

WECA Meeting 28 June 2017 - Statement on Local Rail Services

I wish to submit this short statement to the meeting in relation to provision of local rail services - in particular to future developments.

It might seem slightly esoteric to consider long term planning for rail in the area when it appears, from recent events (such as the Portishead line cost escalation), that even near future projects are struggling to get off the ground. However we hope and a fairly confident that somehow schemes such as MetroWest Phases 1 and 2 will be accomplished.

So where do we go from here? There are a considerable number of closed and abandoned stations that could be re-furbished and brought into use. We (FOSBR) have submitted these in response to the Joint Transport Study and they are also included in our 'FOSBR Rail Manifesto 2017'. Re-opening stations such as St Anne's, Charfield, Saltford, Coalpit Heath and Chittening could greatly increase the capacity of our local rail system to transport commuters around the area - for business, work and leisure.

Some members of FOSBR have in fact gone to various old station sites to check whether re-opening would be possible. In many cases, the answer is 'yes' although the reasons for re-opening do differ. Active planning should be started now to consider their viability in more detail. At the very least, these sites should be safeguarded for possible future rail use.

We consider that rail provides the spine of public transport provision in our area, with good bus links to the individual stations. A comprehensive network of stations and lines around the area will help considerably to reduce congestion on our roads - by reducing non-essential vehicles and so freeing up the local roads for those people and businesses who absolutely need to use them.

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