

What's on

Saturday 9 August

FOSBR stall at Yatton Flower Show, Church Hall, Yatton between 2pm - 4.30 pm

Sunday 31 August

Stapleton Road Station Open Day and FOSBR stall between 12 noon - 5pm

Saturday 13 September

FOSBR has invited Severn Beach and Pilning Parish Council to co-host an evening film show at Severn Beach Community Hall. We await a reply

16 - 22 September

The European Mobility Week, culminating with 'In town without my car' day on the 22nd. This is publicised in Travel Better Live Better and published by the four local authorities. For further information, visit www.mobilityweek-europe.org

Saturday 11 October

FOSBR Meeting, starts at 6pm. Alex Gordon, Bristol RMT Regional Secretary, and Bernard Kennedy, Bristol Aslef Branch Secretary will speak on trade unionists and the struggle for affordable, reliable and frequent rail transport.

Walk from Temple Meads Station down Approach Rd to metal rail on right, Great Western Staff Club, down steps to the lobby. Meeting ends for 8.13 pm train.

Also taking place...

Severnside Saunters. Walks from stations until Saturday 27 September. See www.fosbr.org.uk for further information including times and descriptions of walks

Community Rail Festival and Community Rail Awards. Showcasing and rewarding best practice and achievement on community railways. The 2008 Community Rail Festival and Community Rail Awards will be held in Devon & Cornwall during September. For further information, visit the Association of Community Rail Partnerships' website at www.acorp.uk.com

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Newsletter

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

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Expansion and decline

In the past few months FOSBR has been campaigning in two vastly different areas. In June, proposals drawn up by FOSBR member Eric Wildman and supported by the rest of the group appeared on the front page of the Evening Post. More recently, however, we have been objecting to a turnback signal at Clifton Down which would allow trains to reverse here and return back to Temple Meads.

The half-hour train campaign showed that focussing our resources and energies on one objective can achieve quick results. Even though the new timetable on the Severn Beach Line is still imperfect, it represents an improvement on the past. "This is why I have proposed the reopening of Ashton Gate and extending Severn Beach Line trains," said Eric.

A reopened Ashton Gate, provided it is given an adequate service, has the potential to rival Filton Abbey Wood and Clifton Down as the most used suburban station. Numerous facilities such as parks, community facilities and a university campus are within walking distance. This is an up-and-coming area of Bristol poorly served by public transport in general.

Trains to Ashton Gate could be operated as an extension of the Severn Beach Line, which would also serve two other south Bristol stations already in situ and with other services; Bedminster and Parson Street; linking the north and the south of the city.

Of course FOSBR wants to see all closed stations in Greater Bristol reopened, and development of this station, situated on the line to Portishead, would bring the reinstatement of passenger services there one step closer.

At a FOSBR meeting earlier in the year, we asked ourselves what we had achieved. As well as the recognition of the role we played in securing service enhancements and increased public awareness of local railways; came a reply few of us had thought about: "the fact that the Severn Beach Line is still running."

Many FOSBR members will never forget the days of "managed decline" and service changes in the past. There are now almost double the number of

trains on the Severn Beach line than there have been in a number of years, so anything other than positive changes are unthinkable for some.

The turnback signal at Clifton Down was originally proposed in Network Rail's 2007 Business Plan, listed as pending third party funding. In a reply to a letter sent to Cllr Mark Bradshaw in June, FOSBR received confirmation that Bristol City Council intends to provide some funding to enable this signal to be provided.

The Line Development Plan listed two main reasons to provide a turnback facility at Clifton; improved reliability, by enabling late trains to terminate early instead of running all the way to Avonmouth or Severn Beach; and provision of an enhanced service between Temple Meads & Clifton Down.

I am sure that some will be wondering what this has to do with a decline in service. In 2004, a report for the Government produced a plan to completely withdraw passenger services north of Clifton Down, but highlighted the fact that the principal barrier to implementation of the recommendation is the present "nature of the signalling." If this principal barrier is removed then FOSBR believes there is nothing to say that this proposal will not be implemented in the future.

A full analysis of the Clifton Down Turnback is available for download from the FOSBR website.

More passengers now using local rail

39,600 passengers travelled on the Severn Beach Line between 26 May and 22 June 2008 according to First Great Western ticket data - the highest since records began.

In the past 10 years, the number of rail passenger journeys into Bristol has grown in excess of 70% - the second highest in the country and almost double the national average.

Passenger volumes at some local stations now outnumber those in other cities where a better service is provided. There were almost 100,000 passengers using Stapleton Road station in the 2006/07 year.

Congestion and road accidents cost the Bristol economy £1 million and £1.8million each week. Good quality local rail services mean modal shift, less economic damage and lower carbon dioxide emissions. Road transport is responsible for 80% of transport CO2 emissions.

Timetabling issues

We have highlighted a number of minor changes in the current timetable which will make a difference and we hope will further improve the service.

There is currently a 60 minute gap before 08.03 and a 90 minute gap after 18.04 in trains departing Temple Meads for the Severn Beach Line. We have called on Bristol City Council to ensure that these are resolved for the December Timetable.

A large number of passengers use the line to commute to Bath, connecting at Temple Meads. As well as this, better connections at Temple Meads with the Severn Beach Line to longer distance services are required. During the day, the number of useful connections with trains to London and the North has decreased from hourly to every 2 hours with the advent of the new timetable!

Sunday afternoons and evenings are some of the busiest times of the week for long distance trains - anyone who has stood on the forecourt at Temple Meads on a Sunday will realise how busy it is. Well timed connections and adequate promotion means long distance travellers can start or finish their journey on a local train.

Travellers pleased with new trains at Stapleton Road & Lawrence Hill

Since December 2007, passengers at Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill have had their service improved beyond recognition with the stopping of trains between Parkway, Filton Abbey Wood and Temple Meads.

These trains provide direct links to destinations such as Bath and Weston-super-Mare and now up to four trains per hour to Temple Meads, including the Severn Beach Line call at Stapleton Road.

Better information for passengers by end of year

Following the success of Bristol City Council and the West of England Partnership in being given funding by the Department for Transport for station improvements, passengers will benefit from real time information screens on station platforms on the Severn Beach Line by the end of the year.

Also included in the package is direct contact to First Great Western's control centre which will be able to provide passenger information and assistance in an emergency and station accessibility improvements.