

FOSBR AGM, 22nd January 2011

Chair's Report

Firstly I would like to welcome you to this years AGM. Thank you for coming. Last year we were in the GW Social Club at Temple Meads but sadly since then the Club has had to close and so we find ourselves without a regular venue for our meetings. However, this has lead to creativity and we have held meetings in different places this year, including in Yatton. Hopefully this year we will be visiting different places in the area.

FoSBR is a campaigning organisation for rail travel in the region. Later we will update our constitution to put us on a legal footing. It has been designed to reflect the changes in the organisation since it changed from the Severn Beach Railway to Suburban Bristol Railways. Perhaps it is not a priority for most people but it does make us a recognised group.

Campaigning has continued throughout 2010 through lobbying, publicity and action. I would like to thank especially Julie Boston, Tina and Brendon Biggs and Rob Dixon for their phenomenal input in a myriad of ways – without their input we would not be able to influence planners, councillors and other politicians. We will later hear a report on their activities: thank you.

I do want to thank your committee which meets every 6 weeks or so and especially I want to thank Eric who has been our newsletter editor this year and has done a great job. However, Eric is the EDITOR but has also had to be reporter, typesetter and photographer. He needs help. I therefore appeal to members (and perhaps our rail industry members can help) to send in articles and information to Eric.

Tony, our hard working Treasurer is also our Secretary and Membership Secretary (if he turns up at a meeting we are quorate with him alone!). Thank you Tony. Admin is not everyone's cup of tea!

Another job that has been done again this year is that of the stall. Lionel and Peter have been stalwarts spending several Saturdays at various community events around the area publicising FoSBR. Lionel also distributes 10000 time tables twice a year, a job he does without complaint or even a murmur.

FoSBR has not been alone in is campaigning. We have worked together with the Transport for Greater Bristol and we have had the support of ASLEF and the RMT. It is important that we are not ill informed but that we understand and work with the rail industry to help politicians to understand and find ways to improve rail locally. Dave Wood has been a very active member of both RMT and FoSBR, writing his rail column each week for the Bristol Evening News – great stuff. BEN has also given rail a lot of support in its columns too.

We have been involved in many activities, ranging from making submissions to all 4 local council transport plans, to WEP, Network Rail and to local MP's. We have worked hard for the Portishead reopening which continues to make some forward progress before being becalmed in red tape etc. Electrification to Bristol (and S Wales) including local lines to WsM and Yate along with the requadrupling of Filton Bank from Parson St to Parkway is currently being pursued; and we are also pressurising the BCC to conclude its protracted negotiations with FGW to keep and extend the SB line time table – this has been an astounding success and should be given pride of place in the transport plans of Bristol: trains have been proved to be a major way of shifting travel habits here in Bristol. Our rail system has been systematically neglected for decades and we have the highest fares in the UK the highest price rises in tickets and the oldest trains. It simply is not good enough for the present economic situation to be blamed for this neglect. FoSBR therefore calls on local councils, WEP Network Rail and central Government to get real and deal with the transport issues by improving rail, with new trains, new stations, reopened and new lines as well as a programme of systematic electrification and relaying of tracks to allow an intense rail service in Bristol and region. Ebbw Vale has not only proved that rail is the way ahead but is now undergoing studies to expand with new branch lines, stations and services being proposed. If it can be done 20 miles east of Bristol, why not here? I know that I am not the only one fed up with the 'it's impossible' attitude. Where is the can do attitude of Brunel?

I mentioned Ebbw Vale. Can I urge you to come to our next meeting on April 8th which will be at the Halo restaurant on Gloucester Road, close to the Arches. There will be a buffet from 6- 7 pm followed by a talk on the Ebbw Vale line reopening by David McCallum who was involved in its planning and execution. It should be fascinating. I also hope to organise a trip to the line this spring to go and see this amazing revival.

In the meantime, let us renew our commitment to campaign for the rail network of Bristol and to promote its use and development. FoSBR depends on its members. PLEASE get involved if you are not already; encourage your friends and neighbours to use the trains in Bristol; get them to join FoSBR - We may be small, but like a terrier, we can bite hard. Bristol deserves better.