busiest UK junction) and Waterloo (most passengers of any UK Station). **They provide** the only through services from London to Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon and Oldfield Park, and all but one services (which leave Paddington before 06:30 in the morning) to Keynsham. **They provide** the only direct trains from Woking, Basingstoke and Andover to West Wiltshire, Bath and Bristol.

* **In spite of the clear strong love of these trains, and their heavy use in a growing rail leisure market, we have learned that they are to be withdrawn from 12th December 2021.**

* **These services are busy.** On days when they are cancelled, other trains on the same line can overcrowd to squash levels. To make the same journeys "across" Salisbury without these trains means a wait of 50 minutes in one direction, and 59 minutes in the other direction. **There are no alternatives that connect. They are not "duplicate" trains. They do not provide excess capacity.**

* There was no consultation on this. Even with the Department for Transport's own "Transport Focus". **They write "We believe you should carefully consider deferring this proposal to December 2022, to give time for proper consideration of passenger feedback and how needs can be met in future."**

* A Freedom of Information request to learn how the decision came about has told us that **data is being withheld** for a further period while a "complex public interest test" is applied - the effect of which will be that the data is not available **until conveniently too late to do anything about it.**

These are not little local services - they are long distance trains that provide key connectivity. **Rail User Groups from along the route are coming together to raise awareness of the big difference these services make. We ask for them to be retained for 2022 at prePandemic levels, with a view to providing a well tuned and appropriate service in future years.** Please do not kill a successful service and lose passengers and goodwill for a year in which rail leisure use is growing.

Railfuture (Sevenside Branch)

The Two Tunnels Project

Great Western Coffee Shop Forum

West Wilts Rail User Group

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

TravelWatch SouthWest

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Sevenside+Branch>

<http://www.twotunnels.org.uk/waterloo/index.html>

<http://www.passenger.chat/25503>

<http://www.wrug.org.uk>

<https://fosbr.org.uk>

<http://travelwatchsouthwest.org>