

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR)
***DRAFT* Minutes of Annual General Meeting**

(to be ratified at next AGM)

14th February 2020

Randall Room, All Saints Church, Alma Vale Road, Clifton, BS8 3ED



1. Welcome from the Chair (Rob Dixon)

The Chair welcomed members, speakers and visitors to the meeting. There were 40 attendees.

2019 has been another busy year for FOSBR. We've had much to celebrate, including the bedding in of the four-tracking on Filton Bank, and the inclusion of an expanded local rail network in the latest Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP).

FOSBR has engaged with communities at Coalpit Heath, Portishead, Thornbury and Lockleaze, and with passengers at Filton Abbey Wood. We've taken part in Bristol Clean Air Day, the Severn Vale Festival the ZeroWest Winter Conference and attended many other meetings. We have responded to several consultations, including the Joint Spatial Plan, JLTP4, the Williams Review and GWR timetable reviews.

The MetroWest project is progressing, although it is frustrating that delivery dates continue to slip, the latest target being 2024 for the Portishead Line. Half-hourly services between Bristol Temple Meads and Yate are due by 2022, with possible extension to Gloucester.

By the time of the next FOSBR AGM, we hope that Bristol will have its first new railway station in 24 years – Portway Parkway is supposed to be built and operational by December 2020.

We continue to campaign for local trains to all local stations every 30 minutes and the FOSBR Plan for Rail. This year we have also updated our website, so you can now find out about what we do more easily.

A [FOSBR 2019 Roundup](#) was distributed to attendees.

2. Speaker: Professor Stuart Cole - Cardiff Metro

Our main speaker this year was Prof Stuart Cole, who gave us a fascinating insight into the Cardiff Metro Project.

Much of the South Wales railway network, the “Valley Lines”, survived Beeching and continued into the 1980s because it served coal mines. Cardiff also benefits from a system of governance that has made it easier to unlock the funding and commitment needed to allow this scheme to make progress.

The previous 2003 franchise had no growth built into it and no provision for new rolling stock. Current trains are old and ill-assorted, the journey times are too long, the frequencies are bad and the trains are seriously overcrowded. But roads into Cardiff are heavily congested and people are returning to the trains in desperation. And passenger numbers are rising.

Cardiff is growing, with new shopping centres and centrally-located facilities such as the Millennium Stadium, together with new offices which have gravitated to the Welsh capital. In terms of jobs, Cardiff Centre has grown by 82% over the last 20 years. About 100,000 people come into the Cardiff City boundary on weekdays, of which 80,000 travel by car; on top of this there are many people travelling within the City. Buses do not attract passengers because they get stuck in the traffic.

Transport for Wales have an ambitious scheme. It involves electrification, new trains and a core 12 trains-per-hour service from Pontypridd to Cardiff. In contrast with most other areas of Britain, Transport for Wales are reducing fares by 10% to stimulate demand. There is commitment to build six new stations in the Cardiff area, with 3 more under assessment.

It's not all been plain sailing though. Key routes will not be electrified due to lack of funding, so the new

trains need to be heavier less efficient tri-mode (diesel-battery-electric) units. Bus-rail integration has suffered with the demolition of Cardiff's central bus station eight years ago; its planned replacement is too small. Opportunities for bus to Metro interchanges are also being missed.

Key slides from the Professor's talk can be found here: <https://fosbr.org.uk/cardiff-metro/>
Many thanks to Professor Cole for his presentation and for allowing us to reproduce the slides.

3. Questions & Discussion

The chair highlighted the difference in political structure between Wales and Bristol, and the impact of devolution.

The audience was encouraged to find Professor Cole during the break for questions and discussion.

4. Regional updates

(a) Donald Davies – Leader of North Somerset Council

Don updated the meeting on the progress of the Portishead line where the Development Consent Order has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. A concern is that hourly services for Portishead and Henbury are insufficient and will not achieve modal shift.

The chief executive of Bristol Sport has asked (Bristol) council chiefs to work towards reopening the old Ashton Gate station and move the Metrobus stop named Ashton Gate closer to the stadium, but have been unable to get any commitment. [Note: In the discussion later in the meeting, David Redgewell asked if FOSBR can put on more pressure in respect of Ashton Gate station.]

Don spoke of the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4) which contains many road-based elements. He suggested that once the JLTP4 is passed, then work can begin on a JLTP5 that may better address the climate emergency.

The response from the planning inspectors on WECA's Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) means that the document will need review before progressing to a Mayoral Spatial Strategy.

Don recommended Workplace Parking Levy fees to better control city centre parking. There was comment from the floor that such levies punish the workers, but consensus was that dedicated parking spaces are usually reserved only for higher paid employees, and also the cost is usually borne by the employer.

Finally, Don noted that a lot of money was spent locally in anticipation of electrification, eg, track lowering under Keynsham bridge, so we must hope that electrification may yet come our way.

BREAK

(b) Nigel Bray – Railfuture

Nigel spoke of improving station environments for passengers. Many platforms at local stations are open to the elements such as Filton Abbey Wood and Platform 3 at Bristol Temple Meads (partially).

Nigel thanked Tony Lloyd for his work as treasurer of Railfuture Severnside Branch and presented him with 2 books by the celebrated author, Nigel Bray: "A Wiltshire Railway Remembered: The Devizes Branch" and "Eastleigh to Romsey and Salisbury".

(c) Keith Walton – Severnside Community Rail Partnership

Keith spoke of the "Secret Garden" Community Food Growing project at Avonmouth station (in collaboration with Incredible Edible), which has produced fresh food for the Community Centre's weekly Soup Club and Lunch Club, and a donation to the North Bristol Foodbank.

Keith referred to the recovery in passenger numbers on the Severn Beach Line, and made the point that passenger confidence re-bounds when reliability improves.

In 2020 there will be station improvements at Stapleton Road funded from the Community Infrastructure Levy funds. Stapleton Road has a new Customer Information System. Policy now requires that CCTV is introduced before cycling facilities such as racks are provided.

There will be new CIS screens at Bedminster, and new CIS screens at Nailsea and Backwell.

Keith believes that the May 2020 timetable will “largely address” the problem of cross-city services which terminate early at Filton Abbey Wood rather than proceeding to Bristol Parkway. This will be achieved by stopping some of the Gloucester trains at Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill. [Note: In the discussion later in the meeting, David Redgewell mentioned that platforming at Bristol Parkway is proving tight.]

For a full report of SCRIP activities last year, their February 2020 progress report can be found on: <https://www.severnside-rail.org.uk/progress-reports/>

(d) **Bernard Kennedy - ASLEF**

Bernard recently celebrated 40 years of train driving. He has driven freight trains up and down the line to Portishead and hopes to see the return of passenger services both to Portishead and the Henbury Loop.

Bernard commended Tim on his recent article in FOSBR Newsletter 102 <https://fosbr.org.uk/news/newsletters/> which describes the glacial GRIP process.

Bernard mentioned the necessity of the Worle-Weston redoubling project. This scheme is listed in the JLTP4 as an “Early investment scheme under development - Infrastructure to support service improvements including double tracks on the Weston-super-Mare loop line and reinstating the southern chord”

There are issues with several of the rail franchisees, Bernard is concerned that the current franchising system is not fit for purpose.

Bernard handed over a cheque for £100 from ASLEF to FOSBR as recognition of the work done in promoting local rail.

5. Formal business (Rob Dixon & Tony Lloyd)

(a) Constitution

Rob outlined changes to wording of the FOSBR constitution – the new wording can be found here: <https://fosbr.org.uk/constitution/>

Acceptance of new constitution was proposed by Julie Boston, seconded by David Redgewell and passed with 25 for and 0 against.

(b) Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of previous AGM held 18th January 2019 can be found [here](#).

Acceptance of minutes was proposed by Tina Biggs, seconded by Tim Weekes and passed with 25 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions.

(c) Treasurer’s report

The treasurer’s report for year ending 31 December 2019 is online [here](#). 184 private members and 8 organisations gave money to FOSBR last year (2019). For 2020, 98 members have paid up, not yet counting those who (re-)joined on the night. Tony thanked Lionel White for his diligent auditing.

(b) Elections

The committee posts are as follows:

- Chair – Rob Dixon
- Secretary – Andy McGillivray (Andy was unable to attend the AGM)

- Membership Secretary & Treasurer – Tony Lloyd
- Press (including social media) – Carol Durrant
- Campaigns Organiser – Tina Biggs

Additionally in 2019, the committee co-opted two members who will continue to serve:

- Data Analyst – Terry Miller
- Webmaster – Tim Weekes

The committee was proposed as a group by Julie Boston, seconded by Martin Garrett, and re-elected unopposed.

6. Discussion

Julie Boston: In 2020, FOSBR celebrates its 25th anniversary. Julie suggested that an event be held on the 2nd Sunday of the summer service at the Miles Arms in Avonmouth. The chair said that he would look into the dates for this.

Theresa McGill: Theresa is a member of the Bishopston Ukelele Group. The group helped FOSBR celebrate four-tracking and half-hour service petition in 2019 and is keen to perform at a FOSBR event in 2020, possibly at the Miles Arms.

Rail fares: Theresa mentioned that she has achieved good cost-savings on fares from the RailEasy website. Other split-ticketing websites use similar algorithms.

Website: Theresa was also complimentary about Tim's new website, for instance, the article on HS2. Theresa suggested that the website show more photos of passengers, and people stories generally. Theresa suggested that email alerts be available to alert people to new website content. Webmaster Tim responded that he will try and vary the content, and that he was thinking of email alerts.

[Post-meeting note: Tim has created email alerts as per Theresa's suggestion]

Tim stressed the importance of the website as a way of increasing membership and reach generally. He cited the recent Boris Johnson funding announcement for Bristol East Junction. On that day, 220 people visited the FOSBR BEJ webpage for further information.

David Redgewell: David spoke of the transfer of bus powers from South Glos, BANES and Bristol City Council to WECA and highlighted that North Somerset must be encouraged into WECA.

Bus interchange: David spoke about the deterioration in bus service from Bristol Parkway to Cribbs Causeway, although MetroBus can now pull into Parkway station. The chair noted the lack of bus/rail integration in South Gloucestershire, and said that he, Julie Boston and Martin Garrett were going to check the interchange situation in Filton Abbey Wood and consider whether laminate signage would help.

Consultations: There are current consultations on the West of England Bus Strategy and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Both consultations can be found at below link, and require response by 15th March 2020.

<https://travelwest.info/projects/transport-consultations>

Unfortunately discussion time was limited, so the Chair thanked attendees.

Meeting closed 9:30pm