

FOSBR: Minutes of Annual General Meeting 20th January 2017 at Alma Church Hall, 29 Alma Road, BS8 2ES

1. Notes from the Chair (Rob Dixon)

The Chair welcomed members and speakers to the meeting. There were 49 attendees.

2016 has been another busy year for FOSBR.

Ongoing campaign work involves regular submissions to consultations, questions and statements to council and (West of England Partnership) WEP meetings, production of thrice-yearly newsletter and attendance at conferences such as TravelWatch SouthWest.

Bristol Green Capital 2015 (BGC) came to an end but one legacy is FOSBR's continuing participation in BGC Partnership Gatherings.

FOSBR ran a travel survey in January with 800 participants, the results of the survey being passed on to FirstBus and GWR.

FOSBR attended the Mayoral Hustings in April where the eventual winner, Marvin Rees, signed the FOSBR transport pledge for a cleaner and less congested city.

FOSBR campaigned hard with local groups for the Pilning footbridge to be retained during the electrification work, but the bridge was ultimately removed in November. Email exchanges with Network Rail since that time have revealed that Network Rail saved £658,000 by not replacing the footbridge but future replacement (requiring the GRIP process) would cost in the region of £3-5m.

Looking forward, FOSBR have challenges ahead: Filton Bank four-tracking is underway but Bristol East junction remodeling work is unfunded

On a positive note, the WEP Joint Transport Plan (JTP) for period 2011-2026 is ambitious and Bristol City Council are funding a rail study.

The Chair emphasised that FOSBR's role is to continually remind decision makers to prioritise public transport.

2. Speakers

Mark Bradshaw – Cabinet Member for Transport & Infrastructure (Bristol City Council - BCC) and member of the WEP Joint Transport Board (JTB)

Mark has been a councillor for 11 years, and has held the transport portfolio 3 times. He and FOSBR tend to "agree more than we disagree".

Mark stated his belief that there is still huge potential for rail in Bristol as evidenced by the overcrowding on the 18:03 from Bristol Temple Meads to Clifton Down this evening.

Mark wants to see more frequent services and better quality trains and considers the original subsidy of the Severn Beach Line one of the best public transport investments made by the council.

Public transport planning is about trying to retrofit existing city as well as ensuring appropriate public transport infrastructure is in place prior to new developments.

Mark gave the meeting an overview of current rail projects.

Four-tracking

4-tracking is ongoing - part of Filton Bank work is for flood resilience

Bristol East junction

Network Rail are funding £15m development costs, otherwise unfunded

MetroWest

Portishead Line – there are engineering challenges and environmental impact challenges, eg rare Bristol whitebeam

Ashley Down/Hill - will move into Grip 3 in 2017 (original station site)

Portway Park&Ride

Portway P&R is at GRIP 3 with anticipated delivery in 2019

Electrification

Bristol Temple Meads has been treated as a branch line. Mayor Rees and Mark Bradshaw are seeking clarity on which elements of electrification are progressing. Electrification to Bristol Temple Meads will now be delivered by control period 6 – 2020-2024

Trains

The cascade of DMUs from Thames Valley is beginning. One165 Turbo is already in our area. It has not yet been re-furbished and is being used for staff training. Lineside clearance is underway to facilitate use. Further units will arrive in July (1) and September (1).

Ticketing and fares

GWR are piloting a new Smartcard fare collection system in July .

There have been no Severn Beach Line fare increases since 2007. GWR are proposing fare rises. Mark Bradshaw would like 2-stage increase, eg, summer then new year 2018 whilst freezing weekly tickets and PlusBus

Note: GWR are proposing following fare rises: 33% or 50% for both zonal single and return fares; 56% and 58% for monthly and annual season tickets. Under this proposal, weekly tickets would no longer offer any saving.

Accessibility

FOSBR were invited to Accessibility Workshop on the instigation of Mark Bradshaw. This workshop ran at a time when accessibility improvements at Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill were to be achieved as part of electrification. Mayor Rees has written to Rail Minister to clarify what funding is now available for accessibility improvements at Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill.

Parson Street is currently very inaccessible

Current transport projects total a budget of £800m.

Keith Walton - Severnside Community Rail Partnership (SCRP)

Community Rail Partnerships are set up offer more cost-effective mechanisms of delivery for small-scale projects on railway lines that are designated as community rail schemes.

In 2016 SCRCP delivered a "new station" at Severn Beach with a new shelter, fencing and interpretation panels.

The cost estimates for the work were around £150k but SCRCP has delivered the changes for £70k. The re-vamp of the station won the ACORP Most Enhanced Station Buildings and Environs award sponsored by Railway Heritage Trust.

In 2017 SCRCP are working at Avonmouth. The northbound platform will get a new shelter and fencing to cut off access to derelict land west of the station which had been used for drug dealing.

SCRCP have 82 station volunteers and links to numerous community groups at Severn Beach, Redland, Clifton Down, Keynsham in Bloom, Nailsea and Backwell (art project)

SCRCP are supporting the new group Friends of Parson Street, who would like to stop more trains at Parson Street, particularly after football matches at Ashton Gate and would like extra carriages to be laid on for these trains.

SCRCP have designed a new resource pack – Discover the Severn Beach Line

This pack (and supporting website) is for families with school age children. The pack is currently undergoing testing.

A new ticketing system for schoolchildren being trialled at Cotham School. On a trial basis, children using the train will be able to purchase, through the School, a discounted photo ticket attached to a lanyard. This will enable those who participate in the scheme, which is linked to a good behaviour code, to be easily identified on the train. It will thus enable train conductors to concentrate on collecting fares from other passengers, knowing that the children have pre-paid.

Together with GWR and UWE, SCRCP are providing the opportunity for low-income communities to have a "Day Out by Train" in the West of England. So far 1,700 disadvantaged adults have travelled on a trip to destinations such as Weston-super-Mare and Bath.

In an ongoing programme, SCRCP offer a group train trip for Year 6 children at any primary school within walking distance of a (wider) Bristol station.

December 2018 Severn Beach Line timetable: Filton Bank should be four-tracked by this date so the feasibility of introducing a half-hourly regular interval service is being assessed and costed. As this will require an extra train there is an issue of what extra revenue will be generated and how the cost will be paid. (Note: MetroWest Phase 1 to Portishead is currently scheduled for 2020.)

The Severn Beach Line grows in ridership by 10% year after year and is the top growing community rail line in the country.

There will be two 165 Turbos in the area from July – they will be used on the Severn Beach Line. A third train is likely in September and should be used on the Bristol Parkway-Weston service.

The mural on Constable Road bridge will be demolished as part of electrification. Keith asked for help in identifying the artist or community group involved as engineers can save the pieces.

SCRCP will publish their new progress report in early February and it can be downloaded from their website: <http://severnside-rail.org.uk>.

Bernard Kennedy - ASLEF

Bernard had been asked to update the meeting on two issues: Southern rail dispute and rail freight.

Bernard's take on the Southern rail dispute is that the dispute is not about rosters or money, it is about safety. Driver-only operation (DOO) was introduced on some trains in 1987. Southern are seeking DOO on 10/12 coach trains with 1100–1200 passengers. In Bernard's opinion the Southern Railway franchise operation has been understaffed since 2001.

The rail freight situation in the UK is not good at the moment due to drop in coal and other cargo. DB Cargo (previously EWS/DB Schenker) is losing £1.5m a week and many redundancies are being made. Freight is moving onto roads as new distribution depots are set up to use motorways, for instance, Morrisons and Asda distribution depots.

Bernard also commented on the inadequacies of aspects of rail privatisation - if a franchise fails, reverts to government. Also the GRIP process is unwieldy and could be reformed.

Bernard emphasised that the affiliation between ASLEF and the RMT and FOSBR should continue. Julie from FOSBR will address the 2017 ASLEF conference in Bristol. Bernard presented FOSBR with a cheque from ASLEF for £300 "We believe in you".

3. Questions to Speakers

There was only a short slot available for questions to speakers.

Question 1

North Bristol is clogged up with cars and parking, Henbury schools and staff and patients at Southmead hospital adding to the problem.

Answers

Better travel planning should be made available to staff and patients. There are 25 bus services per hour to Southmead hospital.

There should be better bus links to Parkway (some direct buses but other buses require 15 minute walk from Filton Avenue).

Metrobus may help in future when routes are extended.

Transport campaigners have not given up on Henbury Loop (Mark Bradshaw also has long-term hopes for this).

Question 2

Why have the problems on MetroWest Phase 1 to Portishead been discovered so late in the day, such as the bats and bees and difficulty with curves?

Answer

GRIP 3 is more complex as this line includes improving an existing freight line and building a section of new track.

Break

4. Updates from across the region

Glen Burrows, Friends of Bridgwater Station

Bridgwater has a population of 41,000 residents and is growing fast. A travel survey has indicated the need for a more frequent train service, both southbound to Taunton and northbound to Weston and Bristol.

Friends of Bridgwater Station are also campaigning for better station facilities. Disabled access across the track is currently via a road bridge some distance away from the station. GWR have indicated that they will extend ticket office opening hours, the ticket office currently closes at 14:15pm.

Olga Taylor, Save Pilning Station

Olga described the difficulty in dealing with Network Rail during the campaign to save the Pilning footbridge and the lack of democracy and accountability in the decision making process. Commuting to work from the Pilning area is difficult (in her case to London).

Save Pilning Station will continue to press for footbridge replacement.

Don Davies –North Somerset District Councillor, Pill & Easton-in-Gordano

Don described the causes of the delays in MetroWest Phase 1 to Portishead. Some of the delay is due to the twin bureaucratic processes in upgrading a freight line and laying new track, ie, DCO + GRIP.

There are also engineering challenges:

- Pill underbridge needs replacing and double-tracking but Pill viaduct is sound
- Pill station access needs to be made disabled friendly
- The speed limits in the gorge have to be increased to 50mph; the freight currently travels at 30 mph. The track was built to the Brunel 7-foot broad gauge.
- Access to Ashton Vale Industrial Estate opposite Ashton Gate stadium would be severely limited by level crossing operation when the passenger services start. There has been consultation on a new access road from the A370 near the Park & Ride.

The original budget of £68m will be re-calculated and the new sums released by the end of January. It is likely that the project will need more government funding and FOSBR support is welcomed to press for this.

Nigel Bray, RailFuture Severnside

Nigel discussed the deferral of electrification to Bristol Temple Meads. Some of the railway magazines have been full of doom and gloom about electrification but Nigel is feeling more positive after a meeting with a Network Rail senior sponsor for electrification between Swindon, Bristol Parkway and Bristol Temple Meads.

Pre-requisites for local electrification are:

- Four-tracking Filton Bank– underway
- Bristol East junction re-modelling – unfunded
- Bristol Area Signalling Renewal & Enhancement (BASRE) – completion of scheme to provide AC-immune electrification-gauge compliant signalling system (including 4-tracks of Filton Bank) & re-location of signalling centre to Didcot

Electrification delay has released resources to complete the above-listed projects. March 2024 is deadline for electrification to BTM

A subsequent priority for electrification will be Bristol Parkway to Birmingham. Didcot-Oxford electrification, Oxford re-modelling and Gloucester re-signalling have lesser priority.

By December 2017, the electrification of Paddington to Didcot will result in a cascade of Turbo 165 DMUs due to EMU replacement.

From 2018 the Hitachi IEP bi-mode trains will be delivered. The bi-modal trains running via the Berks & Hants (Reading-Taunton) line to the far South West need the insurance of electric power for part of the journey (hence electrification as far west as Newbury) because of the finite capacity of their fuel tanks.

5. Questions

Question 1 (John)

Stapleton Road station is invisible from Stapleton Road. Even bus drivers do not know station is there. Can better signage be erected?

Answers

Rob Dixon – Interchange improvements are an important priority for FOSBR

Tina Biggs – There is a Sustrans project focused on transport interchange and timetabling. Sustrans have funding for integration improvements around MetroBus and MetroWest. FOSBR are involved in the meetings for this.

Dave Redgewell– There are FirstBus and DfT initiatives to look at Travel Plans in Bristol area, ie, total multi-modal journey plans.

Question 2

There is a poor Sunday evening service on the Severn Beach Line. The last train from Bristol Temple Meads departs at 17:53. The questioner lives in Easton and to reach the eastbound bus services it is necessary to walk 15 minutes to Old Market via not a particularly nice route. Otherwise the walk to Stapleton Road takes 30 minutes.

Answer

FOSBR are keen to focus campaigning on the priorities of local rail users and service gaps such as this are one of those priorities.

Question 3

There are often problems with bicycle capacity on the Severn Beach Line. Technically, the bike carriage can take 2 but often the on-board train staff use their discretion and allow up to 6. Occasionally bicycles are turned away. What can be done?

Answer

FOSBR are making enquiries regarding the bicycle capacity of the cascaded Turbo 165s.

Post-meeting note: A 3 coach 165 seats around 275 seats (200ish in a 150); a 2 coach 165 around 186 seats (140ish in a 150)*

*Numbers approximate because some trains formerly had 1st class, which has been down-graded. There is currently no separate bike section/folding seats on these trains - GWR are looking at possible modifications.

Comments

Dave Redgewell commented that pressure from campaign groups such as FOSBR is important on many fronts. Improvement works to Keynsham had an initial budget of £70k but this was upped after pressure and eventually the station upgrade cost £1.5m.

Dave also commented that FOSBR should keep an eye on Patchway station as there is a risk of a Pilning-type outcome – closure by stealth. FOSBR may need to defend Patchway and other local stations.

Decision making has to an extent been re-centred to the minister and the DfT. Diversity Impact Assessment work is due at many Bristol stations and pressure such as mayoral pressure is needed.

Dave commented that with devolution and the MetroMayor election, power will be shifting away from Bristol City Council to the Combined Authority. FOSBR need to keep an eye on this.

6. Treasurer's Report

- Current account balance at end of 2016 was £863.
- There are currently 187 private members, and 10 contributing organizations: ASLEF, Bristol Civic Society, Bristol Cycling Campaign, Bristol Pubs Group, Cotham Labour Party, Friends of Bridgwater Station, Henbury Community Council, Pilning and Severn Beach Parish Council, Railfuture (Sevenside), RMT.

Note: The "Treasurer's report for year ending 31st December 2016" was distributed with the agenda and can be found at https://fosbr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/20170120_agm_treasrep.pdf

7. Minutes from the previous AGM (29th January 2016)

Minutes from 2016 AGM were distributed for review.

Proposed by: Tony Lloyd

Seconded by: Tina Biggs

8. Elections to the Committee

There were no new nominations for the committee. The committee remains unchanged.

9. Motions for FOSBR AGM

The agenda contained 3 motions for the meeting to discuss. There was discussion around the motions which resulted in re-wording. The re-worded motions can be found at end of minutes.

Motion 1: Fair Investment in the West of England

Discussion centred around timelines, bus/rail integration (particularly at Filton Abbey Wood) and disability access.

Re-worded motion votes: For: 27; Abstention: 2

Motion 2: Fare rises on the Severn Beach Line (proposed by WEP Friday 13th January 2017)

BCC were not consulted on this. JTB and SCRCP consulted (Keith Walton had left the meeting so could not share the SCRCP viewpoint.)

Votes: For: 28; Abstention: 2

Motion 3: Support for We Own It and Let Bristol Breathe with donation of £50 to each

We Own It

Votes: For: 26; Against: 3

Let Bristol Breathe

Votes: For: 28; Abstention: 1

The Chair thanked attendees and caterers.

Meeting closed 9:30pm

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR) Resolutions for AGM (AMENDED)

Friday 20 Jan 2017



1. Fair Investment in the West of England

Preamble

FOSBR wants to see fair investment in public transport for the West of England. While we welcome the ambition of the local authorities' joint transport study, we are concerned that government has ignored this region's transport needs for too long. East Bristol junction is unfunded and threatens MetroWest; electrification has been delayed or possibly cancelled. This seems short-sighted. The City Region of Bath and Bristol is the only area outside London that is a net contributor to the Treasury. MetroWest is vital and welcome but is insufficient. We need a comparable service to the other core cities where some rail services are every 15-20 minutes, and transport systems (often including trams) are integrated. We can only look on with envy.

FOSBR AGM Resolves: *FOSBR calls on our MPs, mayors, and local councillors in the immediate term to press the government to obtain a date for the electrification of Bristol Temple Meads and in the interim to fund and deliver East Bristol Junction, MetroWest Phase 1 and 2, and the Temple Meads Spatial Plan.*

In the longer term, we also urge MPs to press the government to fund the West of England Joint Spatial Plan and Joint Transport Study, with local rail as a backbone for the region, including the Henbury Loop and five new stations (Horfield, St Anne's, Saltford, Ashton Gate and Charfield) and to include our FOSBR MetroWest Phase 3 proposals for five further stations (Coalpit Heath, Chittening, Uphill/Locking, Corsham, and Long Ashton), as well as replacing the footbridge at Pilning and improving the access to stations (rail/bus interchange, disabled access and signposting).

We invite our representatives to meet with the Department for Transport and report back within the next six months.

2. Fare rises on the Severn Beach Line (proposed by WELEP Friday 13 Jan 2017)

Preamble

FOSBR notes the proposals for fare rises on the Severn Beach Line: 33% or 50% for both zonal single and return fares; 56% and 58% for monthly and annual season tickets; that weekly tickets no longer offer any saving. Whilst we recognise

that prices have been unchanged since 2008, these are steep rises that will most affect those on lower incomes who are more likely to buy daily or weekly tickets.

By raising fares government, GWR and the local authorities risk reducing passenger numbers and the attractiveness of the line. The West of England authorities should celebrate the fact that Severn Beach Line fares are low and promote social equality and decreased road congestion.

Great Western Railway and the local authorities claim that these fare increases will help pay for as yet unnamed rail improvements. They are proposed to take effect at the same time as new rolling stock is introduced, which implies a service improvement linked to fare rises.

FOSBR AGM Resolves: *FOSBR urges GWR to delay any fare increases until the proposed smartcard scheme is introduced in Sept 2017, as FOSBR anticipates that the income will rise considerably due to improved fare collection. Should the proposed fare increases occur FOSBR wants to see real improvements (not existing planned changes) that show progress towards MetroWest. As a minimum we would expect improvements to the current lamentable service to St Andrews Road and/or Severn Beach (to enable better commuting to industrial sites), and the gap in the timetable between the 20.03 and 21.37 departures from Avonmouth to Bristol to be filled.*

3. Support for We Own It and Let Bristol Breathe

a) FOSBR supports the valuable work We Own It does to alert the public to the issue of public ownership, as the most efficient use of government funds and organisation.

b) FOSBR supports the aims of Let Bristol Breathe, by committing to campaigning for rail and for electrification of regional and local rail lines.

FOSBR AGM resolves: FOSBR to give a donation of £50 to both We Own It and Let Bristol Breathe