



## **1. Welcome from the Chair (Rob Dixon)**

The Chair welcomed members, speakers and visitors to the meeting. There were 33 attendees. A [FoSBR 2021 Roundup](#) had been circulated with meeting papers.

### **Celebration**

December 2021 saw the introduction of a half hourly service on the Severn Beach Line, a long-term FoSBR campaign. We marked this with a trip to Severn Beach, attended by the cabinet members for transport from Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

### **Interchanges**

We have discussed Filton Abbey Wood bus/rail interchange improvements with Steve Reade, South Glos Cabinet Member for Transport. The recent consultation on [number 2 bus route](#) demonstrated little thought for bus/rail interchange. FoSBR will campaign on this with local authorities, GWR, First Bus and TfGB.

### **New stations**

Work has started at Portway P&R. We await the outcome of the Secretary of State DCO examination for Portishead. We continue to campaign for stations that are desperately needed, but not yet on WECA plans. For Lockleaze, FoSBR have produced campaign postcards, run stalls at Lockleaze events and held meetings with councillors & Darren Jones MP, who described the need for Lockleaze station as a “no-brainer”.

### **Other campaigns**

More double-tracking on the Severn Beach Line would increase resilience, and facilitate further frequency improvements. SevernNet produced an ambitious draft transport charter recognising the need for better public transport to serve Severnside, including the potential of Pilning station. FoSBR need to support organisations such as SevernNet in bringing their plans to fruition.

### **Risk of cuts**

DfT have told all rail companies to make cuts of 10% across the board. There is a risk of cuts to services and jobs as well as plans for new infrastructure being delayed. We are concerned that this is being driven by the Treasury who are micromanaging the railway.

## **2. Speakers: Jane Jones and Ian Mundy from GWR**

The GWR slide pack can be found [here](#).

### **Jane Jones – Head of Public Affairs, GWR**

#### **Covid-19**

- pandemic passenger numbers were at 5%, recovered to 76%, then down to 40% during Omicron
- leisure, weekend and local suburban travel have fared best (although Bristol East Junction engineering made it difficult to measure Bristol trends)
- long-distance commuter market slower to recover
- Omicron led to significant staff absence, sickness, self-isolation “pingdemic”
- January 2022 temporary timetable with minor reductions, with protection of key worker and education services
- post-Omicron, post-Plan B restrictions, restart recovery and aim for full timetable by end February

#### **Engineering**

- railway work has to be done in order, ie, 4-tracking preceded Bristol East Junction which completed in August 2021
- Bristol Rail Regeneration: Network Rail (NR) had a budget of £140m for Bristol East Junction

- NR have a budget of £40m for Bristol Temple Meads roof renewal and station re-wiring, due to complete in 2023
- Bristol Temple Meads eastern entrance work will be ready prior to opening of University of Bristol campus
- Portishead – Jane acknowledged that the delay in DCO decision is a worry but remains positive – a decision is due in April, in the meantime NR cannot do anything
- Malcolm Parsons was previously Industry Programme Director at NR, and since October 2021 has taken on a dual role as Interim Head of Capital Delivery at WECA, bringing rail expertise to heart of WECA – this should help with Portishead

### **Severn Beach Line**

- New Severn Beach Line timetable has increased frequency with earlier start, later finish
- GWR work with SevernNet and others trying to make the timetable fit better with shift patterns
- Jane acknowledged that reliability easier with fewer passengers, but the new timetable has better turnaround times, and fewer turnbacks have been needed
- Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> saw 100% of SBL service arrive on time, ie, 0 minutes late – this is the level of service GWR want
- Turbo trains are gradually being removed for internal refresh of carpets, paint, seat coverings – 2 cars first, then 3-cars

### **Smartcards & marketing**

- from April, Bristol will have a “Pay As You Go” smartcard
- passengers will tap in/tap out, and get cheapest value, similar to TfL Oyster
- smartcard will work out cheapest fare over multiple journeys, including Freedom Travelpass fares
- see the area on map (see slide pack) which corresponds to Freedom Travelpass area
- smartcard is linked to bank details, will also give delay-repay notifications
- readers being installed across network
- the card cannot yet be used on buses, but that is the WECA aspiration
- Omicron delayed the start of regional marketing, to destinations such as Bristol Light Festival
- there will be door drops and leaflets
- smartcard and marketing designed to encourage modal shift back to rail
- smartcard website will be updated mid-March with the new PAYG functionality:  
<https://www.gwr.com/your-tickets/choosing-your-ticket/smart-tickets/touch>

### **Upcoming improvements**

- Bristol Clean Air Zone due summer 2022 – working with BCC to promote rail as viable alternative
- PlusBus tickets are paper only – GWR are developing digital version
- there will be covered cycle parking at Avonmouth and Severn Beach with associated CCTV
- better bus integration at WSM, Yatton, Worle funded by North Somerset Council
- new waiting shelters, seating, wayfinding at Parson Street, Stapleton Road, Severn Beach, Freshford, Nailsea & Backwell, Lawrence Hill, Yate and Oldfield Park funded by “Access for All”
- GWR support FoSBR’s campaign for bus stops closer to stations – there are good initiatives out there, eg, Bus Back Better, Bus Service Improvement Plan
- budgets are tight, and funding is going to be difficult, but there are still opportunities.

### **Future of the industry**

- GWR has been under Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA) since early-Covid which is now extended until June – we are not under a franchise situation
- Jane emphasised that there would not be a railway without EMA bailout, the cost of EMA to central government has been £70m a week for some time
- with passenger numbers at 76%, revenue is at 65%, GWR would not have survived without EMA
- GWR are applying to DfT for a direct award to start 1<sup>st</sup> June for 6 years under National Rail Contract
- NRCs include Service Quality Regimes, similar to Scotland, e.g., punctuality, vandalism monitoring
- GWR are working with Great British Railways Transition Team (Williams-Schapps Plan for Rail) leading to increased Track & Train “one railway” working but GBR legislation not yet been passed
- investment is going to be tight, difficult to move as quickly as we would like, no massive subsidies year on year
- need to build back custom, and GWR needs FoSBR and others’ help to encourage rail travel

## Ian Mundy – GWR Project Manager for Portway P&R

Ian previously worked as Dartmoor Route Project Manager that resulted in re-opening of Okehampton station to daily services. On the day of the AGM, Ian started his new role in Bristol as “New Infrastructure and Delivery Readiness Manager” which covers both new stations and new routes.

### Station build

- Ian emphasized the importance of working closely with funding partners and Network Rail.
- Portway P&R build contracted to Dyer & Butler by NR
- GWR involved from early in GRIP/NR Programme of Works process, for instance, NR lay the platforms but GWR install the ticket machines, so don't want to dig up newly laid surface for cabling.

### Station service

- the station will benefit from the increased ½ hourly service to Avonmouth
- the train service aims to be complementary to bus service
- the train service aims to also serve local residents (like Okehampton), not just park&ride car drivers; GWR are setting up a working group for this purpose
- current timetable has passive provision for Portway P&R so trains will likely arrive early at Avonmouth or Shirehampton
- there is no precise opening date, other than summer.

### Station design

- station will have two entrances (north and south). The south entrance will be brought into use when station opens but will see greater use when car park extended, as planned by Bristol City Council
- customer facilities will include waiting shelters, help points, ticket machines, smart ticket readers, Wi-Fi, customer help points, public announcement system, induction loops and CCTV coverage.
- the operational length of the single platform will be 126m long and 3.3m wide, allowing a 5-car train of 23m (eg, Turbo) formation to call.
- station will be fully accessible and PRM (Persons of Reduced Mobility) compliant.

### Engineering works

- Network Rail will be doing engineering works between Saturday 19th and Sunday 27th February 2022, which is half-term week. They will be completing Bristol East Junction improvements by replacing track on the relief lines from Bristol Temple Meads to Filton Abbey Wood.
- during this week, engineers will also relocate a signal (which protects the level crossing) from the south to north side of the line at Portway Park and Ride station to aid with station despatch. They will also work on the concrete platform foundations. Additional work will be carried out in the Clifton Down Tunnel to improve drainage.
- there will be no services on the Severn Beach Line, and trains will not call at stations between Bristol Temple Meads and Filton Abbey Wood. A rail replacement bus service will be in operation and rail tickets will be accepted on scheduled local bus services.
- full information about train service alterations can be found at: <https://www.gwr.com/travel-information/travel-updates/planned-engineering/bristol>
- Portway Park and Ride facility will remain open throughout the work, with Park and Ride buses operating as usual.

### Q&A

AP: Over £4m to build Portway, wow! Are we permitted to have a high level breakdown of these costs? Ian replied that it is not an expensive station, as stations go. A small brook runs alongside the railway, so stabilisation works are needed with short bridges between the platform and the car park. Cost of signals relocation is also a factor.

Carol D: One thing not covered in GWR update, what is likely to be included in May & December timetable changes in 2022, ie, increased frequency to Gloucester or Westbury?

Jane replied that normally timetable planning would be further advanced for May 2022, but Omicron has delayed decisions. Timetable meeting is due at end February. Timetable planners have had many more temporary/emergency Covid timetable changes than the normal twice a year process. \$\$ GWR did not get a chance to run the December 2021 timetable for long, that may roll over beyond May. GWR want a reliable railway that passengers return to, they want to protect service improvements and high-use services. Increased services to Gloucester/Yate are likely to be the next MetroWest deliverable, ahead of Bath/Westbury, then Portishead/Henbury. Updates will be shared with stakeholders.

Barbara S: Can discount railcards be used with Pay As You Go smartcards? Post-meeting note: Jane clarified the position after the meeting – all Railcards (other than Two Together) will give a discount on the smartcards. From mid-March, there will be a website page setting out the benefits, showing the map and offering more information.

Dave R: I hear Henbury station is on a flood plain, adding to cost of parking and bus interchange? Ian answered that both Henbury and North Filton are still within GRIP 1-3 awaiting planning permission. Drainage has been an issue at Henbury. Jane added that these MetroWest schemes that are already funded are likely to progress, so Bristol is better placed than some regions.

Rob D: Why have GWR declined to stop extra services at Pilning? Jane answered that, unless a requirement to do this is written into Service Level Agreement or National Rail Contract, GWR will not be stopping extra trains at Pilning. The stops would not be commercial and, due to mainline location, would slow down the South Wales services where much investment has gone into speeding them up. Jane suggested leveraging the improved Severn Beach bus service with better bus connections to serve local villages and Severnside businesses.

Peter T: Bristol to Pilning is a much shorter travel time than Bristol to Severn Beach. If trains stopped there, people would use it. The idea of a bus shuttle around the industrial area, from one station to the other, would then be viable.

Jane suggested that, in a world of reducing budgets, a campaign focus where FoSBR & GWR could more align would be electrification to Bristol Temple Meads, both via Bath and via Filton Bank.

### 3. Tim Weekes from FoSBR: [FoSBR Plan for Rail](#)

The Plan for Rail slide pack can be found [here](#).

Tim Weekes is on the FoSBR committee and is the FoSBR webmaster. He also liaises with Bristol Civic Society through their Transport and Placemaking Group and represents FoSBR at the Sustainable Transport Network

#### What is FoSBR Plan for Rail?

- FoSBR Plan for Rail evolves according to whether we have local support for a station opening/re-opening and also in view of post-Covid initiatives like Bus Back Better.
- backbone of sustainable transport system
- a turn-up-and-go (every 15 minute) service, with good links to bus, bike, walking and any future mass transit system
- ideal distance between stations 800-1km, similar to gap Redland-Montpelier or Shirehampton-Portway P&R – this means that people only have to walk 400m to local station.

#### Is it realistic?

- railway corridors are a massively under-used asset – owned by railway
- compare these dedicated corridors with limited road width and the difficulty of bus/bike segregation
- some routes have capacity, others require intervention, eg 4-tracked Filton Bank enables Lockleaze
- many of the desirable interventions are already being sought by WECA & NR:
  - Severn Beach-Henbury Loop chord north-east Holesmouth Junction
  - 4-tracks between Parkway and Yate - Bristol-Birmingham Corridor Strategic Rail Study
  - 4-tracks between Temple Meads and Parson Street - Bristol West Capacity Enhancement

#### How much work is involved?

- more double track needed on Severn Beach Line for 15 minute service– Narrowways to Montpelier or Clifton Down
- passengerisation of Yate-Thornbury
- passengerisation across Filton Diamond from Filton North – Parkway
- passengerisation of Hallen Marsh-Henbury
- capacity improvements on Bristol-Bath corridor to enable St Annes and Saltford
- electrification is needed, mostly overhead 25kV:
  - Bristol TM - Bath - Chippenham
  - Bristol TM – Birmingham
  - Bristol TM - Exeter
  - local lines - battery or overhead?
- some improvements are straightforward, some less so

### How much will it cost?

- simple single-platform station such as Portway P&R - around £4m
- two platform station - around £10m
- Bristol East Junction - £132m
- Filton Bank 4-tracking - £126m

### Q&A

Carol D: Are most households in Bristol really within 3km of a station?

Tim W: used “Google measure” tools to assert this - even in south/east Bristol where railway lines are now bike paths. But his key point is, 400m is walkable, but 3km is not for many people.

Rob D: A chord from Severn Beach via Brabazon to Parkway would enable services from places like Yate and South Wales to Severn Beach, possibly with station at Chittening. This service could be a game changer for the distribution parks. Thinking of the difficulty of increasing service across St Andrews Road due to Port access concerns across level crossing, Parkway to SB could provide “Henbury Loop without a Loop”, but would need regular enough services Av-SB and Henbury-SB to make a journey with a change of trains viable for passengers.

Gavin S: FoSBR 15 minute metro-style service aspiration is great. All other cities do mass transit and rail planning as a block, Bristol not yet. Dave R has reported from WECA today that there are plans to tunnel from Bristol Temple Meads to Henbury (plans as yet unclear). What would FoSBR attitude be?

Tim W: we do not yet know what WECA are specifically proposing. All heavy rail lines in Bristol are used by freight, which does not sit well with light rail.

Rob D: we need a proper transport authority that integrates current bus-rail, let alone LRT-rail.

Tim W: some stations easier to integrate bus-rail than others, Parkway and Filton Abbey Wood are some way from main roads, Clifton Down is screaming to be a transport hub, Portway P&R will be great.

Gavin S: Would FoSBR add Clevedon-Yatton to Plan for Rail if there was local support? Tim replied, yes, as track mostly across open countryside other than issue of crossing M5.

Graham E: What is FoSBR view on suburban stations Keynsham & Oldfield Park losing services?

Rob agreed that loss in services disappointing, an hourly service hugely reduces use. Tim added that we were all surprised by December 2021 timetable patterns – we expected Severn Beach Line trains to continue to Westbury not Weston-super-Mare.

### BREAK

### 6. Formal business

#### a. Tribute to Nigel Bray – Tony Lloyd

Nigel Bray passed away in December 2021. He was Secretary of the Severnside Branch of Railfuture and a staunch supporter of FoSBR, contributing regularly at previous AGMs. Nigel had a life-long passion for the railways, and his rail career took him from Barnstaple to Weston-super-Mare, Paddington, Swindon and Gloucester. He wrote a series of definitive histories of rail lines in the South West which will long continue to be appreciated by those who read them.

b. Treasurer's report – Tony Lloyd

A [draft treasurer's report](#) had been circulated with meeting papers. Post-meeting note: the [finalised treasurer's report](#) has now been audited & will be circulated with March newsletter. Expenditure fell by c£700 since previous year for several reasons:

- (a) Covid limited outreach opportunities,
- (b) only 2 newsletters were produced,
- (c) newsletter recipients such as councillors now get electronic newsletter rather than printed version. FoSBR members still get printed copies.

The balance in bank at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 was £2399. The transition to Paypal payments made 2021 accounts more complicated, but 2022 should be easier. Post-meeting note: the March newsletter will detail how the committee will ensure there is time to finalise future years' accounts before AGM, including holding the AGM slightly later in the year.

c. Elections

No nominations were received, so committee posts were put forward as follows:

- Chair – Rob Dixon
- Secretary – Mark Maggs (previously vacant)
- Membership Secretary & Treasurer – Carol Durrant (previously Tony Lloyd)
- Press (including social media) – Tim Weekes (previously Carol Durrant)
- Campaigns Organiser – vacant.

The above committee was jointly proposed by Tony Lloyd and seconded by David Redgewell. There were no votes against.

The committee intend to co-opt 3 other committee members.

- Data Analyst – Terry Miller
- Newsletter – Tony Lloyd
- Committee member at large – Tina Biggs.

Mark & Rob commented that we are looking into committee roles over the next year. Rob asked if anyone would like to join the committee as Campaigns Organiser or for a more ad hoc role, please contact the committee through the usual channels. Post-meeting note: the March newsletter will explain the process and value of co-opting additional committee members.

d. Minutes of previous AGM

Unfortunately we omitted to ask the meeting to approve the [minutes of the 2021 AGM](#), so we will carry this action forward to the 2023 AGM.

e. Resolutions

No resolutions were proposed.

## 7. Discussions & AOB

Bernard Kennedy from ASLEF reported that the Avonmouth Bulk Handling Terminal is being dismantled along with the coal conveyor from Portbury to St Andrews Road so this may offer opportunity for the track to be re-doubled from Avonmouth to Hallen Marsh. This is relevant to earlier discussions around "Henbury Loop without a loop".

Bernard also commented on what a challenging year it had been operationally for rail, with Covid staff absences. [Bristol East Junction engineering over-run](#) on weekend of 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> August 2021, together with a tragic fatality on the M32, resulted in Bristol reaching a "standstill". Bernard announced a £300 donation from ASLEF to FoSBR – thank you ASLEF!

Andrew R: the 15 minute service aspiration is great but shouldn't FoSBR be concentrating on a better service to Henbury and Portishead, both slated to be hourly (or 45 mins peak) service.

Tim W: we are biting our fingernails on Portishead at the moment – at the moment we'd be happy to see a train at all. If services from Henbury alternated between Temple Meads and Parkway direction across the diamond, they could be every 15 minutes. YTL are keen on a more frequent service, but will they contribute financially?

Don Alexander: had been up at Portway P&R to do a [photoshoot](#) for press release next week. Also commented that the [mass transit consultation](#) will be very open - all comments welcome - and the lack of and need for integration is recognised by all I think. More money would be great but we are more ambitious than ever in BCC.

Chris O: What is to be done about buses coming down Bath Road now no longer stopping at BTM station but people having a quarter of a mile walk from Victoria St back to Temple Meads? Post-meeting note: FoSBR have submitted a response to [number 2 bus route](#) consultation.

Peter T: Trains are idling at Severn Beach. Drivers leave the engine running between arrival and departure, and local residents are affected by noise and fumes. Peter has raised this with GWR directly. GWR staff say that they need to do this to keep carriage heating on, but the doors are open.

Dave R: attended a [WECA meeting](#) that day and described how the meeting had agreed to firm up mass transit costs, dates and key milestones by their next meeting in April AND that there was a last-minute amendment mentioning [potential tunnel](#) under Temple Meads and Gloucester Road. NR are involved in mass transit study of undergrounding study at Bristol Temple Meads. Dan now leads on mass transit, this having been formally passed over from Marvin.

Dave R: Malcolm Parsons (as Jane mentioned) has brought NR to heart of WECA. Malcolm is looking at all routes, eg, service improvement to Gloucester. Dan Norris is funding Charfield station (planning permissions soon) and a study at Stonehouse Bristol road station with Gloucestershire County Council

Dave R: WECA are creating a Passenger Forum. For transport authority branding, there will be one transport authority logo rather than the 3 unitary authority logos currently used on buses, bus stops, stations, to be rolled out in next 6-8 months. There are complicated funding arrangements relating to buses, the quicker we get an Integrated Transport Authority the better.

Graham E thanked FoSBR for support with his campaign against the [loss of the SWR Bristol-Salisbury-Waterloo](#) service in December 2021. This provided the only through trains from London to Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Oldfield Park and Keynsham, and from Bristol and Bath to London Waterloo. Graham is disappointed that there is no date for the MetroWest ½ hour service uplift to Westbury, and worried that it seems to have slipped behind the ½ hour service uplift to Gloucester in planning priority.

Graham E promoted the local "[Coffee Shop](#)" internet passenger forum 15 years old today – all welcome.

Rob D: how can members be involved? Julie asked before meeting asked how members can be involved - reply to consultations, contact media, contact elected representatives, suggest campaign issues, report from stations, attend events, send photos for sharing on social media, eg, stations, trips (thanks Anna!). In 2022, we are planning a trip to Severn Beach for village's June centenary, and of course an event to celebrate the opening of Portway P&R.

**(a) The meeting officially closed at 9.40pm.**